

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: A POSSIBLE REMEDY FOR VIETNAMESE EFL STUDENTS' ESP READING COMPREHENSION AT A VOCATIONAL COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

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Received: 3 November 2020

Revised: 16 April 2021

Accepted: 23 April 2021

Published: 18 May 2022

Citation:

Duong, T. M. and Truong, M. L. (2022). Task-based language teaching: A possible remedy for Vietnamese EFL students' ESP reading comprehension at a vocational college. *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies* 22(2): 291-306.

In order to facilitate an ESP reading comprehension teaching and learning process in vocational schools, a variety of approaches have recently been used. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is supposed to enhance ESP reading comprehension. This study endeavours to explore impacts of TBLT on English for specific purposes (ESP), reading comprehension in terms of overall results of reading comprehension tests, understanding lexical meaning and using strategies for identifying main and detailed ideas. This is a quasi-experimental study with the participation of 25 students majoring in Automobile Technology at a vocational college in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province, Vietnam. ESP reading comprehension tests (i.e., pre-test and post-test) and classroom observation were employed as the main instruments. The quantitative data were analysed using paired samples T-test, Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). Content analysis was used for the qualitative data analysis. The preliminary findings showed that TBLT had a positive effect on the students' ESP reading comprehension achievements. Specifically, the research participants' reading comprehension post-test scores gained at the end of the task-based reading course outperformed those achieved in the pre-test, and their reading skills (e.g., meaning guessing, scanning, and skimming) gradually improved throughout the four observation sessions. Such findings may raise EFL teachers' and administrators' awareness in applying TBLT in ESP reading courses at this research setting and other similar contexts.

Keywords: ESP; reading comprehension; task-based language teaching; vocational education

1. INTRODUCTION

Alongside the advancement of science and technology, English language skills, especially reading comprehension, has become more important than ever. According to Dechant (1991), reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that contributes to students' successful learning process both at school and in their real life. As a result, students are expected to improve their reading comprehension to understand texts effectively

by means of reading strategies. At vocational schools, students learn English for specific purposes (ESP) to have an ability to communicate and exchange information in the real working contexts. Therefore, ESP courses have been used in Vietnamese vocational schools to provide linguistic knowledge as well as strategies for reading comprehension.

To enhance the quality of ESP teaching and learning, there have been significant shifts, e.g., flexible duration for teaching, purposely-classified learning materials, and training courses for teachers. Currently, there are thirty-hour or seventy-five-hour ESP courses for Automobile Technology, Fashion Technology, Information Technology, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, etc. Additionally, learning materials have been designed and evaluated according to the focus of each English course. What is more, several ESP training courses for EFL teachers have been conducted. Remarkably, the first course of teaching specialized subjects in English was organized by the British Council on 23-25 November, 2015, and Vietnam was the second country (after Japan) in Asia participating in this course. The course addressed innovations in teaching approaches and practical language learning tools to facilitate students' reading comprehension learning.

Although ESP teaching and learning has occupied more attention and support from administrators and teachers, the results are inconsiderable. It can be observed that EFL students have faced common difficulties in ESP reading courses such as the complexity of ESP topics and lexical range, reading strategies, motivation in reading, teaching methods, etc. To grasp ESP reading texts, vocabulary is one of the biggest challenges faced by EFL students as Kennedy and Bolitho (1944) have asserted vocabulary had a higher frequency in scientific and technical descriptions and discussions. Moreover, Tran and Duong (2018) reached a conclusion that students could not fully understand ESP reading texts because of insufficient background knowledge and limited ESP vocabulary.

It is assumed that task-based language teaching (TBLT) deals with ESP reading comprehension-related problems to better the ESP reading comprehension teaching and learning process. In other words, this approach may help create effective and interesting ESP reading comprehension classes. It has principles and characteristics that meet the requirements of the learner-focused teaching and learning language process such as providing authentic texts and reading strategies, encouraging students' participation, increasing learning motivation (Breen, 1987; Richards, 2006).

The studied vocational college has had over 3,000 students aged 14-20 years old. The training program aims at equipping students with vocational skills, information technology skills, and language skills. In terms of language skills, vocational students are expected to comprehend ESP reading texts. At the research site, however, students have complained about their ESP reading comprehension ability after completing their courses. It can be inferred that there exists a gap between the requirements of reading texts and their reading comprehension ability; consequently, most of them lack motivation in reading ESP materials. Accordingly, the study endeavours to explore whether or not technical students' ESP reading comprehension at a Vietnamese vocational college is enhanced with the intervention of the TBLT approach in a 6-week ESP reading course.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Task-based language teaching has been developed and promoted by several linguists (e.g., Breen, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996) since the 1980s. TBLT is a method of using tasks to produce purposeful and authentic language outcomes. Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined TBLT as "an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching" (p. 223). Language tasks can be viewed as a set of work plans with an overall aim to facilitate language learning (Breen, 1987). In a similar vein, Willis (1996) affirmed that a task is a goal-oriented activity which involves achieving an outcome deliberately with a final product.

More specifically, Richards (2006) proposed the following characteristics of a task as follows:

- 1) Utilizing learners' prior language learning resources
- 2) Producing a clearly-defined outcome
- 3) Focusing on meaning
- 4) Employing communication strategies and interactional skills for collaborative learning

In regard to reading comprehension, it is seen as the process of decoding and grasping the meaning from texts. Linse and Nunan (2005) have confirmed that reading comprehension refers to higher-order thinking skills involving sense-making ability and meaning interpretation. Meanwhile, Burns et al. (1984) have claimed that reading comprehension may be both a process and a product. The former is accomplished by going through all necessary steps while the latter is the consequence of utilizing certain aspects of a process in an appropriate sequence. Besides, reading comprehension is considered an activity relating to readers, a text, an information obtaining process, and meaning construction based on readers' prior knowledge.

Teaching English for specific purposes has witnessed a great change from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred one as TBLT may overcome the drawbacks of traditional methods. While the teacher-centred methods put an emphasis on reading a text passively, translating it into mother tongue, and focusing on form, TBLT shows its merits, e.g., needs-based tasks, authentic tasks, communicative competence development, and a connection with learners' experience and knowledge, etc. Specifically, applying the TBLT approach in an ESP reading class brings real-life activities that allow students to practice the language ability to construct meaning and comprehend reading texts actively. In addition, TBLT gives technical students a chance to share their experience and activate background knowledge related to reading texts. Finally, the TBLT approach is used to meet the specified needs of using language in the actual context to collect and comprehend the information concerning their particular needs.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the effects of the TBLT approach on language competence in general, and on reading skills in particular. The following is a brief review of studies addressing the effects of TBLT on students' ESP reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

With reference to impacts of TBLT on students' reading comprehension, a study was conducted at an Iranian EFL context by Golchin and Kheirabadi (2013). The participants included 60 advanced EFL learners who were divided into two groups of 30. The reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were employed as the research instruments. The results showed that compared to the control group's reading comprehension achievement, the experimental group's reading comprehension ability improved when task-based reading activities were used learning activities. Similarly, Ökcü (2015) explored the effects of task-based instruction (TBI) on EFL learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition at a private university in Turkey. Two out of 55 beginner classes were conveniently selected and named experimental and control groups. The findings of the study revealed that both experimental and control groups showed an improvement in their reading comprehension. However, there was a statistically significant difference in terms of mean scores of the post-test between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the recall test indicated that TBI positively influenced the participants' vocabulary learning. Meanwhile, Smaili (2014) made an attempt to examine the impacts of the TBLT approach on the third-year students' ESP vocabulary learning at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University-Oum El Bouaghi, Algeria. Thirty students who took part in this study as the participants were assigned into two groups of 15: a control and an experimental group. The pre-test and post-test were used as main instruments for the data collection. The findings showed that the TBLT approach used in the experimental group was found to be more effective in teaching ESP vocabulary than the teacher-centred approach utilized in the control group.

In Vietnam, Le and Nguyen (2012) conducted an experimental study to scrutinize whether or not task-based language learning had an effect on non-English majors' vocabulary acquisition at a community college. The results gained from a questionnaire, interviews, and tests revealed a significant impact of TBLT on the students' learning motivation and ESP vocabulary. Another experimental research conducted at a high school in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam by Trinh and Ha (2017) aimed to delve into the impacts of TBLT on EFL students' reading comprehension. It was found that the participants' intrinsic motivation in the experimental group increased and the students in both of the groups showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension.

To sum up, while the previous studies addressed General English reading courses with the focus on students' motivation, reading skills or strategies and reading comprehension ability at high schools, a community college, or universities, the present study attempts to discover if the TBLT approach affects vocational college students' ESP reading comprehension. More specifically, this study aims at exploring the effects of TBLT on the students' ESP reading comprehension achievement in terms of scores, ESP reading comprehension strategies and ESP vocabulary acquisition because these issues represent the students' reading comprehension performance (e.g., Breen, 1987; Richards, 2006; Tran and Duong, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research questions

In this study, one main research question together with three sub-questions is formulated as follows:

Does TBLT help improve the Automobile Technology students' ESP reading comprehension after the 6-week reading course at the Vietnamese vocational college?

1. *Are there any significant differences in terms of the students' overall reading comprehension results between before and after the TBLT-based ESP course? If so, how?*
2. *Are there any significant differences in terms of the students' understanding lexical meaning between before and after the TBLT-based ESP course? If so, how?*

3. Are there any significant differences in terms of the students' using strategies for identifying main and detailed ideas between before and after the TBLT-based ESP course? If so, how?

3.2 Research design

This study was quasi-experimental research with one-group pretest-posttest design in which a single group is measured and observed after the treatment (Fraenkel et al. 2012). It is worth noting that a mixed-methods approach involving the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was employed in this study to examine possible effects between an independent variable (i.e., the TBLT approach) and dependent variables (i.e., students' reading comprehension ability).

3.3 Research setting and participants

The research was conducted at a vocational college in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province, Vietnam. The experimental course was a 30-hour ESP reading class, lasting 6 weeks. The students were instructed with the TBLT approach for five 45-minute sessions each week.

The sample in this study was chosen by means of the purposive sampling. The participants including 25 second-year students of the Automobile Technology class were selected for two reasons. First, the students completed the 120-hour general English courses and some specific subjects concerning Automobile Technology in Vietnamese language, so they supposedly had an adequate knowledge of Automobile Technology and English language which contributes to their ability to construct meaning from reading texts. Second, the duration of the course was compatible with the research conducting time. All the participants were male, ranging from 20 to 22 years old. They attended this ESP course with six various topics containing a variety of technical and technological articles, advertisement pieces or passages, etc. They passed the general English courses in which they experienced life-related reading passages. This means that their English language proficiency was supposed to be at the pre-intermediate level which is a minimum level the students at the research setting need to achieve prior to the ESP reading comprehension course. Obviously, however, they had not officially gained background knowledge about ESP except for the knowledge on professional areas in Vietnamese.

3.4 The teaching procedures

The TBLT-based reading course consisted of three main stages, namely pre-task, task cycle, and language focus which are different from those used in a teacher-centred ESP reading class. In the pre-task stage, the teacher got the students involved in lessons through questions, games, pictures, and videos. The task cycle stage had three sub-stages of task, planning, and report. The students first used reading strategies, e.g., skimming, scanning, predicting, etc. to deal with reading texts individually and collaboratively. Then they discussed and made a plan for reporting their work to the class. Finally, while a group was presenting their projects, other groups were required to provide feedback on their presentation. In the last stage – language focus, the students worked in groups to analyse mistakes and highlight the key language used in the lesson with the assistance of the teacher. After that, the teacher asked the students to further practise based on the lesson learned.

3.5 Research instruments

3.5.1 English reading comprehension pre-test and post-test

In this study, the pre-test and post-test were designed according to the ESP topics to examine any significant differences in terms of academic achievements between before and after the TBLT-based course. The 60-minute ESP reading comprehension tests were adapted from a range of realistic reading passages in the series called Career Paths designed for professionals and students in vocational schools and colleges by Jim (2012). The test specifications are summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Specification

Part	Question type	No. of items	Point allocation	Aim
1	Cloze test	5	2.5 points (0.5 point each)	To examine students' understanding about ESP vocabulary
2	True-False	11	7.5 points (0.375 point each)	To assess the ability to use reading strategies to identify main ideas and details
	Multiple-choice	9		

Whilst the purpose of cloze questions was to assess the students' comprehension of ESP vocabulary, true-false and multiple-choice questions aimed to examine the application of reading strategies in ESP reading comprehension test. More specifically, for the cloze test, the students read a passage and then chose words from the box to complete the passage, whereas in the true-false test, they read passages and then indicated whether the information in each item was true or false, and they read technical passages and answered the follow-up questions to identify specific information and main ideas in the multiple-choice test. The 25-item

English reading comprehension pre-test and post-test extracted from the test bank had the same format and level of difficulty. The tests had two parts consisting of understanding vocabulary (5 items) and understanding main ideas (3 items) and specific ideas (17 items) with the score allocation of 2.5 points and 7.5 points respectively (Appendix A).

The English reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were designed by teachers who were in charge of the ESP reading comprehension course based on the template and academically evaluated by the Faculty Examination Committee at the studied vocational college in 2017. After that, the tests used in this study were evaluated by a linguistic expert who is specially trained in TBLT and reading comprehension. To increase the reliability of the test results, furthermore, two EFL teachers were invited for grading the tests (i.e., one for the pre-test, one for the post-test).

3.5.2 Observation

In addition to the quantitative data obtained from the tests, observation was used as another instrument to gather the qualitative data as it helps record information participants' actual behaviour in a particular setting (Creswell, 2014). In the present study, the observation was designed with a checklist containing closed-ended and open-ended questions. The 2-option checklist (i.e., yes or no) was divided into 2 main parts: students' vocabulary learning (2 items) and students' reading comprehension strategies (3 items). After each close-ended item, there was an open-ended item to gain insights into students' performance.

To avoid a research bias, the researchers' colleague, who holds a B.A. degree, was invited to be a classroom observer. She observed four TBLT-based lecture sessions during which she completed the classroom observation checklists and answered the open-ended questions.

3.6 Data collection and analysis procedures

This research predominantly aimed at finding out whether or not the TBLT approach had any effects on technical students' reading comprehension ability after the TBLT-based ESP course. There were two instruments, viz. tests and observation employed to collect the data. First, the English reading comprehension pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the course. Subsequently, the post-test was carried out at the end of the course. What is more, the observations were made throughout the course (i.e., four times) and named from the first session to the fourth session. In particular, the observer joined the class and recorded the students' learning activities according to the given checklist.

The data obtained from the English reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were statistically analysed using SPSS 20 (i.e., paired sample T-tests) in order to compare the significant differences in terms of mean scores gained from the reading comprehension tests before and after the TBLT instruction. The information collected from the observer's checklists was analysed by content analysis. Particularly, the data were first transcribed and put in the Microsoft Excel file, and then were coded and grouped for three major themes relating to understanding ESP vocabulary, using strategies to identify main ideas, and to look for details.

4. RESULTS

To examine the effects of the TBLT approach on students' reading comprehension, the findings from the English reading comprehension pre-test and post-test and the observation were analysed.

4.1 Overall results of ESP reading comprehension tests

The results from ESP reading comprehension tests are displayed in Table 2 to show the overall picture of the students' reading comprehension improvement after the course.

Table 2: Overall Results of Pre-test and Post-test

	n=25		
	M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	5.66 (.76)	-11.63	.000*
Post-test	6.80 (.69)		

Note. n=sample; M=Mean; SD=Standard deviation; p=p-value; t=t-value

*p<.01

As observed in Table 2, the students' post-test mean score (M=6.80; SD=.69) was higher than the pre-test mean score (M=5.66; SD=.76). Strikingly, the result revealed a significant difference in mean scores between the English reading comprehension pre-test and post-test at the significance level of .000 which was smaller than .001. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there were no significant differences in terms of the students' reading comprehension achievement between before and after the course was rejected. In other

words, students' ESP reading comprehension ability significantly improved after task-based language teaching instruction was used in the ESP course.

4.2 Detailed results of the ESP reading comprehension tests

Turning to details, the scores on the ESP reading comprehension tests were statistically analysed to investigate the effects of TBLT on each aspect of the students' English reading comprehension, namely understanding ESP vocabulary and using strategies to read for main ideas and specific information.

4.2.1 Understanding lexical meaning

In this section, the students were asked to grasp the meaning of ESP vocabulary to fulfil the content of the reading passages. The items required students to choose and fill out the correct word in each blank. The reading comprehension test contained 5 items to examine students' lexical comprehension with the total score of 2.5 out of ten.

The following table presented the comparison of the students' pre-test and post-test mean scores in terms of understanding ESP vocabulary by using the t-test.

Table 3: Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Understanding ESP Vocabulary

	n=25		
	M (SD)	t	p
pre-test	.84 (.36)	-9.87	.000*
post-test	1.60 (.48)		

*p<.01

The results presented in Table 3 report that the post-test mean score of understanding vocabulary knowledge (M= 1.60; SD=.48) was higher than the pre-test mean score (M=.84; SD=.36), and the significance level of .000 (p<0.01) implies that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores. In other words, students' understanding of ESP vocabulary improved after the TBLT instruction.

4.2.2 Using strategies for reading for detailed information and main ideas

The aim of 17 questions related to the identifying specific information was to assess the students' ability to recognize the detailed facts in the reading texts. Table 4 presents the students' pre-test and post-test results regarding identifying specific information.

Table 4: Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Identifying Specific Information

	n=25		
	M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	3.66 (.74)	-7.65	.000*
Post-test	4.28 (.63)		

*p<.01

It is reported that the post-test mean score of identifying detail ideas (M=4.28; SD=.63) outperformed the pre-test mean score (M=3.66; SD=.74). Remarkably, there was a significant difference in terms of mean scores between the pre-test and post-test at the significance level of .000 (p<0.01). That is, the students' ability to look for detailed information improved after the TBLT-based reading course.

Table 5: Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Identifying Main Ideas

	n=25		
	M (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	.66 (.24)	-5.73	.000*
Post-test	1.04 (.25)		

*p<.01

Table 5 shows that the post-test mean score (M=1.04; SD=.25) regarding identifying main ideas was higher than the pre-test mean score (M=.66; SD=.24). Also, there was a significant difference in terms of mean scores between the pre-test and post-test at a significance level of .000 (p<0.01). This means that there was an improvement in using the reading strategies to identify the main ideas of the texts after the application of the TBLT approach.

The qualitative data of the classroom observation sheets showed positively gradual changes throughout four sessions. In respect of lexical meaning acquisition, students did reading comprehension tasks instinctively in the first session, i.e., they read the whole reading texts and translated them into their mother

tongue before doing follow-up reading exercises. In the next sessions, students purposefully handled the ESP reading texts.

The students learn vocabulary by translating a text into Vietnamese, looking up words in the dictionary, asking their teacher and peers. They face a lot of difficulties in understanding ESP vocabulary. (1st session)

Notwithstanding, the students tended to understand ESP vocabulary in context rather than word-by-word translation.

They attempt to acquire ESP vocabulary in context instead of successive use of a dictionary. (2nd session)

Meanwhile, visual aids (e.g., flashcards, pictures, graphs, etc.) in the textbook, articles or other materials offered by the teacher helped students to guess the meaning and learn ESP vocabulary more easily. Besides, task-based activities enabled the students to connect the existing knowledge with their prior knowledge to comprehend ESP vocabulary's meaning.

They look at the flashcards and pictures to learn ESP vocabulary and guess the meaning of vocabulary in reading texts. They also use technical pictures, drawings and symbols in the textbooks provided by the teacher to acquire vocabulary. (3rd session)

In the last observation session, the outstanding improvement in learning and constructing ESP vocabulary's meaning in the task-based reading course was the ability to read the text quickly.

The students complete a reading text faster than before. They do not look up words in a dictionary all the time. Instead, they know how to understand technical terms via reading tasks properly. (4th session)

With reference to reading for main and specific ideas, it is observed that the students still got used to discovering the whole reading texts' meaning before addressing the questions at first. Their ESP reading comprehension strategies, however, have gradually been developed over the four observation sessions.

The students can highlight important information in a reading text from a real topic and context. (1st session)

Moreover, they could scan and/or skim a text to fully comprehend its content quickly as the teacher instructed them how to use skimming and scanning effectively during the task-based course.

The students underline key words and focus on important rather than translating a text into Vietnamese, so they can read and comprehend the texts more quickly. (2nd session)

It is noteworthy that using other social strategies in the following sessions (e.g., discussing with their partners and working in groups or pairs to overcome reading comprehension obstacles) helped students know how to look for information efficiently. In other words, they endeavoured to discuss the reading comprehension tasks with their peers to facilitate the reading process. This means that they were able to actively deal with reading texts.

In case of failure to grasp a reading text, they immediately seek help from their classmates. (2nd session)

The students first try to do a reading task for the main ideas and specific information and interact with their classmates to compare the answers. (4th session)

5. DISCUSSION

As reported above, the findings reveal that the students' ESP reading comprehension ability positively changed. The mean scores of the post-test were significantly higher than the pre-test's. Furthermore, the results obtained from the classroom observation also show that students' ability to construct ESP vocabulary knowledge and use reading strategies for main ideas and supporting details improved. These results are in alignment with those in the previous studies (Rubaiat, 2018; Sariannur, 2017) which showed the improvement in students' reading comprehension ability after the employment of task-based learning activities.

The discussions concerning ability of grasping ESP vocabulary knowledge and ability of reading for main ideas and supporting details are specifically presented as follows.

5.1 The ability to understand ESP lexis

The results indicate that students' ability to grasp ESP vocabulary significantly improved after they were instructed with the TBLT approach. In other words, the TBLT approach helped student know how to grasp the meaning of the ESP vocabulary from the context. In particular, task-based vocabulary instructions such as listing and brainstorming (i.e., students can list places, things, people, daily problems, reasons, etc.), ordering and sorting (i.e., students can sequence, rank, or classify items), matching vocabulary items to pictures or flash cards, and connecting students' prior knowledge with the content of a reading passage which is called topical knowledge (Schallert and Hare, 1991 as cited in Estaji and Meihami, 2016) or available real text books to learn ESP vocabulary. That is to say, the students' performance in task-based vocabulary learning was considerably progressive. These findings are consistent with several previous studies (e.g., Javanbakht and Yasuj, 2011; Khoshsima and Saed, 2016; Le and Nguyen, 2012; Sarani and Sahebi, 2012; Vosoughi and Mehdipour, 2013) exploring that proper use of task-based language teaching can improve students' vocabulary acquisition in EFL/ESL classrooms. This positive impact is confirmed by Sarani and Sahebi (2012)'s research showing that the students could enhance vocabulary achievements through exposure to tasks during the studied period and become receptive to task-based learning in ESP classes.

5.2 The ability to use reading strategies

It can be stated that the TBLT approach had positive effects on students' reading comprehension ability. In particular, the data from the reading comprehension tests show that there was a significant difference between the results from the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test in terms of identifying main ideas as well as specific ideas. The results are in line with those found in a few studies (e.g., Golchin and Kheirabadi, 2013; Hayati and Jalilifar, 2010; Poorahmadi, 2012). Poorahmadi (2012) found out that task-based instruction improved reading comprehension ability and end-of-course language proficiency more significantly than exercise-based teaching method did. Similarly, Hayati and Jalilifar (2010) confirmed that the students attending the reading class with the intervention of TBLT had a better academic performance and reading comprehension ability. Therefore, there is a congruence in terms of positive findings between the previous studies and this study that the implementation of the TBLT helped promote the students' reading comprehension ability.

Furthermore, the qualitative data from the observation showed a positive enhancement during the reading comprehension teaching and learning process. The students showed constant improvement in the class participation from pre-task phase, task cycle phase to language focus phase. This result is in line with the results of the previous studies concerning the use of tasks in improving reading comprehension. For example, Poorahmadi (2012) pinpointed that activities using interactional authenticity enabled learners to use language pragmatically and the learners, therefore, needed to employ cognitive strategies, namely choosing, categorizing, ordering, inferencing, and/or evaluating information to conduct a task. These findings are supported by Nunan (2004) stating that the focus of TBLT is on learners who use language naturally via collaborative activities, which gives them an opportunity to share ideas mutually. Also, Willis (1996) has emphasized that the TBLT framework with a set of tasks provides students with exposure to use the target language. As a matter of fact, the students' interaction during the task performance provided opportunities for them to optimize the language they use (Shariq, 2020). Moreover, the results indicate that students knew how to apply the reading strategies in the task-based reading activities, such as skimming and scanning to fulfil the reading comprehension tasks. This finding is consistent with the results of Hayati and Jalilifar (2010) who concluded that the reading strategies such as scanning and skimming demonstrated statistically significant differences among the participants in their study. These results are similar to Hokmi (2005)'s findings showing that assigning tasks to students positively influences their reading comprehension.

In comparison with other previous studies, nonetheless, the findings of the present study do not support the fact that TBLT has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension. For example, Adams and Newton (2009), who conducted a study addressing the implementation of TBLT in English training courses in the East Asian countries, concluded that using TBLT was not successful in those courses. Additionally, the results of this study are contrary to Jeon and Hahn (2006)'s viewpoint stating that the application of TBLT was likely to be challenging or even impossible due to time limit and/or inexperienced teachers.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to examine the effects of TBLT on vocational reading comprehension. The research instruments used to collect quantitative and qualitative data were the pre-test and post-test of ESP reading comprehension and classroom observation. The results indicate that the students' ESP reading comprehension ability in three aspects, namely understanding vocabulary knowledge, identifying main ideas

and looking for details improved after the TBLT-based instruction. Besides, the findings gained from the observation checklists discover that the students in ESP reading comprehension knew how to use reading strategies to identify the main and specific ideas of the texts as well as understand new ESP vocabularies. To sum up, the students' understanding of ESP vocabulary in the task-based reading class experienced an outstanding enhancement because of the significant differences in terms of mean scores and the positive changes in their learning performance over the 6-week period.

6.1 Pedagogical implications

6.1.1 For students

It is widely acknowledged that enriching ESP vocabulary knowledge and size is indispensable for mastering reading comprehension, so students should take advantage of their background knowledge and experiences to connect them with a new language. In other words, they should be creative and autonomous in the reading comprehension learning process. These activities relating to setting learning objectives, creating a study plan, choosing learning materials, working with peers, using learning strategies, and seeking help from classmates, teachers or other sources may increase students' learning motivation in ESP reading classes.

6.1.2 For teachers

An EFL teacher in a task-based ESP class plays a role as a task designer, a facilitator, a guide, and an evaluator so that s/he should be aware of their roles to maximize students' reading comprehension ability.

First, teachers should be careful while selecting materials and designing or building tasks which must be authentic, real-life contexts because the predominant learning outcome of a task-based ESP reading class is the ability to use the target language in authentic situations.

Second, teachers not only instruct and facilitate learning activities but also let students do tasks creatively because the core features of TBLT are "tasks" and "learners", so the teachers' instructions should be based on a learner-centred approach rather than a teacher-centred one.

Finally, teachers should guide and encourage students to employ peer assessment besides teacher assessment in order to get them actively involved in their language learning, especially ESP reading comprehension.

6.1.3 For administrators

It is recommended that vocational training institutions promote the implementation of the TBLT approach in English reading comprehension teaching and learning because of its benefits that EFL students may get. Furthermore, the administrators should encourage English teachers to integrate other language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, and writing) in a task-based reading comprehension class as students are supposed to achieve an ultimate goal – communicative competence in the real world when language skills are put together.

6.2 Limitations and recommendations for further research

Despite the considerable contributions of the study to the field, there exist a few limitations as follows. First, there was only one ESP reading class selected as an experimental group in this study due to the fixed curriculum. Hence, the ESP reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were used to examine the significant differences in terms of academic achievements within one treatment group instead of the comparison of an experimental group and control group. Second, the duration of the ESP course was quite short (i.e., 30 hours), but its content was quite long. In particular, there were six face-to-face class sessions, and each session lasted forty-five minutes. As a consequence, the students might be under pressure to complete the lessons. Finally, the presence of the observer in the classroom might have had an influence on the students' performance.

It is worthwhile to compare the improvement in reading comprehension abilities between two different groups. One group will be instructed with the TBLT approach, whereas the other group will be taught with a traditional approach. Additionally, the future researcher may apply the TBLT approach in a ESP reading comprehension course with longer duration. Last but not least, an interview should be employed as a research instrument to explore students' insights into the TBLT approach used in ESP reading comprehension classes.

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APPENDIX A: ESP READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Part 1. Understanding vocabulary (2.5 points)

Read the encyclopedia entry. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the word bank.

distributors	customers	charges	spark plugs	products
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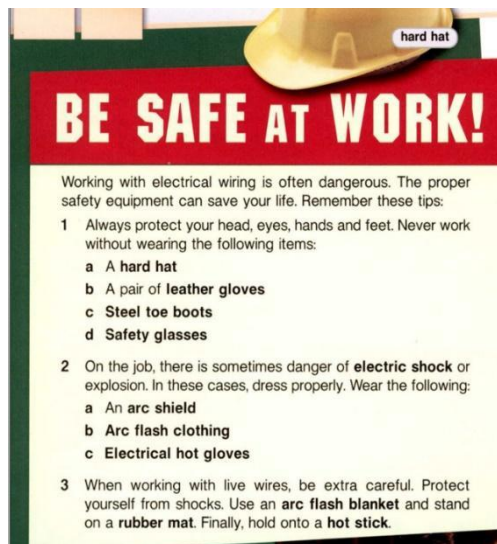
Car Genius carries many different ____ (1) ____ to maintain electrical systems. A vehicle chart is available to help customers select ____ (2) _____. Products are also available for cars with distributorless ignition systems. Feeler gauges measure the right distance to gap ____ (3) _____. For fuse replacements, a picture gallery guides ____ (4) _____ to the correct type. Car Genius also offers resources to check batteries' ____ (5) _____ and identify terminals.

Part 2. Understanding main ideas and specific ideas (7.5 points)

A. True/False questions

Questions 6 through 8 based on the safety poster. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

6. Safety glasses should be worn if needed.
7. Arc flash clothing helps if there is an explosion.
8. Hold a hot stick when working with dead wires.



Questions 9 through 11 based on the troubleshooting guide. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 9 _ If an ignition switch is bad, a car's lights won't work.
- 10 _ The article recommends that professionals handle all work with batteries.
- 11 _ A malfunctioning alternator could lead to a dead battery

Auto Monthly
January Edition

START STOP ENGINE

key

You try to **start** your car and nothing happens. Compare your car's symptoms to our troubleshooting list to see what's wrong.

When you turn the **key**:

Symptom: The lights don't work and the engine is silent.
Diagnosis: The battery could be dead. Check the cables and **ground** connections.

Symptom: The lights work. The engine makes a clicking noise but it doesn't **turn over**.
Diagnosis: There could be a loose connection involving the **starter** or **starter relay**.

Symptom: The lights work but the engine is silent.
Diagnosis: The starter could be bad, or you have a failing **ignition switch**.

A mechanic can replace your ignition switch, battery cables, or starter. If your battery is dead, you can replace or charge it yourself after a **jump start**. Your car should start normally once it's charged. However, if the battery doesn't hold the **charge**, there could be problems in the charging system. Have a mechanic check the **alternator**, **voltage regulator**, and battery.

ignition switch

jump start

Questions 12 through 14 based on the poster from a brake shop. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 12 _ Quick Stop Brakes can replace entire brake systems.
 13 _ The poster recommends changing brake fluid two times a year.
 14 _ The poster recommends seeing a brake specialist if a brake pedal is too low.

QUICK STOP
BRAKE SHOP

Thank you for choosing **Quick Stop Brakes** as your automotive care center!

Whether you need new **brake pads** or a completely new **brake system**, we have what you want!

Our services include:

- Brake system inspection*
- Brake fluid changes**
- Brake line repairs
- Brake shoe replacements
- Brake master cylinder inspection / repair
- Caliper inspection / replacements
- Power brake booster repair / replacements
- Detailed inspection and diagnostics for anti-lock braking systems (ABS)

We know brakes like no one else does. Whether you are driving with **hydraulic brakes**, **disc brakes**, **power brakes**, or **drum brakes**, we know what to do.

Remember, you need to see a brake specialist immediately if you are experiencing:

- A brake warning light that stays on
- Squealing or grinding brakes
- A hard **brake pedal**
- A spongy or low brake pedal
- A **parking brake** locked in place

* recommended twice a year
 ** recommended every two years

disk brake

drum brake

brake pad

brake shoe

brake pedal

Questions 15 and 16 based on the advertisement. Then, mark the following statements as true (T) or false (F).

- 15 _ The shop performs. Emission inspections.
 16 _ The shop installs custom heat shields.



JJ's Muffler and Automotive

Do you have **muffler** trouble? Did you fail an **emissions** test? Come into JJ's Muffler and Automotive. We are a family-owned shop that provides the best customer service at unbeatable prices. We offer vehicle emission inspections and diagnostics and repairs, as well as high quality **emission controls** and installations. We honor our promise to provide free visual inspections upon request and will perform engine scans when necessary. Our services include:

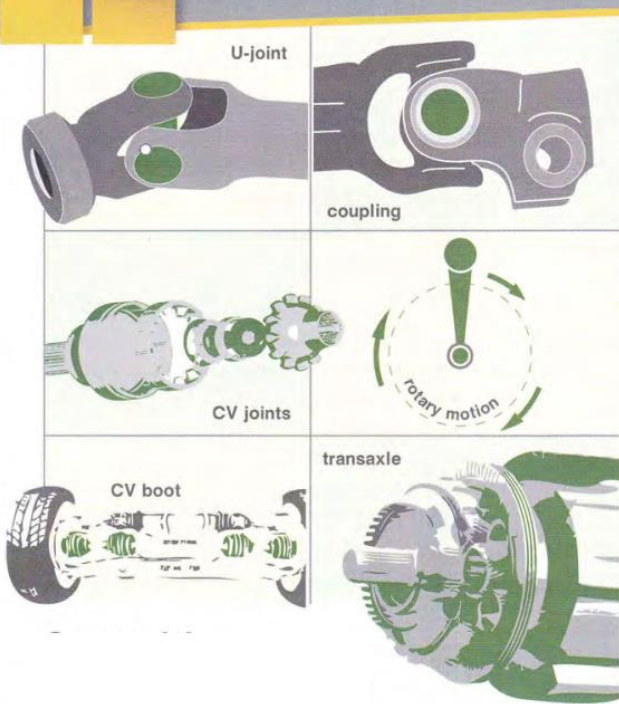
Exhaust services and repairs to:	Custom and performance installations of:
● Catalytic converters	● True dual exhaust systems
● Exhaust manifolds	● Diesel exhaust systems
● Exhaust manifold gaskets	● Mid-range and high performance mufflers
● Exhaust pipes	● Custom-made tailpipes
● PCV valves	
● Heat shields	

Come in for your exhaust system needs today!

B. Multiple-choice questions

Questions 17 through 19 based on the auto advice column. Then, choose the correct answers.

17. What is the purpose of the passage?
- A. to show the steps of joint replacement
 - B. to recommend switching to CV joints
 - C. to explain symptoms of U and CV joint damage
 - D. to describe the differences between U and CV joints
18. Where does damage to a CV joint usually start?
- A. a worn down hinge
 - B. a cracked CV boot
 - C. a loose coupling
 - D. a snapped transaxle
19. What is probably true of a car with a damaged CV boot?
- A. It needs a new U-joint.
 - B. It has front-wheel drive.
 - C. It cannot transmit rotary motion.
 - D. Its CV joint has completely failed



The diagrams are arranged in a 3x2 grid. The top row shows a 'U-joint' and a 'coupling'. The middle row shows 'CV joints' and a circular diagram with an exclamation mark labeled 'rotary motion'. The bottom row shows a 'CV boot' and a 'transaxle'.

St. Petersburg Herald

Ask the Doctor

Dear Car Doctor,
I hear a loud **clunk** when I put my car in gear,
and it vibrates when I speed up or slow down.
What's going on?

- Roger

Dear Roger,
It sounds like you have a problem with your **joints**, which **transmit** the **rotary motion** of **transaxle** to the wheels. If you have a rear-wheel drive vehicle, you likely have **U-joints**. A U-joint is essentially two connected **hinges**. When the connection is loose, they spin and make a "clunk" upon meeting. On the other hand, if you have a front-wheel drive car, you probably have **CV joints**. Like U-joints, CV joints produce a **knocking** sound when loose. However, the problem usually begins with the **CV boot**. A cracked CV boot lets grease escape and dirt enter. The result is that the **coupling** experiences too much **friction**, wears down, and loosens. But no matter what joints you have, you need to get to a mechanic before the joints completely fail and you lose control of your vehicle.

Questions 20 through 22 based on the checklist. Then, choose the correct answers.

20. What is the purpose of the checklist?
 - A. to train employees on body repair
 - B. to order replacement parts
 - C. to determine the cost of repairs
 - D. to assess damage to a vehicle
21. Which is NOT an instruction on the checklist?
 - A. replace worn or bent wipers
 - B. look for any signs of collision
 - C. check the hood for dents or scratches
 - D. test all bulbs in headlights and taillights
22. When should a car go to the maintenance garage?
 - A. when the bumper is dented
 - B. when the engine is not starting
 - C. when the windshield is cracked
 - D. when headlights are not functioning

Vehicle Inspection

Check **hood, bumpers, and fenders** for scratches or dents. Make a note of any signs of collision. Also check the **grill** for signs of frontal collision. All **doors** should open and close smoothly. If the car has a **spoiler**, check for paint scratches.

List damage: _____

Look for cracks in the **mirrors**. Also examine the **windshield** for damage. The **wipers** should move easily and should not be bent or worn out.

List damage: _____

Test **headlights, taillights, and brake lights** to ensure all bulbs are working. List bulbs that are not working: _____

Start engine and check fuel level. Record fuel level and any engine problems*:

Fuel: _____ Engine: _____

*Send all cars with engine trouble to the maintenance garage. All other damage is repaired in the parking lot.

Questions 23 through 25 based on the advice column. Then, choose the correct answers.

23. What is the column mostly about?
- an expensive repair man
 - a recommendation for tools
 - a local hardware store
 - a description of how long tools last
24. What are NOT included in tool kits?
- tape measures
 - adjustable wrenches
 - Phillips screwdrivers
 - flathead screwdrivers
25. According to the columnist, what is true about utility knives?
- The blades break frequently.
 - They are included in tool kits.
 - The blades are not always out.
 - They cost less than hammers.

Fix it! Answers:

Sometimes things break in houses. Calling a repair man is expensive. As a homeowner, you need tools. Go to the local hardware store. Most sell **tool kits** with the basic **hand tools**. They usually include a couple of **Phillips screwdrivers, flathead screwdrivers, and an adjustable wrench**. Some tool kits also have **slip-joint pliers and long-nose pliers**. Then buy a tape measure, a **claw hammer**, and a **utility knife** separately. Utility knives have **retractable** blades, so they last a long time. And these separate items can be found for less than ten dollars. Read about how to use these tools, and home improvement projects are easy.

APPENDIX B: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SHEET

- Class size: _____
- Date: _____
- Subject: _____

4. Topic of the lesson: _____

5. Session no.: _____

Put a tick () in the appropriate answer.

No.	Item	Scale	
		Yes	No
Students' vocabulary learning			
1	The students pay attention to the activity of discussing new vocabulary items.		
Justification:			
2	The students actively get involved in the discussion.		
Justification:			
Students' reading comprehension strategies			
3	The students pay attention to the activity of learning how to apply reading strategies.		
Justification:			
4	The students actively get involved in learning how to apply strategies in reading.		
Justification:			
5	The students know how to use reading strategies.		
Justification:			