The effects of task-based instruction on reading comprehension of non-English major students at a university in the Mekong Delta

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a core of English language learning skills. However, many English as a foreign language (EFL) learners face challenges in learning this skill due to a lack of exposure to authentic texts. Concerning this issue, it is believed that task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an ideal teaching method for successful reading learning. Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine how task-based instruction (TBI) influences students' reading comprehension and their attitudes regarding this teaching approach. The research was carried out at a university in the Mekong Delta, where English is a compulsory subject of all majors. The two groups – the control group and the experimental group were made up of 58 non-English major students. Data about students' reading performance and their attitudes towards the intervention were collected using two instruments: tests and questionnaires. The findings revealed that TBLT had a considerable impact on improving experimental students' reading comprehension. Moreover, students showed their positive views on the use of TBLT in their reading classrooms. Therefore, it is suggested that TBLT should be used as the main teaching approach to English language learning.

Introduction

With the current pace of globalization, English is regarded as an international language and is becoming an official or second language in many countries. Therefore, the ability to understand the language and communicate with other people in English has been the first demand for most people now. Reading is undoubtedly the central core skill for second language students (Grabe, 1991). According to Ökcü (2015), reading allows teachers to use various activities and help learners build their language skills in the long and short term. In other words, students can improve other skills, enhance the source of vocabulary with

different contexts, and come across various grammar structures through reading lessons. To take advantage of reading, learners must develop their reading comprehension skills.

TBLT is considered a model approach for language teaching nowadays in many countries. According to Abraham (2015), students use the target language in the TBLT approach for different natural settings in their classroom. Students are allowed to explore the meaning and express themselves in their own words, becoming active learners. There is always a specific purpose for any reading or other skills with task objectives, but in general, all tasks emphasize meaning and communication and help students complete the goals confidently and successfully (Willis, 1996). TBLT provides students with plenty of practical and meaningful practices in reading lessons, so students can take risks without worrying about conveying their meaning. Besides, students get more opportunities to interact with others in their classes thanks to authentic texts or natural contexts in tasks.

In the Vietnamese context, the purpose of teaching reading comprehension has not been achieved in terms of large extent (Trinh & Ha, 2017). Besides, the traditional way of teaching reading is commonly adopted by English teachers rather than using TBLT (Putri & Ratmanida, 2021). In the study of Tran (2021), students still have difficulties in doing reading comprehension tests as their lack of vocabulary and grammatical understanding. Therefore, students tend to translate words into their mother tongue to get the text's meaning, as in GTM. Additionally, few studies have been conducted to examine TBLT's effects on the reading comprehension of tertiary students. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out the effects of task-based instruction (TBI) on learners' reading comprehension in university contexts and how students think about it for their language learning.

Literature review

Reading

Reading is viewed as a foundation of other language teaching and learning skills as learners have to read the written forms of words or texts to understand the language. Reading is described as the process of decoding the meaning of printed or written linguistic signals (Nuttall, 1982). The author explains the interaction between the reader's perceptions of the language's linguistic symbols and his language skills, cognitive abilities, and awareness of the world in the reading process. Van Dijk et al. (1983, as cited in Smith et al., 2021) describe that the readers have to combine their existing knowledge with the text's information to build a mental image of the text's meaning. In other words, to understand the written texts, readers often use prior knowledge and experience to compare to what is in the text. Carrell & Grabe (2010) state that people try to use many cognitive processes and knowledge resources to read for different goals, including "scanning, skimming, reading for general understanding, reading to learn, reading to integrate information and reading to evaluate critically" (p.215). Therefore, it is inferred that reading is an active activity that requires readers to consider the meaning of language and know how to tackle difficulties and incomprehension.

Reading comprehension

Comprehending a text is the process of extracting its meaning. The basis for good comprehension includes the awareness of the content of the text and its organization. Therefore, reading comprehension or reading for understanding is defined as a procedure of analyzing the text's visual and semantic aspects and creating a summary of the text's meaning (Carrell & Grabe, 2010). Similarly, Snow (2002) describes that reading comprehension occurs when the process is extracted from interaction and participation with written language. It implies that there should be a strong connection between the reader, the written text, and different types of reading activities that are indispensable in reading comprehension.

According to Grabe (2002), the fundamental objective of reading is to gain comprehension and help students become aware of the main ideas in a text as well as explore the text's organization. Similarly, Pham (2021) states that reading competency's primary goal is to demonstrate the author's meaning rather than comprehending every word in the text. It implies that to get a successful reading process. Readers should have a general understanding of the text's meaning before analyzing specific information. Ahmadi & Ismail (2013) reveal that readers' prior knowledge will be activated during the interaction with the text, and reading comprehension depends on readers' understanding of the next level. It is inferred that the way readers construct the meaning of the text depends on how they integrate their linguistic knowledge and outside knowledge into the written text and how they analyze different aspects of the text.

Task-based language teaching

The term "TBLT" refers to a teaching approach that was originally used in the 1980s and has received much attention and developed in second language teaching and learning. Prabhu (1987) states that TBLT is a teaching method that provides learners with communicative tasks and allows learners to exchange ideas to obtain the target outcomes. Therefore, TBLT has a significant impact on developing communicative competency. For Mckinnon and Rigby (2004, as cited in Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013), learners will process language more naturally when teachers make it meaningful and comprehensible in the classroom. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), the planning and instruction in TBLT include different tasks, which are the main features of language teaching. The authors believe that "engaging learners in tasks work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place" (p. 223). In TBLT, the tasks that learners do in the class reflect what learners experience in real life; therefore, the role of tasks is crucial and needs to be considered.

Tasks

Many linguists and researchers define 'tasks' in different aspects. Long (1985, as cited in Nunan, 2004) argues a task is "a piece of work" that can be done for one's benefit or that of

others, either for free or for some reward. The term task can be more understandable with the definition of Nunan (1998). Based on its syllabus, the task is divided into two terms: real-world tasks and pedagogic tasks. Real-world tasks refer to the activities that students may be asked to complete in real-life, while pedagogic tasks include different activities or exercises that students have to complete in the classroom. Willis (1996) defines tasks as activities in which learners communicate using the target language to achieve the goal. Learners have to comprehend the objectives of the tasks to complete them in a target time, in a meaningful way, and in the target language as well. The main focus of these tasks is communicative purposes; therefore, grammar or structure construction is less paid attention to during the process of doing tasks. Hence, 'task' in English reading classrooms can be defined as a reading activity in which learners can comprehend the meaning, manipulate the language used in the text, and produce the output by the target language with the help of teachers as well as the interaction with others.

Six major types of reading skills are appropriate for reading (Willis, 1996). Firstly, many talks are involved in the listing activity, requiring students to share their ideas. Secondly, ordering and sorting are slightly more challenging than the first activity since students have to sequence the information in a logical order, rank information in particular criteria, group them under given headings, and even classify the information differently. The other task is comparing, in which students compare the information from different sources to classify their similarities or distinctions. Problem-solving is also a challenging task since it activates students' thinking and intellect. The fifth task is sharing personal experiences that motivate students' interaction as they are free to talk and share their experiences. The last task is called creative tasks or projects, which may include a combination of the five previous tasks and take place in pair work or group work of students. In short, those activities give students the confidence to express their ideas or opinions, notice others' expressions and give feedback, or sometimes participate in negotiating, all of which aim at activating the use of target languages purposefully and cooperatively.

The task-based language teaching framework and its implementation in reading classes

Willis (1996) develops a framework for TBLT with three stages, including (1) pre-task – introduction to topic and task, (2) task cycle – task, planning, report, and (3) language focus – analysis and practice.
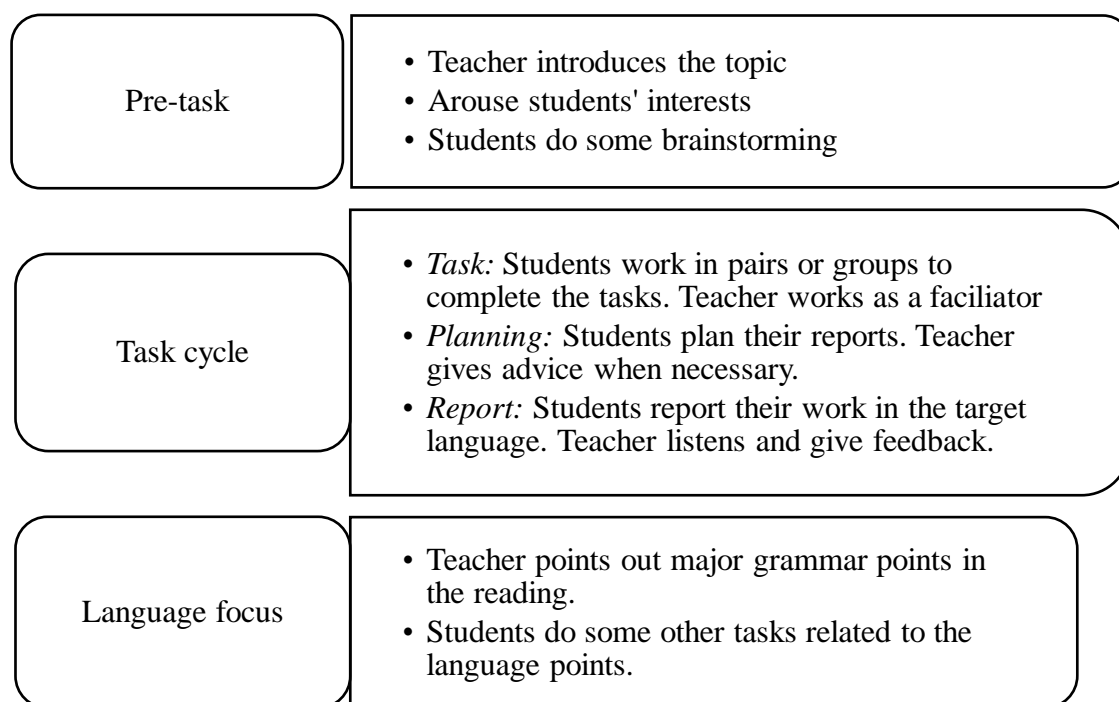
Pre-task	• Teacher introduces the topic • Arouse students' interests • Students do some brainstorming
Task cycle	• *Task:* Students work in pairs or groups to complete the tasks. Teacher works as a faciliator • *Planning:* Students plan their reports. Teacher gives advice when necessary. • *Report:* Students report their work in the target language. Teacher listens and give feedback.
Language focus	• Teacher points out major grammar points in the reading. • Students do some other tasks related to the language points.

Fig. 1 *A framework for task-based reading lessons*

Pre-task stage

This stage aims to introduce and identify the topic. The role of the teacher is to assist students in recalling their knowledge of the topic; in other words, students have to do many brainstorming activities. Sometimes if there is an unfamiliar or complex topic, teachers should do lots of preparation to guide learners through introducing related-topic words or phrases, picking out those words in the text, or letting them cooperate with others.

Task cycle

The task cycle stage includes three components – task, planning, and report.

Task

The task component creates great opportunities for students to communicate when they work in pairs or groups to accomplish the task's objectives. The teacher sets out tasks; thus, he or she should ensure that all students can follow the instruction. Besides, the teacher acts as a monitor who saves his or her control and allows students to accomplish the tasks independently. In reading class, the teacher thus works as a facilitator, observes from a distance, helps the students out when they are stuck, and encourages them to pool the target output.

Planning

After doing the task, students have to plan their reports in the planning step. The teacher should inform the purpose of the report, and the form students can use to present and set them

the limit of time to deal with the final product. The teacher is ready to give advice when students need help by responding to their questions, commenting on good points, pointing out errors, or encouraging them to help each other.

Report

At this stage, the teacher's role is that of a chairperson who first introduces the presentation, informs the purpose of listening, decides who will talk next, and gives a conclusion—some types of presentations, including oral presentations, written presentations, and audio and video presentations.

Language focus

The language focus stage allows for a more in-depth examination of some specific language characteristics used in the task cycle. In other words, after focusing on meaning, the teacher will guide students to pay attention to language form and language use that are useful for their further use.

The effects of task-based instruction on students' reading comprehension

Many researchers have stressed the value of TBI in teaching and learning reading comprehension. For instance, Ökcü (2015) examined how TBI affected reading comprehension and new vocabulary learning of 50 students at a preparatory school who were placed into the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG). The findings showed that TBI improved students' reading comprehension and vocabulary learning even after two weeks of the lesson. Furthermore, it suggested that students' motivation increases as they are active in completing the reading tasks.

The other study that also focused on examining TBLT's significance on students' reading comprehension was by Prasetyaningrum (2018). The author used a collaborative Classroom Action Research design with instruments including an observation checklist, field notes, and reading test to collect data. Twenty-two students in agriculture class studying English were chosen to participate in the experiment. The four main steps in the study were planning, action, observation, and reflection. After implementing TBLT, most students passed the target score, which thus implied that TBLT improved students' reading comprehension ability. Accordingly, TBLT provided students with more opportunities to participate in classroom activities and increase their awareness of studying reading skills.

In recent research, Ardika et al. (2022) used Classroom Action Research to conduct a study on 28 polytechnic students with an aim to examine their reading comprehension performance by TBLT. The researchers utilized an observation checklist and field notes to explore students' reactions to the teaching approach and a reading comprehension test to gather students' reading achievement. The results showed that 78.5 percent of participants passed the passing grade, and 21.5 percent got more grades than that. It proved that students' reading comprehension improved thanks to TBLT. Besides, students gave positive responses to TBLT's benefits that engage students in the activities and raise their consciousness of the

texts' content.

In Vietnamese contexts, Le & Nguyen (2012) examined how TBLT affected 76 non-English major first-year students' motivation to acquire and enhance their vocabulary. The study also aimed at examining students' perspectives on TBLT use in their vocabulary classroom. Three instruments were used in this research: (1) a questionnaire that explored the changes in students' motivation; (2) the pre-test and post-test that evaluated students' vocabulary acquisition; and (3) the interview that collected students' views towards TBL after the treatment. The findings showed that according to students' motivation for vocabulary study, the EG dominated the CG after the treatment, and similarly, the EG's vocabulary achievement was substantially higher than the CG's. Finally, the use of TBL was viewed positively by most interviewed students. Thus, the study suggested that TBL considerably influenced vocabulary teaching and learning.

In the study by Pham & Nguyen (2018), teachers' perceptions of the TBLT and its use in EFL classes at the tertiary level were investigated. 68 EFL teachers have taught English for at least two years and participated in the study. For quantitative data, the questionnaire was used, while semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain qualitative data. The results showed that all teachers had positive perspectives regarding TBLT application and hoped to put TBLT into practice in their teaching practice because of its advantages. However, the participants also mentioned three main challenges they faced in implementing TBLT: students unfamiliar with tasks, time constraints, and teachers' lack of English language proficiency.

In sum, in foreign contexts, the effects of TBLT on students' reading skills, reading comprehension, or other English language skills at the tertiary level have been the subject of numerous research. Most studies received positive results and suggested the implementation of TBLT in language teaching. In Vietnamese contexts, some related studies showed that TBLT had a great impact on teaching English vocabulary or speaking skills, but few studies have looked into how TBLT influences university students' reading comprehension. It is, therefore, necessary to carry out a study to explore the effects of TBLT on the reading comprehension of university students in Vietnamese contexts.

Research Questions

This study tries to seek the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the effects of task-based instruction on the reading comprehension of non-English major students at a university in the Mekong Delta?
2. What are students' attitudes towards the use of task-based instruction in their reading classroom?

Methods

Research design

The main methodology of this study was quasi-experimental research. In the present study, the independent variable was TBLT, while students' reading comprehension was the dependent variable. There were two instruments, t-tests and a questionnaire, to show a complete awareness of the influence of TBI on students' reading comprehension. The t-test was a tool to measure the difference between the two groups' scores after the treatment, and the questionnaire was used to study how students feel about the use of TBI in their reading classroom.

Research site

The study was conducted at Tra Vinh University, which is located in Tra Vinh province, Vietnam, in the first semester of the 2021-2022 school years. It has 13 departments and more than 1000 teachers who are official teachers and contract teachers. The curriculum focuses on teaching four skills in English and language areas to assist students in meeting the requirement of CEFR before graduation. The school has very good learning and teaching condition with many rooms and modern facilities. Each room is equipped with a projector, a big board, a micro, and a recording, thanks to which students have good opportunities to learn English. GTM and CLT are common teaching methods that most teachers use for teaching General English. Therefore, applying the TBLT teaching approach is not only challenging but also necessary for them at this time.

Participants

This study involved a total of 58 non-English major students in two classes. The participants' English levels were quite the same as they were studying in the same English course – General English 3. There were two groups of participants, including 30 students from the control group (CG) who studied reading based on the textbook's design and 31 students from the experimental group (EG) who were taught reading comprehension through TBI. However, one student in CG and two students in EG were not available to do the two tests; thus, the study included 29 students in each group. The participants were chosen first because they had the same level of English and then were taught by the researcher so that the process of researching is easily controlled.

Instruments

In this study, pre-test, post-test and questionnaire were the main instruments to collect data.

Pre-test and post-test

The pre-test and post-test results of the two groups were collected and analyzed to fulfill the first research question. The content and format of both tests were adapted from the reading parts of the Standardized Test – Preliminary English Test (PET). The test was designed to assess two reading aspects: reading for the main idea and reading for specific information. Each test includes three parts with 20 items: part 1 – 5 multiple-choice items, part 2 – 10 true-

false items, and part 3 – 5 multiple-choice items.

After being marked, the scores of the two tests were divided into five levels to see what level of reading English skills the students had, namely very weak (0-2.9), weak (3.0-4.9), average (5.0-6.9), good (7.0-8.9), and very good ($\geq$ 9.0).

A Descriptive Statistic test was run to check whether any differences existed between the mean scores, the maximum, the minimum, and the standard deviation (SD) of the two groups' pre-test results. Then, Independent Samples T-tests were carried out to see if the mean scores of the two groups in both pre-test and post-test differed significantly.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire data was gained from the answers of 29 respondents in the EG to address the second research question. Following the Likert scale questionnaire, all the items were closed-ended sentences with five-point options from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire content was adapted from Hadi (2013), who examined EFL learners' perspectives about TBLT in Iran. The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first section consisted of four questions asked about students' general information. The second section included two clusters with 20 items asking about students' affective attitudes and their cognitive attitudes towards TBI in their reading classroom.

The Reliability Statistics test was run to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. Next, a Descriptive Statistical Analysis was chosen to analyze the mean score of students' total responses, and another Descriptive Statistical Analysis was employed to evaluate the distinction between the mean scores of the two clusters. For descriptive statistical analysis, the Frequency (F), Percentage (P), Mean (M), and Standard Deviation (SD) of each item were computed. To see the significant differences between the mean scores of the two clusters, the researcher used a Paired-Samples t-test. Finally, to check how male and female participants viewed the effects of TBI in their reading lessons, an Independent Samples t-test was run.

Research procedure

The study took place during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 at Tra Vinh University in the Mekong Delta. First, the pre-test was piloted on a sample of students who were not involved in the research for validity and reliability before delivering to the respondents. The questions were adjusted until they were reasonably designed. Then, the revised test was sent to the respondents. After that, a TBI treatment to teach reading comprehension was conducted on the EG while the CG studied reading following the textbook's design. Next, after ten weeks of the treatment, the participants received the post-test.

Some teachers received the questionnaire to read and gave feedback on the content to ensure its validity. Then, learners of the experimental class completed the questionnaire form to analyze the alignment between their perspectives and the practices. Finally, the tests and the questionnaire findings were carefully collected and analyzed.

Results/Findings and discussion

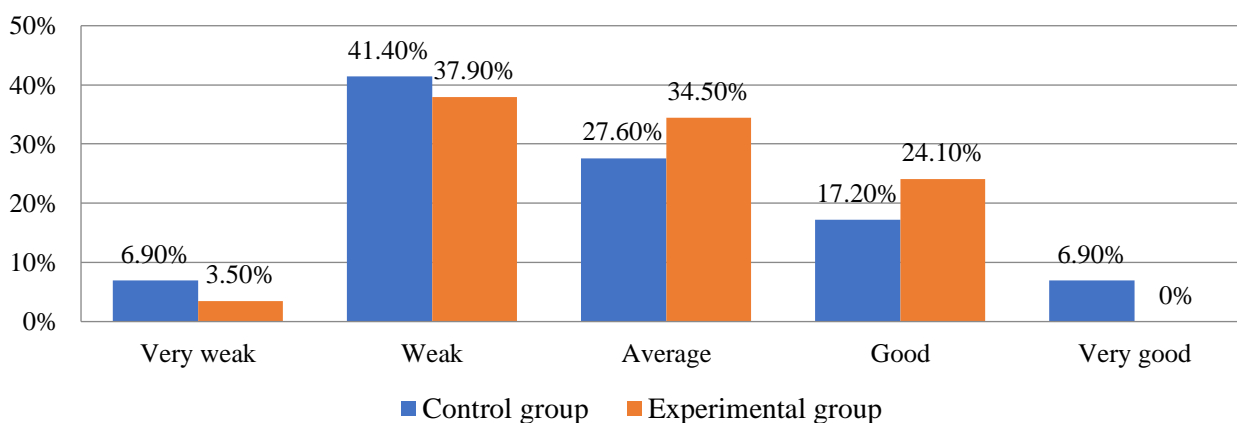The distribution of pre-test scores of CG and EG is shown in figure 2.

Fig. 2. *Distribution of pre-test scores in CG and EG*

Figure 2 displays the distribution of the pre-test scores in CG and EG. The chart presents that students in EG had better pre-test scores than those in CG. Specifically, the very weak scores percentage of CG was *6.9%*, which is nearly double that of EG (*3.5%*). However, the weak scores of the two groups are not significantly different (*41.4%* and *37.9%,* respectively). Meanwhile, both average and good scores of CG (*27.6%* and *17.2%*) were lower than those of EG (*34.5%* and *24.1%*). Finally, two students who got very good scores in CG with *6.9%* compared to no students in EG achieved that score.

The results above revealed a distinction between the pre-test scores in CG and EG before the intervention. Therefore, the mean scores of the two groups should be calculated and analyzed to see whether they are different. The following t-tests were used to compare the significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups.

Comparison of mean scores of the pre-test

A Descriptive Statistics Test was used to examine whether the study's participants in CG and EG had the same level of English reading proficiency before the intervention. The results gained from the pre-test scores of the two groups were calculated, analyzed, and reported in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the two groups on the reading pre-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	29	2.00	9.00	5.31	1.938
Experimental group	29	2.50	8.50	5.25	1.704
Valid N (listwise)	29				

As shown in Table 1, the *Descriptive Statistics* results of the two groups' pre-test scores were displayed. The results indicate a small gap between the mean score of CG (*M=5.31*) and that of EG (*M=5. 26*). In detail, the pre-test scores of CG ranged from 2.00 to 9.00, while those of EG ranged from 2.50 to 8.50. Besides, the standard deviation of the pre-test in CG (*SD = 1.93840*) was higher than that in EG (*SD = 1.70410*), which meant that the pre-test scores of the EG were more variable than those of CG. Due to the difference between the mean scores of the two groups before the treatment, *an Independent Samples T-test* was run to check whether the difference was statistically significant or not.

Table 2
Independent Samples T-test of the pre-test of the two groups

Test	Condition	N	Mean	*t*	*df*	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
Pre-test	Control	29	5.31	.108	56	1.9	.914	.05
	Experimental	29	5.26			1.7		

As table 2 illustrates, it is evident to see that the mean scores of the two groups were not statistically different. The Sig. value was *0.516*, which was significantly greater than the alpha value (*0.05*). Also, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of *0.914* was greatly higher than the alpha value (*0.05*). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that students in CG and EG shared the same level of English proficiency before the treatment. Therefore, it is satisfactory to conduct the study.

The distribution of post-test scores of CG and EG is shown in figure 3.
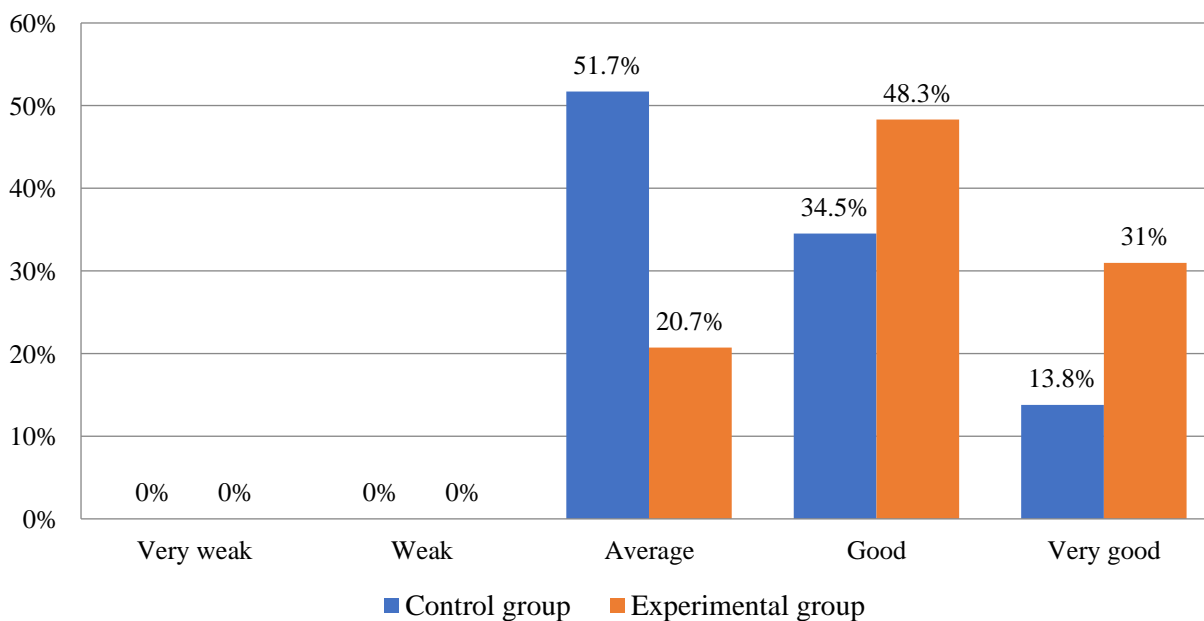

Fig. 3. *Distribution of post-test scores in CG and EG*

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of the post-test scores in CG and EG. The participants in both CG and EG got higher scores after the treatment. However, there were still different trends between the two groups. In detail, after a period of studying, there were no students who got very weak and weak scores in both groups. Meanwhile, the proportion of the CG students with average scores was greatly higher than that of EG (*51.7%* and *20.7%*, respectively), opposite to the proportion in the pre-test. The percentage of good scores in both groups increased, from *17.2%* to *34.5%* in CG and *24.1%* to *48.3%* in EG. Similarly, there were four students in CG with *13.8%,* and nine students in EG with *31%* got very good marks after the intervention.

The results above show a distinction between the post-test scores in CG and EG after the intervention. Therefore, the mean scores of the two groups should be calculated and analyzed to see whether they are different. The following t-tests were used to compare the significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups.

Comparison of mean scores of the post-test

A Descriptive Statistics Test was used to check if students' reading proficiency level in the two groups was different after the treatment.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the two groups on the reading post-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	29	5.00	9.50	6.8966	1.27741
Experimental group	29	5.50	9.50	7.8448	1.18098
Valid N (listwise)	29				

Table 3 shows the results of *Descriptive Statistics* of the two groups after the intervention. The results inform that EG's means score (*M=7.8*) was much higher than that of CG (*M=6.9*). More specifically, the scores of CG were from *5.00* to *9.50* compared to those of EG, from *5.50* to *9.50*. The Standard Deviation of CG and EG was slightly different (*SD = 1.27741* and *SD = 1.18098*). It is clear that students in EG achieved more improvement in reading comprehension than those in CG after studying reading through TBI. However, to ensure whether the mean scores of the two groups were significantly different or not, *an Independent Samples T-test* was run.

Table 4

Independent Samples T-test of the post-test of the two groups

Test	Condition	N	Mean	*t*	*df*	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
Post-test	Control	29	6.90	-2.93	56	1.3	.005	-.948
	Experimental	29	7.84			1.2		

As shown in Table 4, the Sig. value was *0.758*, higher than the alpha value (*0.05*). It implies that the values of variables were normally distributed. The mean scores of the two groups in the post-test were statistically different (*t=-2.935; df=56; p=0.005 < α=0.05*). This finding indicated that the participants' reading performance in EG was greatly higher than that of CG after the intervention. Thus, it is concluded that TBI positively affected students' reading comprehension.

Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire

A Reliability Statistic Test was run to examine whether the questionnaire was reliable or not. The questionnaire would be reliable only when the Cronbach's Alpha was *0.7* and over. Table 5 below shows the findings of the analysis.

Table 5

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.873	20

As shown in Table 5, the result from the Cronbach's Alpha was *α=.873* for the overall 20 items, which suggested that the questionnaire appeared to be sufficiently reliable for the study.

Descriptive Statistically Analysis of the mean scores of students' attitudes

Table 6

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean	29	3.35	4.60	3.9086	.40775
Valid N (listwise)	29				

A Descriptive Statistics Test was run to examine the mean score of participants' attitudes toward the use of TBI in their reading classroom. As indicated in Table 6, the mean score of 29 participants' responses is *3.9*, which is a high level of attitude according to Oxford (1990).

The results revealed that most study respondents had positive attitudes toward the English reading comprehension learning by TBI.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of students' affective attitudes

Items	M	SD
1. TBI motivates me to learn English reading.	4.10	.618
2. The implementation of TBI in reading comprehension is interesting.	3.38	.805
3. TBI creates a comfortable environment that encourages me to use the English language.	4.07	.704
4. I feel free to share and express ideas with friends and teachers.	4.07	.842
5. I do not feel nervous when making English language mistakes.	3.45	.948
6. TBI allows me to discuss and negotiate freely in pairs or groups.	4.38	.622
7. Interacting with friends makes me more confident.	3.90	.724
8. I am interested in doing different types of tasks.	3.79	.819
9. TBI makes me more active in completing tasks.	4.10	.618
10. I have become more confident in reporting in front of the class.	3.69	.891

Table 7 above reveals the results of students' affective attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classroom. The mean scores of 10 items were higher than the median value (*M=3.0*), ranging from *3.45* to *4.38*. Surprisingly, most respondents agreed that TBI allowed them to discuss and negotiate freely in pairs or groups with the greatest mean score (*M=4.38*). The same number of students thought TBI motivates them to learn English reading and makes them more active in completing tasks (*M=4.10*). It is suggested that the participants have positive affective attitudes towards the use of TBI in reading classrooms.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of students' cognitive attitudes

Items	M	SD
11. TBI improves my reading comprehension.	3.86	.639
12. TBI enhances my knowledge through authentic texts.	3.83	.759
13. TBI lessons activate my needs and interests.	3.79	.861
14. I know how to find the information in the text through TBI.	3.59	.907
15. I can improve other skills through integrated tasks.	3.76	.830
16. I can improve my knowledge with the teacher's help and feedback.	4.24	.739
17. TBI provides me with more opportunities to communicate in English.	3.86	.743
18. TBI improves my communicative skills.	3.66	.769
19. Language tasks and activities are meaningful and purposeful.	4.31	.471
20. TBI forms my habit of learning English reading.	3.90	.557

Table 8 shows the results of students' cognitive attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classroom. The mean scores of items 11 to 20 were higher than the middle level (*M=3.00*), ranging from *3.59* to *4.31*. Particularly, most students admitted that they could improve knowledge from the teacher's help and feedback (*M=4.24*) and believed that language tasks and activities are meaningful and purposeful (*M=4.31*). It is suggested that the participants had positive cognitive attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classrooms.

Table 9

Paired-Samples T-test of students' affective and cognitive attitudes

		Mean	N	SD	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
Pair 1	Affective	3.9379	29	.44514	.851	28	.402
	Cognitive	3.8793	29	.45070			

In Table 9*, a Paired Samples T-test* was run to compare the significant differences between the mean score of students' affective attitudes (*M=3.94*) and cognitive attitudes (*M=3.88*). The findings revealed that the two mean scores were not statistically different (*t=.851; df=28; p=0.402*). In other words, the study participants had equal affective and cognitive views on the effects of TBI in the reading classroom.

Table 10

Independent Samples T-test of male and female attitudes

	Gender	N	Mean	*t*	*df*	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
Mean	Male	8	3.9	.031	27	.39	.975	.005
	Female	21	3.9			.42		

As shown in Table 10, *an Independent Samples T-test* was run to examine whether the mean score of female and male students' attitudes towards the use of TBI in the reading classroom was different or not. The results showed that the mean score between female and male students was not significantly different (*t=.031; df=27; p=0.684*). Therefore, it means that female and male students have the same ideas about the use of TBI in studying reading.

In sum, the findings show that non-English major students' reading comprehension was improved through the use of TBI to teach English reading. Besides, most students had positive attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classrooms.

Discussion

Students' reading performance

Based on data analysis findings, it was obvious that TBI brought beneficial effects to students' reading comprehension, which was presented clearly through the results of tests.

Firstly, the pre-test findings informed that students in the two groups had poor reading performance before the intervention. Although the mean scores of the two groups differed, it could be seen that they did not have any statistically significant differences according to the result of the Independent Sample T-test.

Secondly, the post-test results revealed that although students in the two groups improved their reading performance after ten-week of treatment, those in EG got better achievement in terms of mean scores and good scores. Moreover, the statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups was so clear, which was demonstrated through the Independent Sample T-test. In other words, TBLT had a considerable impact on EG. Therefore, it could be concluded that the experimental students' reading comprehension has improved thanks to the application of TBLT.

The tests' findings confirmed that TBLT positively affected the reading comprehension of non-English major students. This conclusion is in line with the study of Ökcü (2015), Mesbah (2016), Prasetyaningrum (2018), Kalaiarasan (2019), and Aliia et al. (2019).

Students' attitudes towards the use of TBI

The aim of the survey was to explore how students felt about TBI using two aspects, namely affective attitudes and cognitive attitudes.

With regard to effective attitudes, many students agreed that TBLT increased their motivation and interest in learning reading. Besides, many students affirmed that they become more active and confident in completing tasks, interacting with friends, and even are able to express their ideas. The findings are the same as those of Ökcü (2015), Prasetyaningrum (2018), Le & Nguyen (2012), and Vo & Nguyen (2021), which revealed that TBLT had positive effects on increasing students' motivation.

In terms of cognitive attitudes, the majority of respondents believed that TBLT helped improve their reading comprehension. In addition, students could enrich knowledge from texts, teachers' feedback as well as the interaction between friends. Moreover, many students admitted that TBLT creates more opportunities for them to communicate in the target language, enhancing communicative skills. This finding corresponds to the results of Aliia et al. (2019) and Vu & Nguyen (2021), who suggested TBLT as a practical approach to improving communicative competency.

In conclusion, the questionnaire findings prove that the majority of students were enthusiastic about the teaching approach TBLT as it not only boosts students' motivation but also provides them an ideal learning environment by giving various tasks to improve their reading performance. Moreover, thanks to TBLT, students become more confident in interacting with others, which can also enhance their communicative skills.

Conclusion

This study tried to explore the impacts of TBLT students' reading comprehension and their attitudes towards this teaching method. From the findings of the tests, it could be seen that students' reading performance improved considerably after the intervention. The results showed that the mean scores of the two groups in the post-test were statistically different (t=-2.935; df=56; p=0.005 < $α$=0.05). Thus, the findings prove that TBLT has a significant influence on improving students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the questionnaire findings indicated that students expressed positive views on the implementation of TBI in reading learning. Students found TBLT not only helpful but also interesting. Thanks to TBLT, students became more motivated, felt happy to share ideas with friends, and became confident in using the target language to complete tasks, thus strengthening their engagement in the lessons. Furthermore, students accepted that TBLT could improve their reading comprehension, and the interaction and the integration of other skills can also develop students' communicative skills.

Although the study received positive results from the effects of TBI in improving students' reading comprehension and positive attitudes, it still has some unavoidable limitations such as

time limit, a few participants, and a lack of qualitative data. Therefore, further studies should be conducted within a longer length of duration – in two semesters instead of one semester, for example – to ensure the constant effect of the approach over a long time. It is expected that there should be a larger population in further studies to make a generalization about the results. Additionally, further researchers should use both quantitative and qualitative methods with the purpose of obtaining more valid and reliable results.

Acknowledgments

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Biodata

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