

# Investigating Self-Confidence through the Implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching in the Context of Higher Education

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## Abstract

This study investigates the influence of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on Japanese university students' self-confidence in using English, an affective factor essential for communicative competence yet underrepresented in English as Foreign Language (EFL) research (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Despite TBLT's proven effectiveness in improving speaking proficiency, vocabulary acquisition, and learner engagement (Harris & Leeming, 2021; Newton, 2001; Aubrey, King, & Almukhaild, 2020), limited empirical research has examined its role in confidence development within Japanese tertiary contexts. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collected data from 93 first-year university students through closed- and open-ended questionnaires. Results indicated increased classroom-based confidence due to repeated speaking opportunities, interactive tasks, and reduced anxiety (Tridinanti, 2018; Willis & Willis, 2007). However, confidence remained low in real-world communication, particularly in initiating spontaneous conversations with foreigners (Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Ulla, 2020). Qualitative findings highlighted a perceptual shift from English as an academic subject to a communicative tool. The study underscores the need for designing TBLT tasks that simulate authentic, high-stakes interactions to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life language use (Richards, 2001; Pietri, 2015). Pedagogical implications and recommendations for contextually grounded TBLT practices in EFL settings are discussed.

**Keywords:** Task-based language teaching (TBLT), learner self-confidence, classroom implementation, EFL classroom, Japanese university

## 1. Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained widespread recognition as a core pedagogical approach in language education worldwide, including across various Asian contexts, supported by both second language acquisition (SLA) theorists and English language teaching (ELT) practitioners. While TBLT has been successfully implemented in numerous Asian educational settings (Adams & Newton, 2009), its adoption in Japan has been hindered by conceptual ambiguities, classroom-level limitations, and broader societal and institutional challenges (Butler, 2011). These factors have contributed to its limited integration within Japanese English language classrooms, despite robust empirical evidence attesting to its efficacy in promoting communicative language competence (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Harris & Leeming, 2021; Hung, 2016; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Nemat Tabrizi, 2011; Sarıçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Ulla, 2020). Nevertheless, with thoughtful adaptation to local educational contexts, TBLT remains a promising and pedagogically sound approach, particularly for foreign language (FL) instruction that prioritizes communicative outcomes.

In the context of Japanese university education, TBLT is particularly well-suited due to the comparatively greater curricular and pedagogical flexibility available at the tertiary level, in contrast to secondary education. Such flexibility facilitates the implementation of contextually appropriate TBLT practices and enhances the potential for meaningful language acquisition. However, empirical investigations into the application of TBLT and its associated factors in the Japanese university context remain scarce. Abe (2023) underscores the importance of deepening our understanding of TBLT principles and their influence on student engagement—specifically with regard to learner motivation and self-confidence in English language use. Despite the growing body of research on TBLT, studies examining its impact on student affective factor such as self-confidence—particularly among non-English majors in Japan—remain limited. In response to this gap, the present study examines Japanese university students' experiences in TBLT-based English courses, with particular emphasis on the affective domains of self-confidence. In response to this research gap, the present study investigates the experiences of university students enrolled in English courses grounded in the principles of TBLT. The study places particular emphasis on examining how TBLT-based instruction influences learners' self-confidence as they engage in a range of communicative tasks. The overarching aim is to gain a deeper understanding of how classroom-based TBLT practices support the development of students' confidence in using English—both within structured, task-oriented activities and in broader, real-world communicative contexts.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

The advent of the communicative approach in the 1970s signaled a significant transformation in language pedagogy, shifting focus toward authentic, meaningful interaction as a central component of language learning. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes learner engagement through purposeful language use and comprehensible input, aligning with the principle of “learning by doing” (Brown, 2001; Brandl, 2008). Within this paradigm, language is acquired through participation in interactive and communicative tasks.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), emerging as a methodological extension of CLT, builds on these principles by centering instruction around functional, real-world tasks. It is defined as an approach in which learners engage in goal-oriented activities that prioritize meaning over form and mirror real-life communicative purposes (Van den Branden, 2006; Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). TBLT is not a rigid methodology but rather a flexible, multifaceted framework that accommodates diverse instructional designs and contexts (Leaver & Willis, 2004). Widely regarded as one of the most effective methods for promoting communicative competence in foreign language education, TBLT emphasizes authentic language use and meaningful interaction.

TBLT is typically categorized into two variants: a weak version and a strong version. The weak version—task-supported teaching—uses communicative tasks to activate learners' pre-existing knowledge, thereby focusing on fluency development rather than linguistic restructuring (Ellis, 2003). In contrast, the strong version treats tasks as the core unit of syllabus design, whereby instruction is organized around task completion instead of predetermined language structures (Ellis, 2003; Butler, 2011).

This study examines a university-level English course designed according to the strong version of TBLT. The course is structured around the completion of communicative tasks, employing authentic materials and emphasizing the use of language for meaning-making rather than form-focused instruction. Given that Japanese university students generally possess a foundational understanding of English grammar from secondary education, the course aims to provide opportunities for the application of this knowledge in communicative contexts. The syllabus is carefully constructed to include a variety of task types aligned with university-level learning objectives. By fostering active student engagement in meaningful language use, this TBLT-informed approach supports both communicative competence and broader linguistic development, reinforcing its pedagogical value in Japanese higher education.

## *2.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Japan*

The literature on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the Japanese context has grown steadily in recent years, yet much of it remains conceptual, with relatively limited empirical focus on classroom implementation. A number of studies have identified systemic barriers to adopting TBLT in Japan, including traditional teacher-centered practices, the constraints of high-stakes examination systems, student anxiety about making errors, and rigid curriculum structures (Burrows, 2008; Miyasako, 2012; Sato, 2019, 2010; Wicking, 2009, as cited in Harris & Leeming, 2020). Despite these challenges, other researchers argue that TBLT remains a viable instructional method if it is thoughtfully adapted to local conditions. For example, Harris (2016) found that although Japanese educators encountered difficulties in implementing TBLT, many acknowledged its potential to enhance students' communicative competence, particularly when contextual factors were addressed through pedagogical adjustments (Butler, 2011; Harris, 2016, 2018).

A growing body of empirical research supports the effectiveness of TBLT in improving various language learning outcomes. These include gains in speaking proficiency (Harris & Leeming, 2020; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Nemat Tabrizi, 2011; NamazianDost, Bohloulzadeh, &

Pazhakh, 2017; Sariçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Tangchaiphithak, 2025), vocabulary acquisition (Newton, 2001, as cited in Harris, 2018), grammatical accuracy (NamazianDost et al., 2017), and writing ability (Abdi Tabari, & Goetze, 2024; Ahmed & Bidin, 2016; Tabari, Khezrlou, & Tian, 2024). In addition, some research investigates the practitioners and teachers who implement TBLT from the facilitators' perceptions (e.g., Harris, 2016; Willis, 2024). Positive effects have also been reported in learner engagement (Aubrey, King, & Almkhaild, 2020), autonomy (Willis & Willis, 2011), and self-efficacy (Harris & Leeming, 2021). For instance, Sariçoban and Karakurt (2016) demonstrated that varied task-based activities significantly enhanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' listening and speaking abilities. In a longitudinal study, Harris and Leeming (2021) found that although both TBLT and the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) method produced short-term gains, TBLT was more effective for long-term retention. Learners in the TBLT group exhibited consistent growth across two semesters, in contrast to the PPP group, which showed improvements only in the latter half of the academic year. Recently, research on TBLT has increasingly incorporated technology-mediated approaches, reflecting the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in both language use and education more broadly (e.g., Kim & Namkung, 2024; Le & Ziegler, 2025; Rosyidah & Faladiba, 2025).

A substantial body of previous literature has demonstrated the significant potential of TBLT in enhancing language acquisition. Beyond linguistic outcomes, TBLT also exerts a notable influence on learners' affective experiences. Ulla (2020) revealed that engagement in meaningful tasks can lead to increased self-confidence, which in turn promotes greater motivation to use the target language in communicative contexts. These findings are supported by Pietri (2015), who reported that TBLT facilitates sustained language development while simultaneously enhancing learners' motivation and creativity. Similarly, a study by Aubrey, King, and Almkhaild (2020) examined the impact of task engagement on affective factors. Their research indicated that student engagement varied considerably depending on task design. Specifically, four out of ten observed tasks elicited higher levels of enjoyment, engagement, and reduced anxiety. In contrast, tasks that did not align with learners' proficiency levels often resulted in disengagement, decreased motivation, and lower self-confidence. These findings underscore the critical role of affective factors in the success of TBLT. While there is a substantial body of research focused on language proficiency outcomes, studies exploring affective dimensions remain relatively limited. Indeed, while investigations into language development have shown and established the benefits of TBLT, affective elements—particularly in context-specific settings where emotional factors significantly impact foreign language learning—required further scholarly attention.

### *2.3. Confidence*

Confidence is widely acknowledged as a critical factor in second language development, yet it remains underrepresented and often overlooked in both theoretical and practical discussions within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. According to Edward (2012), affective factors significantly influence students' learning experiences and outcomes. Notably, research has consistently demonstrated a strong correlation between anxiety and low self-confidence, underscoring the critical role confidence plays in second language acquisition (Cadiz-Gabejan,

2021). Despite such recognition, the exploration of how educators can actively encourage learners to build confidence in using the target language remains insufficiently addressed in the literature. There remains limited concrete understanding of how to effectively foster learner confidence in ways that positively influence language learning outcomes.

The challenge of cultivating learners' confidence in learning English is especially pronounced in the Japanese educational context. Edward (2012) argued that societal perceptions in Japan often lead learners to internalize a fixed mindset that they are inherently weak in English, which negatively influences both test performance and classroom participation. Furthermore, cultural tendencies in Japan may contribute to learners' reluctance to demonstrate their English abilities, as many students prefer to maintain group harmony by avoiding behaviors that might draw attention to themselves, including speaking out to improve language proficiency (Bjornsen, Scepanisky, & Suzuki, 2007).

A handful previous studies have identified various factors causes the low and/or high confidence among foreign language learners while proposing the necessity of building confidence to promote successful language learning (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). Burden (2004), for instance, found the importance of cooperative rather than competitive learning environments in enhancing learners' self-confidence. Another study by Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre (2003) articulated that both classroom atmosphere and extracurricular language exposure are significant contributors for the development of confidence. Ewald (2007) further highlighted the instructor's role, noting that learners—even in advanced-level classes—often exhibited low confidence depending on the encouragement offered by their instructors.

Instructional strategies have also been shown to affect learners' confidence. Cadiz-Gabejan (2021) claimed that integrating interactive speaking tasks and fostering peer collaboration contributed significantly to enhancing learners' self-confidence. Burden's (2004) research corroborates these findings, revealing that peer interaction plays a key role in building confidence. However, in many Japanese educational settings, the traditional language teaching method has been mainly employed, such as a persistent lack of speaking opportunities. Kubo (2009) and Schneider (2001) clearly claimed that many Japanese university students, despite years of English instruction, remain hesitant to speak due to minimal exposure to authentic communicative practice in the past language education, which connects to hinder confidence development.

Given the factors associated with building confidence—such as collaboration, classroom atmosphere, and extracurricular language exposure, instructional strategies —TBLT offers considerable promise. TBLT, integrates these elements at the core of the learning process by emphasizing meaningful communication and learner interaction through task completion. It offers frequent and low-stakes opportunities for learners to use English in collaborative settings, potentially enhancing self-confidence. Moreover, the focus on real-world tasks within TBLT cultivates a supportive environment where learners are encouraged to take risks, engage actively from many practices. In this pedagogical framework, confidence is not merely an outcome of improved language competence but also a catalyst for sustained engagement and

language use.

Taken together, although TBLT holds considerable potential to enhance learner confidence, empirical research explicitly examining this affective outcome remains limited. Rosyidah and Faladiba (2025) investigated confidence and motivation in a technology-mediated TBLT environment; however, their primary focus was on technological integration, leaving traditional, face-to-face TBLT contexts underexplored.

Considering the pivotal role of self-confidence in promoting communicative engagement and effective language use (Gürler, 2015), as well as its associations with collaboration (Burden, 2004), classroom atmosphere and extracurricular language exposure (Clément et al., 2003), and instructional strategies (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021), further empirical inquiry is warranted to better understand how TBLT can support the development of learner confidence, particularly in foreign language classrooms. This study aims to explore how students' self-confidence is influenced by instruction grounded in the TBLT approach. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What aspects of TBLT-based instruction influence changes in students' self-confidence in learning English in university classes?
2. How do students perceive the implementation of the TBLT approach in university English classes?

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1 Participants*

This study involved 93 first-year university students majoring in Administrative Management at a prefectural university in Japan, all of whom were enrolled in a mandatory English course. Each participant had received at least six years of English instruction during their secondary education. Self-reported data indicated a moderate level of interest in English, with 67% expressing, "Like English" and 58% indicating that they enjoyed studying it. The students' English proficiency levels were estimated to fall between A2 and B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the average score of approximately 400 for TOEIC. The 93 participants were distributed across four sessions (each class has 23-24), all of which shared identical course content and were taught by the same instructor over two consecutive semesters. The course spanned 15 weeks, with weekly 90-minute sessions, and was specifically structured to enhance students' English-speaking abilities.

#### *3.2 Procedure*

The course was designed following the core principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), incorporating various tasks aimed at encouraging active and meaningful use of English. These tasks were specifically developed to strengthen both students' language skills and communicative self-confidence through engaging, real-world activities. Key classroom tasks included:

- Producing campus tour videos



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- Workshops to assist foreign residents in Japan
  - Group presentation: Why the world learns English?
  - Reenacting and creatively adapting scenes from movies
  - Conducting peer interviews on future career aspirations
  - Daily routines/ideal routines vlog
  - Engaging in conversations with ChatGPT
  - Taking part in a digital detox task
  - Buying and selling products (Business/negotiation)

To support collaborative learning, all activities were carried out in pairs or small groups, ensuring frequent peer interaction. Students were also required to audio-record their task performances and submit the recordings for evaluation, reinforcing the communicative focus of the course.

Table 1. 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 in the university life.
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Lesson Procedure:

1. Route Planning: Students selected a campus tour route using a campus map.
  2. Model Exploration: Students analyzed other campus tour videos from YouTube for reference.
  3. Language Acquisition: Students took notes on useful vocabulary, phrases, and expressions from the videos.
  4. Script Development: Using their notes, students drafted 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 refined their scripts based on feedback and rehearsed for their final recordings.
  7. Video Production: Students recorded their campus tour videos.
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### *3.3 Research Instrument*

A quantitative and qualitative research design was adopted to explore students' affective responses in terms of self-confidence to TBLT and to examine the contextual factors shaping their learning experiences. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising both closed- and open-ended items. The instrument included 12 closed-ended items and one open-ended reflective prompt. The questionnaire underwent multiple rounds of revision, with each item reviewed for alignment with the study's research objectives. The final version was administered in Japanese to promote clarity and reduce the risk of misinterpretation among participants. To preserve anonymity, no identifying information was collected. Participants completed the questionnaire during the final class session. Prior to data collection, students were fully informed about the voluntary nature of participation, and written informed consent was obtained from all respondents.

### *3.4 Data Analysis*

The analysis began with a presentation of descriptive statistics, the frequency percentage from the closed-ended questionnaires, followed by a thematic analysis of the qualitative reflective responses (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Applied thematic analysis was employed to explore how participants felt, thought, and behaved within the learning context in relation to the study's research questions. This approach allows for a nuanced examination of student experiences grounded in contextual interpretation (Guest et al., 2012). To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, a codebook was developed and iteratively refined through consultation with colleagues familiar with the research context. All qualitative responses were compiled into a single document and read multiple times to identify initial codes, which were then organized into broader thematic categories. Given that the responses were originally written in Japanese, the data were translated into English by the researcher. To enhance translation accuracy, multiple online translation tools were used, and the translated data were reviewed by two native Japanese speakers and one native English speaker. Further cross-checks were conducted with colleagues working in similar educational settings to ensure interpretative consistency. While acknowledging ongoing debates surrounding generalizability in qualitative research, the study emphasizes transferability (Glesne, 2016), allowing readers to assess the relevance of findings to their own contexts. As noted by Heigham and Croker (2009), qualitative research encourages readers to determine how the specific features of the study setting may relate to their own. Accordingly, the study does not aim to offer universal conclusions, but rather to provide context-sensitive insights that can inform practice and future inquiry.

## **4. Results**

The analysis of the 12 close-ended yes/no questions revealed students' self-reported confidence in various aspects of English language learning. The highest levels of agreement were found in areas related to perceived vocabulary acquisition (94%) and the ability to recall and use English expressions when needed (92%). A large majority also reported improvements in their overall communication skills (85%) and speaking ability (84%). Furthermore, 80% of participants indicated a reduction in anxiety when using English. These responses suggest that the TBLT



approach contributed positively to language development and increased self-confidence in speaking competence. The communicative nature of TBLT appears to foster a learning environment in which students feel more comfortable using English, thereby enhancing

When asked about their confidence in the future use of English for academic or professional settings, students expressed more moderate levels of confidence. Fifty percent of the participants responded that they are confident in managing English-related tasks in university classes, and 47% responded “yes” for workplace contexts in the future. However, confidence levels dropped slightly when it came to spontaneous or unscripted communication with foreigners—42% of participants felt prepared to engage without hesitation in unplanned interactions with foreigners, and the percentage dropped noticeably for initiating conversations with foreigners (19%).

The lowest levels of confidence were observed in initiating proactive conversations with foreigners (15%), and only 12% responded that they could engage in effective English conversations with foreigners. These findings suggest that, although students recognize their progress in the classroom, they may still feel uncertain or hesitant to use English in authentic, real-world contexts beyond the classroom.

Table 2. Student Responses to Task-Based English Class: Self-confidence Indicator

No.	Question Items	Yes	Category 1	Category 2
1	My vocabulary and expressions that I can actually use have increased.	94%	Self-evaluation	Past
2	I will be able to use the English expressions learned in this class when needed in the future.	92%	Self-evaluation	Past
3	My English communication skills have improved.	85%	Self-evaluation	Past
4	My English-speaking skills have improved.	84%	Self-evaluation	Past
5	Compared to the past, I feel less anxious about using English.	80%	Self-evaluation	Past
6	I remember most of the English expressions used in the assignments.	67%	Self-evaluation	Past
7	If I have an English-related task at university or work, I can manage it on my own.	50%	Capability	Future
8	I will be able to speak English when needed at university or work in the future.	47%	Capability	Future
9	If I meet a foreigner, I will be able to speak English without hesitation.	42%	Capability	Future
10	If I meet a foreigner, I can imagine myself actively initiating a conversation.	19%	Capability	Future
11	If I meet a foreigner, I will be able to speak proactively.	15%	Capability	Future
12	If I meet a foreigner, I will be able to have a smooth conversation.	12%	Capability	Future

These outcomes underscore the need for incorporating more experiential, real-life communicative tasks into the curriculum to bridge the gap between classroom learning and practical language use. As prior research in the literature review section, has emphasized, task design plays a crucial role in supporting language development and achieving instructional goals. To further strengthen students' confidence and readiness for real-world communication, it is essential to integrate tasks that simulate authentic interactions and provide opportunities for students to engage with English speakers outside of the classroom.

Although students reported engaging in frequent communicative practice during class, many remained unsure of their ability to communicate comfortably with native speakers. This suggests that classroom-based TBLT alone may not fully shift learners' self-beliefs unless accompanied by direct experiences that validate their communicative competence. Opportunities to interact with foreigners and receive meaningful feedback are essential for helping students internalize their language gains and feel more assured in real-world communicative situations.

Overall, the findings reinforce the potential of TBLT to foster learner confidence and reduce language anxiety, particularly through its emphasis on interaction and meaningful communication. This aligns with the research conducted by Aubrey, King, and Almukhawkd (2020), which highlights how task engagement and enjoyment contribute to positive learner outcomes. The results suggest that TBLT can play a key role in developing both linguistic proficiency and the affective readiness needed for successful communication in English.

In addition, students were asked to reflect their experiences of TBLT lessons and provided deeper insights into how the TBLT approach influenced their self-confidence in using English. Overall, the data revealed that students increased self-confidence in speaking English, which they attributed to the principles underlying the TBLT instruction. For instance, participants explicitly responded that their confidence improved because of repeated opportunities for speaking and consistent interactions with peers and the instructor. These active interactions gradually helped them become more accustomed to using English, thereby reducing their sense of difficulty or apprehension. This process enabled students to recognize their capacity to engage in English beyond what they had previously believed.

One of the salient aspects that influence students' self-confidence underscores the role of the repetition and active interaction from employing TBLT, which provided students with consistent opportunities to engage in English both within and beyond the classroom.

*"We had many tasks and assignments to talk English in this class. As I talk with my friends and teacher, I gradually felt that my English skills are improving."*

*"When I had more opportunities to speak, I found that I could communicate more effectively than I thought."*

*"Having various assignments made me spend more time engaging with English, and I felt that my English skills improved to some extent."*

Through repeated practice in meaningful contexts, students were frequently exposed to English, which gradually led them to grow self-confidence while ample use as a communication tool.

As MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) have emphasized, a substantial amount of practice is fundamental to the development of speaking proficiency.

The repeated and ample practice helped reduce students' fear of making mistakes and fostered a more positive attitude toward language use. They came to understand that the primary goal was not to produce 'perfect' English, but to communicate effectively. Several students realized through TBLT classes that the use of simple and accessible English was sufficient for communication.

*"I initially felt that English could not be communicated without using correct grammar, but I realized that I could express myself using easy words. I tried not to think of grammar too much. Through this, I learned that as long as I try to speak, I could engage in conversations and understand each other."*

*"At first, I found it difficult to speak in English and was not very motivated, but as I working many tasks, I started to feel less difficulties and realized that I could actually do well and use English more than I thought. Also, it made me curious to explore better ways to say English and express my opinions in English, sparking my interest in finding more effective expressions. I tried my best to do this task"*

*"I was able to rediscover the enjoyment of using English. It was the joy of learning or the satisfaction of understanding."*

As shown above, students' focus shifted from speaking with grammatical accuracy to a willingness to communicate using simple language when comprehension was achieved. This shift contributed to a reduction in their anxiety about producing English. Moreover, this realization fostered greater engagement and a sense of ownership in their English communication as they completed various tasks.

Furthermore, the participants' reflective voices indicate the comparison of TBLT classes with their past English learning experiences.

*"Compared to the classes I had in elementary, junior high, and high school, I felt that I was able to develop my ability to use English much more now."*

*"Even though I am not good at English, I gained some confidence in my ability to use English through this class more than before when I was in high school."*

*"I tried to come up with many expressions that can be used in specific situations, so it was easy to apply them, and I was able to have conversations more effectively."*

Unlike students' previous English classes in secondary education, they paid less attention on English accuracy in TBLT classes, as it is more focused on completing tasks and meaningful interactions instead of linguistic accuracy.

What is more, students reframed their perspectives of English by doing various real-life focused tasks from the past considering it as one of the school subjects for studying not as a communication tool. They realized that English a tool for communication beyond the studying in the classroom.

*"Unlike the past English classes, this class made me improving English skills that I*

*can actually use in daily life, which I really appreciated.”*

*“Until now, the only opportunities to use English in class were short pair conversations, but through various tasks in this course, I was able to practice practical English in real situation to use.”*

*“In university, I’ve had more opportunities to talk about my real life situations, so I could interact with foreigners when foreigners came to my part-time job restaurant. I was excited and felt that I improved my English a little bit more than before.”*

*“Through this class, I was able to use various English expressions for communicating in real life situations. It made me want to go abroad, and I started to feel that I want to have conversations with people from other countries.”*

These excerpts highlight a transformation in students’ attitudes toward English learning, particularly an increase in their self-confidence in using the language in real life situations. In this process, their anxiety about making errors decreased, and they began to use English more naturally in real-life situations.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study reveal that TBLT-based instruction significantly contributed to the development of students’ self-confidence in using English, particularly in classroom settings. Quantitative results from the closed-ended survey showed high levels of agreement in areas such as vocabulary acquisition (94%), recall and application of expressions (92%), and overall communication skills (85%), indicating notable gains in language ability and reduced anxiety (80%) through TBLT. However, students reported lower confidence in using English in real-world or spontaneous interactions with foreigners, with only 12–19% expressing confidence in initiating or sustaining such conversations. These quantitative patterns were supported and enriched by qualitative responses, which highlighted repeated speaking opportunities, peer interaction, and task variety as key contributors to increased confidence. Students reflected that their fear of making mistakes diminished, their focus shifted from grammatical accuracy to communicative intent, and they began to see English as a practical communication tool rather than a subject for memorization. While classroom confidence improved, students also expressed a desire for more authentic, real-life communicative experiences to transfer their skills beyond the classroom. Together, the findings suggest that while TBLT fosters significant affective and linguistic growth, bridging the gap to real-world application requires continued task-based engagement and external exposure.

## **5. Discussion**

The salient outcome demonstrates that the TBLT approach effectively enhances students’ self-confidence through notable improvements in speaking proficiency, recall, and the use of vocabulary and various expressions. These findings align with a body of previous research supporting the benefits of TBLT implementation (e.g., Harris & Leeming, 2021; Sariçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Nemat Tabrizi, 2011; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015) and including its positive effects on vocabulary acquisition (Newton, 2001). As Tridinanti (2018) indicates that self-confidence and speaking ability have a significant relationship (Cutrone & Beh, 2014), these insights significantly contribute to students’ increased confidence, particularly in speaking.

One of the primary reasons participants reported for their increased confidence was the repeated opportunities for speaking. Numerous studies have highlighted that greater communicative confidence leads to more frequent speaking opportunities, which in turn enhance overall communication abilities (Chou, 2018, 2021; Tridinanti, 2018; Yanagi & Baker, 2016). As demonstrated, frequent engagement in spoken English tasks through the TBLT framework leads students to develop more confidence in speaking English. This outcome is consistent with findings from previous research indicating that task-based and student-centered learning environments foster fluency, motivation, and confidence in English speaking (Masrom, Alwi, & Daud, 2015; Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Sarıçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Ulla & Winitkun, 2017).

Moreover, students reported a shift in their perception of English—from a purely learning English as one of the subjects focused on linguistic accuracy to a practical tool for real-life communication. This change allows to reduced anxiety, encouraged to be more proactive, and enhanced their confidence in expressing themselves despite linguistic imperfections. These findings align with the study by Aubrey, King, and Almukhaild (2020), which concluded that TBLT fosters learner engagement and reduces anxiety through interactive and collaborative learning. Similarly, Willis and Willis (2007) argued that TBLT enables learners to use language more freely, without fear of penalties for grammatical or pronunciation errors. According to Hashimoto (2002), anxiety has a clearly detrimental effect on self-confidence. Many students recounted negative experiences with prior English instruction in secondary school, where a prescriptive, accuracy-focused approach may have inhibited their willingness to communicate. In contrast, this study indicates that TBLT served as a mechanism to reduce this anxiety, to illustrate collaborative learning, meaning focus and less form focused. This supports the assertion that an excessive emphasis on linguistic accuracy can undermine learners' confidence. Learning within a comfortable and supportive classroom environment fosters more spontaneous and confident communication (Anderson, 2019). Thus, TBLT may represent an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing communication and reducing anxiety in Japanese higher education.

However, the study also reveals limitations in the extent of students' confidence even within experiencing TBLT. While they demonstrated moderate confidence in academic and professional contexts, their confidence in spontaneous, real-life interactions—such as initiating conversations with foreigners—remained relatively low. This was also shown in the Ulla's (2020) study that students' confidence outside the classroom did not match the confidence displayed during classroom tasks. Despite assertion that TBLT promotes broader and more natural language use (Jeon & Hahn, 2006), students may require more time and access to authentic communicative experiences and situations in real-world contexts to build sustained and transferable confidence (Ellis, 2009; Ellis, 2013).

One possible explanation for this discrepancy in confidence is the lack of tasks specifically designed to simulate interactions with foreign people, as opposed to familiar classroom settings with Japanese classmates. Although students engaged in a variety of meaningful classroom-based tasks, they are still worried for the actual communication with foreigners. As Richards (2001) emphasized, integrating authentic, real-world communication tasks is essential to



preparing students for language use beyond the classroom—especially in EFL contexts like Japan. A shift from classroom-based learning to unfamiliar environments with interacting native speakers may challenge learners' confidence unless they are consistently exposed to tasks that closely mirror in real life contexts with foreigners.

As being a monolingual and EFL context, it is not indeed easy to have ample opportunities to interact with foreigners in the real situations, however, more effort of designing and implementing tasks with ongoing exposure to diverse communicative tasks that simulate real-world scenarios may help students maintain and extend their confidence. This study reveals that students' confidence may fluctuate depending on the learning situations where and how they use English. Despite these challenges, as sustained language development and learner confidence require ongoing practice and reinforcement (NamazianDost, Bohloulzadeh, & Pazhakh, 2017; Pietri, 2015), this study indicates that TBLT emerges as a promising approach from integrating various tasks to use English as learners needed. Furthermore, for TBLT to fully achieve its potential, it is necessary to further incorporate tasks that reflect genuine communicative exchanges with native or proficient English speakers. Such integration may not only enhance students' self-confidence but also contribute to improved communicative competence.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach on students' self-confidence in using English in university classes. The findings reveal that TBLT has a positive influence on students' confidence, particularly in speaking and communicative tasks. Through engaging in real-life, meaningful tasks, students reported improvements in vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and communicative competence, which contributed to increased confidence in English use. Additionally, many participants experienced a shift in their perception of English—from an academic subject requiring grammatical precision to a practical communication tool—highlighting the potential of TBLT to reduce anxiety and promote risk-taking in language learning for more willingness to communicate and feel more comfortable using English as a tool.

However, the study also identified that there is still have low confidence in spontaneous or speaking with foreigners in real-life situations. While students demonstrated moderate confidence for using English in academic success and classroom-based learning, the transfer of that confidence to broader communicative contexts outside of classes remained limited. This suggests a need for more authentic and contextually rich tasks within TBLT frameworks that mirror real-world language use

This gains the insight of essential pedagogical implications. These findings underscore the importance of designing TBLT tasks that are not only communicative and interactive inside but also showed the need of tasks that closely aligned with real-world language demands and the actual practices outside the classrooms. Language educators should incorporate ample tasks that simulate active interactions in diverse settings, including the real interaction with foreigners and real-life situations. This helps to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life language use, supporting building learners' confidence and feeling more comfortable



to become an autonomy user of English. Additionally, continuous exposure to varied communicative scenarios may help reduce anxiety and build students' resilience in demanding situations for using English.

Although this study yields interesting findings, several limitations should be acknowledged to guide for the further research. As the data relied primarily on self-reported measures of confidence, future research could incorporate more diverse data sources, such as performance-based assessments and longitudinal tracking, to gain deeper insights into the long-term impact of TBLT on learners' confidence and language use across contexts. Moreover, the study focused on a specific group of university students within a particular educational and cultural context in Japan, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In conclusion, while TBLT shows clear potential in enhancing students' confidence in English communication, its full impact may depend on how authentically and contextually tasks are designed and implemented within the classroom and beyond.

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