

Motivation and Engagement through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Pedagogical Insights from Japanese Education

Saeun Lee

Prefectural University of Kumamoto

862-8502 3-1-100 Tsukide, Higashi-ku, Kumamoto-shi, Kumamoto

Tel: 81-63-383-2929 E-mail: saeunlee@pu-kumamoto.ac.jp

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Abstract

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is increasingly recognized for its effectiveness in fostering communicative competence and enhancing learner motivation (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). Although it has been successfully implemented in various Asian contexts (Adams & Newton, 2021; Butler, 2011), the uptake of TBLT in Japan has been limited due to conceptual misunderstandings, institutional resistance, and classroom-level constraints (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). Nonetheless, the relative curricular flexibility in Japanese university settings allows space for innovative pedagogical practices. In the Japanese context, motivation is considered a critical factor in language learning success (Harris, 2018), particularly among non-English major students who often show low levels of engagement and participation. This study explores the motivational impact of TBLT on this learner group. The findings reveal that TBLT promotes active participation, increases willingness to communicate in English, and reduces language-related anxiety. Participants reported a stronger appreciation for the relevance of English in real-life contexts and expressed interest in continuing their language study beyond the classroom. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of meaningful, authentic, and appropriately challenging task design in maintaining motivation. These results support the pedagogical potential of TBLT and emphasize the need for localized adaptations and sustained teacher development to facilitate its wider implementation in Japan.

Keywords: Task-based language teaching (TBLT), Motivation, Classroom engagement, EFL classroom

1. Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is widely recognized as a fundamental approach in language curricula globally, including in Asian contexts, and is supported by both second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and English language teaching (ELT) practitioners. Despite its successful implementation in various Asian countries (Adams & Newton, 2009), TBLT faces several challenges in Japan, including conceptual constraints, classroom-level factors, and societal/institutional barriers (Butler, 2011). These challenges have hindered its widespread adoption in Japanese English classrooms, despite substantial evidence of its effectiveness in fostering communicative language competence (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Harris & Leeming, 2021; Hung, 2016; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Nemat Tabrizi, 2011; Saricoban & Karakurt, 2016; Ulla, 2020). However, with careful contextual adaptation, TBLT presents a promising pedagogical approach, particularly for foreign language (FL) classes aimed at communicative development.

In Japanese university English education, TBLT offers a viable and adaptable framework due to the relatively flexible educational environment compared to secondary education. This flexibility is crucial for achieving contextually appropriate TBLT implementation and maximizing its potential for effective language acquisition. Nevertheless, empirical studies that implement TBLT and explore its influencing factors within the Japanese context remain limited. Abe (2023) emphasizes the importance of understanding the core principles of TBLT and its impact on student engagement, particularly in terms of motivation in using English. Despite the growing body of research on TBLT, qualitative studies of its impact on student motivation—particularly among non-English majors in Japan—remain limited. This gap in the literature necessitated the present qualitative investigation, which aimed to explore the ways in which TBLT influences student motivation and engagement. Accordingly, this study aims to contribute to the discourse on TBLT in Japan by investigating students' experiences in TBLT courses in a required university English course, with a particular focus on their motivation and engagement in English learning.

1.1 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

The emergence of the communicative approach in the 1970s marked a paradigm shift in language teaching, placing significant emphasis on natural and authentic communication. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes meaningful interaction, in which learners receive comprehensible input and utilize language purposefully through interactive tasks (Brown, 2001). CLT underscores the principle of “learning by doing,” fostering language acquisition through engagement in communicative tasks (Brandl, 2008).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a methodological extension of CLT (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007), defined as “an approach to language education in which students are given functional tasks that invite them to focus primarily on meaning exchange and to use language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes” (Van den Branden, 2006, p. 1). Rather than adhering to a rigid framework, TBLT is a dynamic and multifaceted approach that encompasses diverse instructional strategies (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Recognized as one of the most effective methodologies for foreign language instruction, TBLT emphasizes

practical language use as a means of enhancing communicative competence (Willis & Willis, 2007). A fundamental objective of TBLT is to promote communication-driven language learning. Within this framework, TBLT is categorized into two distinct versions: weak and strong. The weak form, also known as task-supported language teaching, employs tasks as a means of activating learners' existing linguistic knowledge, facilitating fluency development rather than language restructuring (Ellis, 2003). In contrast, the strong version of TBLT positions tasks as the central component of syllabus design, wherein instructional sequences are structured around task completion rather than prescriptive focus on linguistic accuracy (Butler, 2011; Ellis, 2003).

This study investigates a university-level course designed within the strong TBLT framework. The course emphasizes task completion as a means of engaging with new knowledge, maintaining a focus on meaning, and incorporating authentic materials. Given that university students in Japan have typically acquired foundational grammatical knowledge through secondary education, this approach provides an opportunity for them to apply their existing linguistic resources in communicative contexts. The TBLT syllabus is meticulously designed to incorporate a variety of tasks that align with the educational objectives of university-level English instruction. By actively engaging students in meaningful language use, this approach fosters both linguistic development and communicative competence, positioning TBLT as a pedagogically sound framework for English education at the university level in Japan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Japan

The body of literature on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) within the Japanese context has been expanding; however, a disproportionate focus remains on theoretical discussions rather than empirical investigations of classroom-based implementations. Previous studies have highlighted several contextual constraints that challenge the adoption of TBLT in Japan, including teacher-centered pedagogical traditions, a rigid examination system, anxiety about making mistakes, and highly structured curricula (Burrows, 2008; Miyasako, 2012; Sato, 2010; Wicking, 2009, as cited in Harris & Leeming, 2020). Nonetheless, some researchers have countered these claims, arguing that TBLT can be an effective instructional approach when adapted to local educational contexts. For example, Harris (2016) investigated teachers' perceptions of TBLT and found that while challenges exist, educators recognized the potential benefits of TBLT in fostering students' communicative competence, provided that contextual constraints are addressed through appropriate pedagogical adjustments (Butler, 2011; Harris, 2016; 2018).

Several empirical studies have examined the impact of TBLT on students' language learning outcomes. Research has consistently reported positive effects of TBLT, including improvements in speaking proficiency (Harris & Leeming, 2020, 2021; Nemat Tabrizi, 2011; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Hung, 2016; Saricoban & Karakurt, 2016; Ulla, 2020), vocabulary acquisition (Newton, 2001), grammatical accuracy (NamazianDost, Bohloulzadeh, & Pazhakh, 2017), writing skills (Ahmed & Bidin, 2016), learning engagement (Aubrey, King, & Almukhaild, 2020), student autonomy and motivation (Willis & Willis, 2011), and

self-efficacy (Harris & Leeming, 2021). Another study by Sariğoban and Karakurt (2016) found that incorporating various task-based activities in EFL classrooms significantly improved students' listening and speaking skills, suggesting that TBLT is an effective approach to language instruction. Similarly, Harris and Leeming (2021) compared TBLT with the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) approach to examine second language (L2) proficiency development. While immediate gains in language proficiency were observed in both groups, the TBLT group demonstrated significantly greater long-term retention of language skills. Their study indicated that TBLT students exhibited steady growth from April to September (semester start to end) and from September to January (subsequent semester), whereas the PPP group showed significant progress only in the latter half of the academic year. This finding aligns with Pietri (2015), who reported that TBLT facilitates long-term retention of language skills while also enhancing students' motivation and creativity in completing language tasks. In a related study, Munirah and Muhsin (2015) found that TBLT not only improved students' speaking accuracy but also increased their motivation and self-confidence in using English.

While previous research highlights the effectiveness of TBLT, motivation is also a crucial factor influencing language learning outcomes. Ulla (2020) proposed that the effectiveness of TBLT is often influenced by students' levels of motivation. The study suggested that higher motivation and self-confidence naturally emerge from successful task-based learning experiences, ultimately leading to enhanced language achievement. Moreover, student engagement has been identified as a key factor in determining the success of TBLT implementation. Aubrey, King, and Almukhaild (2020) found that TBLT was most effective when students were actively engaged in tasks. Their study revealed that four out of ten tasks led to significantly higher levels of engagement, characterized by increased enjoyment and reduced anxiety. However, disengagement in certain tasks was attributed to discrepancies between students' English proficiency levels and task demands, which in turn affected their motivation. These findings suggest that careful task design, taking into account students' linguistic abilities, interests, and familiarity with the content, is essential for fostering engagement and positive learning experiences in TBLT classrooms.

Existing research has demonstrated that TBLT is an effective pedagogical approach for improving students' linguistic competence. However, factors such as motivation and engagement also play important roles in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes. Given the close interrelation of these variables, further research is warranted to examine how TBLT influences language development by fostering learner motivation and engagement, particularly within Japanese contexts.

2.2 Motivation

Motivation is a significant contributing factor in the development of language skills, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Students' affective factors influence their learning experiences and outcomes. In Japan, motivation has been a focal point in English education research (Cutrone & Beh, 2014; Harris, 2018; McVeigh, 2001; Sugimoto, 1997), as it is considered a key determinant of language learning success (Harris,

2018). Cutrone and Beh (2014) identified low levels of motivation as a primary factor contributing to insufficient language development among Japanese learners. Despite the importance of motivation, many non-English major university students in Japan exhibit low motivation to learn English, which often results in minimal classroom participation and engagement. Even when effective learning approaches are introduced, these students may fail to fully benefit from them due to their lack of motivation (Moritoshi, 2009). Given this context, when implementing a new pedagogical approach, it is imperative to examine not only its effectiveness but also its influence on students' motivation.

Several studies have investigated the role of motivation in TBLT classrooms. Pietri (2015) explored the motivation of Thai university students engaged in task-based English learning and found that TBLT encouraged students to develop and retain language skills through creative use rather than merely answering textbook-based questions. The study also highlighted that the interactive nature of task completion fostered greater motivation and willingness to learn. Similarly, NamazianDost, Bohloulzadeh, and Pazhakh (2017) conducted a study within the Iranian EFL context, comparing students' motivation in TBLT and non-TBLT groups. While no significant difference was observed in motivation levels before the intervention, the post-test results showed a notable increase among students exposed to TBLT-based instruction.

In the Japanese context, research has also demonstrated a positive relationship between TBLT and student motivation. Cutrone and Beh (2014) investigated Japanese university students' motivation in TBLT classrooms and found that students reported increased motivation because task-based learning was perceived as both engaging and practical. The study indicated that students found TBLT beneficial due to its relevance to real-life communication, leading to greater enjoyment and motivation in using English. Although previous literature underscores the potential of TBLT to enhance motivation, studies examining how motivation changes following experience of TBLT remain limited. Given the significance of the affective factors in English education in Japan, particularly for non-English major university students, further research is warranted. Therefore, this study aims to explore how students respond to TBLT instruction by investigating their motivation in Japan. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent does the TBLT approach influence students' motivation in learning English in university classes?
- 2) How do students perceive the implementation of the TBLT approach in terms of motivation in university English classes?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study include 93 first-year university students majoring in administrative management, who were enrolled in a compulsory English course at a prefectural university in Japan. All participants had completed a minimum of six years of English education in secondary education. Their overall interest in learning English was

moderate, as indicated by self-reported preference ratings: 57% expressed a general liking for English, while 38% reported enjoying studying English. The students' English proficiency levels ranged between A2 and B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The participants were divided into four separate sections, all of which followed the same course content and were instructed by the same lecturer over two consecutive semesters. The course was conducted over a period of 15 weeks, with each session lasting 90 minutes, and was specifically designed to develop students' English-speaking skills.

3.2 Procedure

The course was structured around the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach, incorporating a series of tasks designed to promote active language use. These tasks were intended to enhance both linguistic and communicative competencies by engaging students in authentic and interactive tasks. Some of the example tasks included the following:

- Buying and selling products
- Campus tour video
- Describing daily routines
- Group discussions on reasons for learning English
- Reenacting and recreating scenes from movies
- Conducting peer interviews about future careers
- Organizing workshops to support foreign residents in Japan
- Engaging in conversations with ChatGPT
- Participating in a digital detox activity

All tasks were conducted in pairs or groups to foster collaborative learning and maximize student interaction. Given the emphasis on communicative practice, students were required to record their conversations while completing tasks and submit these recordings for assessment.

Sample Task: Campus Tour Video

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- **Task Objective:** Enable students to describe campus locations in English.
 - **Collaborative Work:** Students worked in groups of three to four.
 - **Linguistic Goals:** Practice diverse English expressions for introducing places, giving directions, and developing presentation skills.
 - **Content Goals:** Become familiar with campus facilities and provide detailed descriptions of selected locations. Additionally, share aspects of one's own college life to enhance engagement with university life.
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Lesson Procedure:

- 1) Route Planning: Students select a campus tour route using a campus map.
 - 2) Model Exploration: Students analyze other campus tour videos from YouTube for reference.
 - 3) Language Acquisition: Students take notes on useful vocabulary, phrases, and expressions from the videos.
 - 4) Script Development: Using their notes, students draft scripts for their tour presentations.
 - 5) Peer Evaluation: Groups conducted internal script reviews before exchanging them with another group for feedback.
 - 6) Revisions and Rehearsals: Students refine their scripts based on feedback and rehearsed for their final recordings.
 - 7) Video Production: Students record their campus tour videos.
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3.3 Research Instrument

A qualitative research design was employed to gain a deeper understanding of students' emotional responses to TBLT and to contextualize the various factors affecting their learning experiences. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire that incorporated both closed-ended and open-ended items. Specifically, the questionnaire consisted of six closed-ended questions and one open-ended reflection. To enhance the validity and reliability of the instrument, multiple rounds of refinement were conducted, and the questions were cross-checked for alignment with the study's research objectives. The questionnaire was administered in Japanese to ensure clarity and comprehension among participants and to minimize potential misinterpretations. Anonymity was maintained throughout the data collection process. Students completed the questionnaire during the final class session of the course. Prior to participation, all students were informed that their involvement was voluntary, and each provided written informed consent.

3.4 Data Analysis

The study first presents descriptive findings from the closed-ended questions, followed by thematic analysis of the reflective qualitative responses (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Applied thematic analysis enables an in-depth exploration of "how people feel, think, and behave within a particular context relative to a specific research question" (Guest et al., 2012, p. 13). To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, a codebook was developed and refined through consultations with colleagues familiar with the research setting. The data were consolidated into a file, and the qualitative responses were read multiple times to identify initial codes, which were subsequently grouped into broader themes. As the responses were written in Japanese, the researcher translated the responses into English, cross-checked the translations using multiple online translation tools and further validated them with two native Japanese speakers and one native English speaker to ensure accuracy and clarity. To ensure the credibility of the findings, multiple cross-checks were conducted with colleagues who are in the same context. Recognizing the ongoing debate in qualitative research about generalizability,

this study emphasizes transferability (Glesne, 2016), encouraging readers to determine the extent to which the findings are applicable to their own contexts. As Heigham and Croker (2009) suggest, qualitative researchers often “leave it up to the readers to decide to what degree the features of the research setting are relevant to their own context” (p. 9). This study does not seek to establish definitive conclusions or objective truths but rather offers insights that readers may adapt to their specific situations.

4. Results

4.1 Motivation and Engagement in TBLT

The quantitative analysis of motivation, as measured by closed-ended survey items, revealed an overall positive impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on students’ motivation, with an average agreement rate of 88% across all items (See Table 1 below). The highest percentage of agreement (95%) was observed in students reporting that they put significant effort into completing tasks, followed by 91% who indicated active, voluntary engagement. Furthermore, 90% of students reported increased interest in studying English, while 86% expressed heightened motivation due to the TBLT approach. Notably, despite being non-English majors, 75% of participants expressed a willingness to enroll in additional English courses, even if not required by their university curriculum.

Table 1. Student Responses to Task-Based English Class: Motivation and Engagement Indicators

Survey Items	Affirmative Responses (%)
I honestly worked hard on the tasks in this class.	95%
I actively work on the tasks voluntarily.	91%
My interest in studying English has increased compared to before.	90%
While working on the tasks in this class, I experienced realizations, discoveries, or emotional moments.	89%
I was highly motivated for this class.	86%
I would like to take English classes in the future (even if they are not required).	75%
Average	88%

These findings suggest that TBLT fosters a highly motivating learning environment by engaging students in meaningful tasks that require active language use and oral English performance. The positive motivational outcomes observed in this study are consistent with prior research highlighting the advantages of TBLT (Cutrone & Beh, 2014; NamazianDost, Bohloulzadeh, & Pazhakh, 2017; Pietri, 2015). Putri (2023) also posits that TBLT facilitates language acquisition by requiring students to use English as a communicative tool in meaningful contexts. This study provides further empirical support for this claim, as participants frequently reported in the survey experiencing moments of realization, discovery, or inspiration (89%) during task completion, reinforcing the potential of TBLT to create

meaningful learning experiences.

4.2 Qualitative Insights on Motivation

The open-ended responses further illustrate the motivational impact of TBLT, with many participants attributing their increased motivation to active communication opportunities. Responses indicate that students found TBLT engaging because it required them to use English to communicate with peers, thereby overcoming the challenge of speaking:

“I wanted to learn how to communicate in English, so this class was an opportunity for me to overcome my weakness in speaking.” (Excerpt #78)

“I experienced both the fun and challenges of communicating in English, which made me want to speak more fluently.” (Excerpt #82)

These responses resonate with Ellis’ (2009) assertion that one of TBLT’s core principles is providing learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful communication, which results in greater willingness to speak. Additionally, some participants contrasted their experiences in TBLT courses with traditional, grammar-oriented instruction, highlighting a preference for the interactive nature of TBLT:

“Before, my English classes were only for learning grammar and reading comprehension, but we used English a lot for talking and doing tasks, which was more interesting and increased my motivation.” (Excerpt #119)

“Unlike my past English classes, this course emphasized speaking and interaction, which was refreshing and new to me.” (Excerpt #127)

While Wicking (2009) stated that Japanese students might favor teacher-led instruction because of their fear of making mistakes and preference for passive learning, these responses indicate that today’s students are becoming more receptive to interactive learning methods as shown by many excerpts expressing a preference for doing tasks while interacting with others.

4.2.1 Shifting Attitudes towards English Learning

Another notable finding is the role of TBLT in transforming students’ attitudes toward English learning. Many participants expressed that, prior to experiencing TBLT, they viewed English learning as rigid and grammar-focused, but they developed a more positive perception through task-based activities:

“I used to think English was all about memorizing grammar and vocabulary, but I realized that it is meaningless if you do not use it. This motivated me to learn English more practically.” (Excerpt #37)

“Before, I had a negative impression of studying English, but now I see it as more flexible and enjoyable as I am using it more.” (Excerpt #52)

These insights resonate with critiques of traditional English education in Japan, which has often been characterized as overly prescriptive and test-focused (Harris, 2018). The current

findings suggest that TBLT can counteract such perceptions by fostering active engagement and promoting English as a practical communication tool.

4.2.2 The Role of Task Content in Motivation

The results further highlight that the appropriateness of task content plays a significant role in student motivation. Many participants emphasized the importance of tasks being interesting, relevant, and appropriately challenging:

“I was motivated because the content was engaging and meaningful for us so I had my thoughts to talk about a lot.” (Excerpt #18)

“The tasks’ topics were related to real-life situations. Tasks were interesting in every class. What we did in class, I rethought and actually used in my daily life.” (Excerpt #26)

These findings align with what Nicholson and Center (2014) suggest that task relevance and familiarity significantly impact motivation and task engagement. Moreover, some participants reported that they applied English from class in real-life settings, further reinforcing the utility of TBLT:

“I sometimes used the English I learned in class at my part-time job. Tasks and what we did in English were applicable, so I became more willing to continue learning English.” (Excerpt #44)

4.2.3 Long-Term Implications for Motivation and English Learning

Beyond immediate classroom engagement, several participants indicated that TBLT influenced their long-term interest in English. Responses suggest that TBLT not only increased motivation during the course but also encouraged students to integrate English into their daily lives:

“After this course, now I want to try writing my diary in English and changed my smartphone keyboard to English.” (Excerpt #97)

“Learning English helped me broaden my perspectives on other cultures, and now I want to use English more in my daily life.” (Excerpt #105)

“I realized English is actually used a lot every day in my life. I was not aware of it but now I know.” (Excerpt #117)

This reveals that TBLT has the potential to foster sustained motivation and encourage students to seek further English learning and usage opportunities beyond the classroom.

5. Discussion

This study examined the motivational effects of TBLT on non-English major university students in Japan, addressing a notable gap in the literature concerning the implementation of TBLT in EFL contexts characterized by traditionally low learner motivation. The findings affirm the pedagogical value of TBLT in enhancing student motivation, promoting active

engagement, and reshaping learner attitudes toward English learning.

The major positive responses to the closed-ended survey items suggest that TBLT can effectively generate high levels of motivation, even among learners who typically exhibit limited interest in English. Students reported working hard on tasks, voluntarily engaging with content, and experiencing increased interest in English learning. These outcomes align with previous studies (e.g., Pietri, 2015; Cutrone & Beh, 2014; NamazianDost et al., 2017) that have shown motivation as a key benefit of TBLT and reinforce the notion that task-based instruction provides a more engaging alternative to traditional, grammar-focused pedagogy. Furthermore, the qualitative reflections from students offered deeper insights into the sources of their increased motivation. Participants frequently highlighted the opportunity to speak and use English for real communicative purposes as a motivating factor. These findings resonate with Ellis's (2009) emphasis on meaningful language use as central to TBLT and suggest that communicative engagement helps learners overcome speaking anxiety, a common barrier in Japanese EFL contexts. This also supports Ulla's (2020) assertion that successful task engagement leads to higher motivation and confidence.

This study also illustrates a significant shift in students' attitudes toward English learning. Prior to the course, many students viewed English as rigid and test-oriented, but TBLT helped reframe their understanding of English as a practical and accessible communication tool. This attitudinal shift is particularly meaningful in the Japanese context, where English education has historically emphasized passive learning and rote memorization (McVeigh, 2001; Harris, 2018). Students' reflections indicate that TBLT challenged these perceptions by demonstrating the utility and enjoyability of English in everyday interactions. Another critical finding involves the role of task content and design. Students expressed strong appreciation for tasks that were relevant to their lives, cognitively engaging, and connected to real-world contexts. This validates the arguments of Butler (2011) and Nicholson and Center (2014), who emphasized that task relevance and challenge are essential for sustaining motivation. The data also suggest that when tasks are perceived as meaningful, students are more likely to transfer their learning beyond the classroom, as seen in comments about using English at part-time jobs or in personal life.

Importantly, the results offer evidence that Japanese students are not inherently resistant to interactive methods such as TBLT, as previously assumed (e.g., Wicking, 2009; Luo & Xing, 2015). On the contrary, many participants embraced the shift from passive to active learning and expressed a desire to continue their English studies, even outside of curriculum requirements. This challenge entrenched stereotypes about learner preferences in Japan and support Sato and Takahashi's (2020) call for curriculum innovation grounded in communicative practices. In sum, this study reinforces the pedagogical value of TBLT in Japanese higher education by demonstrating its capacity to engage students, increase their willingness to communicate, and reshape attitudes toward English learning. These findings suggest that with thoughtful adaptation and task design, TBLT holds considerable promise for revitalizing English education in Japan and fostering more autonomous, motivated language learners.

6. Conclusion

This study provides strong empirical support for the motivational benefits of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the context of English learning among Japanese university students. The findings demonstrate that TBLT fosters active engagement, increases motivation, and shifts students' perceptions of English learning by promoting meaningful communication and real-life language use. Survey responses revealed that many students experienced reported increased motivation and a desire to continue studying English beyond course requirements. Qualitative data further showed that TBLT helped students alleviate communication anxiety, develop more positive attitudes toward English, and recognize the practical value of the language—especially in contrast to their prior experiences with grammar-focused, teacher-centered instruction. These findings suggest a growing preference among students for learner-centered and communicative approaches.

While this study offers valuable insights into the motivational benefits of TBLT in Japanese university EFL classrooms, several limitations should be noted. First, the research was conducted within a single institutional context and involved instruction by a single teacher, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The specific characteristics of the university, the student population, and the instructor's teaching style may not reflect the diversity of higher education environments across Japan. Additionally, the study is subject to the constraint of instructor singularity, as the same instructor was responsible for designing, delivering, and assessing the course. This unified instructional perspective may have influenced the outcomes, raising questions about the replicability of results in classrooms led by educators with different pedagogical backgrounds or varying levels of familiarity with TBLT. To address these limitations, future research should involve multiple institutions and instructors to determine whether similar motivational effects can be consistently observed across diverse educational settings. Furthermore, employing a broader range of data collection methods—such as classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and standardized performance assessments—over an extended period would enhance the depth and validity of findings. Longitudinal and mixed-methods research designs would be particularly valuable in capturing the development of learner motivation and communicative competence over time. Overall, this study highlights the promise of TBLT as an effective pedagogical framework while underscoring the need for further empirical exploration to support its broader implementation in diverse EFL contexts.

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