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# Introducing TBLT to High School English Learners: Do L2 Proficiency and Affective Variables Predict TBLT Benefits?

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## Abstract

This study explores the attitudes of Japanese high school students toward TBLT and their relations with their affective variables and L2 proficiency. In this study, Japanese high school students received task-based instructions as part of their English Communication classes and responded to a 24-item questionnaire about the introduced TBLT instructions and their anxiety, integrative and instrumental motivations, and self-efficacy on English learning. The data and their GTEC scores were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics, a correlation analysis and a multiple regression analysis. The results showed students' relatively positive attitudes toward TBLT instructions. The correlation analysis between variables indicated that students' attitudes toward TBLT were positively but weakly correlated with their integrative motivation toward language learning. The multiple regression analysis revealed that students' integrative motivation was also the significant predictor of their attitudes toward TBLT. These findings suggest that TBLT instructors should focus on nurturing or stimulating students' integrative motivation through using authentic task materials and class interactions.

## Introduction

A strong form of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), task-based language teaching (TBLT), has been gaining popularity among not only researchers (Van den Branden, Bygate & Norris, 2009), but also educators, such as Nunan (1989), Prabhu (1987), and Willis (1996). In TBLT, learners develop their second or foreign language (L2) skills in meaning negotiations with their peers and instructors in authentic tasks. Learners develop their linguistic knowledge and skills through receiving focus-on-form instructions whenever they confront obstacles in their meaning-based communications with others. TBLT advocates argue that

through these authentic L2 communications with linguistic focuses, TBLT nurtures learners' practical L2 competence for their educational and professional language uses (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2014; Skehan, 1998).

In the surge of TBLT popularity, task-based research studies have been conducted within various areas. These studies cover the areas of meta-analysis (e.g., Bryfonski & McKay, 2016; Han & Kang, 2018), task designs and task implementation (e.g., Nunan, 1989; Pica, et al., 1993; Tavakoli & Foster, 2011), learners' L2 development (e.g., Douglas & Miller, 2016; Han, 2018; Sasayama & Izumi, 2011), and instructors' and learners' attitudes and impressions toward TBLT (e.g., Albino, 2017; Chuang, 2010; Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010).

In the studies on learners' attitudes toward TBLT, the study of Ooyoung Pyun (2013) was different from others. Even though a number of attitude studies focus on impression and attitude changes of instructors and learners after experiencing TBLT, Ooyoung Pyun's study investigated the learners who benefited from TBLT in a Korean language college classroom by analyzing the relations between learners' attitudes toward TBLT and their other affective variables: anxiety, integrative and instrumental motivations, and self-efficacy. Since L2 classrooms are always diverse in learners' skills, aptitudes, and learning motivations, certain learners benefit more from TBLT than others. Acknowledging the tendencies of the learners who benefit from TBLT provides instructors efficiency in classroom management and helps them develop a personalized support for each L2 learner in the classroom.

The implementation of CLT including TBLT has been scarce in Japanese high schools. According to a survey on English instruction in Japanese lower and upper secondary schools by Benesse Corporation (2015), 15.0 percent of high school instructors answered that their students have opportunities to interact with their peers in English, and only 7.3 percent of the instructors answered that their students have opportunities to deliver their own opinions extemporaneously during class activities. According to Butler (2011), CLT implementation is hindered by three types of constraints in Asia: conceptual constraints such as literacy-focused and teacher-centered classrooms, classroom-level constraints such as large class sizes and limited instructional skills, and societal-institutional level constraints such as grammar-focused college examinations and students' limited opportunity to use English outside the classroom.

On the other hand, many high school instructors in Japan also feel the need of incorporating CLT in their class activities. From the same survey by Benesse Corporation (2015), 66.8 percent of high school instructors in Japan answered that it is necessary to

provide opportunities for their students to deliver their own opinions in their class activities. Butler (2011) maintains that with instructors' modifications suitable for their students and their learning environments, CLT including TBLT will gradually spread in Asia.

Thus, on the ground that classroom-based studies exploring the TBLT benefits are scarce, especially on child and youth L2 learners, and high school instructors in Japan need hints for their future TBLT implementation and its modification, this study investigates the attitudes of Japanese high school students toward TBLT and their relations with students' affective variables, replicating the experiment of Ooyoung Pyun (2013). In addition, this experiment looks into the influence of high school students' L2 proficiency on their attitudes toward TBLT using the scores of their external L2 proficiency test. Finally, whether any of these learner variables become the predictors of high school students' attitudes toward TBLT is examined. Understanding who benefit or will benefit from TBLT helps instructors develop effective and efficient TBLT sessions tailored for their own students and their L2 levels and provide personalized support for each student.

## Literature Review

### TBLT Pedagogy

The fundamental philosophy of TBLT is Dewey's student-centered teaching (Long, 2014; Matsumura, 2017), which argues that human beings learn only through a 'hands-on' approach. From this underlying philosophy, TBLT proponents argue L2 learning happens only when learners are richly exposed to the target language and engage in meaningful interactions with others in authentic tasks. They discover and develop new language forms in the efforts to achieve smoother and more effective communication (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2014).

### Tasks

Tasks are different from other devices, such as classroom activities, exercises, or drills (Ellis, 2003), and TBLT proponents agree with the following criteria categorizing tasks: meaning-based, goal-oriented, outcome-evaluated, and authentic (Skehan, 1998). Tasks also should involve psychological processes, where learners reasonably make connections between pieces of information, deduce new ideas, and evaluate outcomes (Prabou, 1987). A task goal has to be something different from language acquisition, and instead of learners' language performance, their task performance is evaluated. In the strong form of TBLT, target language structures should not be focused beforehand in light of the fact that once learners

start focusing on the target structures, the tasks become exercises, and their incidental learning is hindered (Ellis, 2013). For “authenticity,” tasks do not always need situational authenticity, but they at least require interactional authenticity, in which tasks do not have to replicate real-life situations. Instead, they provide opportunities for learners to prepare for the actual language uses in real life (Nunan, 1989; Ellis, 2003; Long, 2014). In TBLT, tasks are selected based on needs analysis, which identifies learners’ personal and academic interests and needs, in order to stimulate their L2 learning motivation and eliminates learners’ negative affective factors (Long, 2014). Needs analysis also identifies their present and future L2 communicative needs, which enables instructors to teach L2 efficiently and effectively.

### **Focus-on-Form**

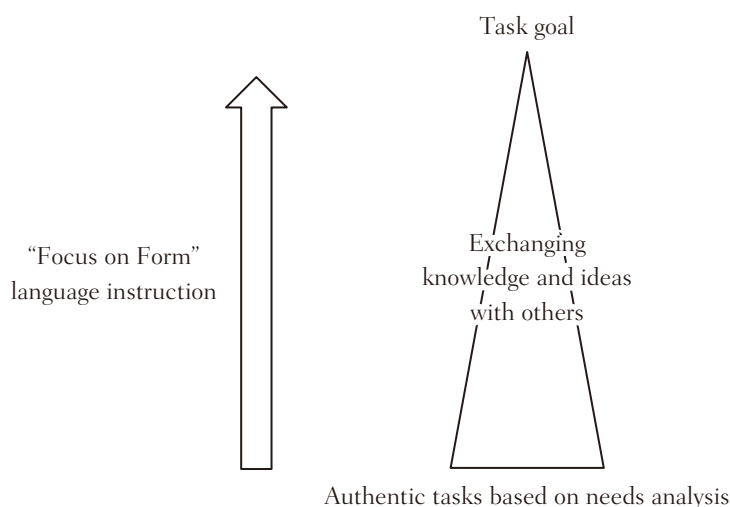
In TBLT, focus-on-form instructions help learners pay attention to their language forms during meaning negotiations (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2014). Focus-on-form instructions known as just-in-time grammar instructions help whenever learners make errors in meaning negotiations by shifting their attentions to linguistic forms (Ellis, 2014; Long, 2014). There are two types of focus-on-form instruction: explicit and implicit. Explicit focus-on-form instruction helps learners clearly notice the gaps between their linguistic forms and correct forms and promote the modification of their output, which eventually accelerates the acquisition of the target language structures (Ellis, 2014; Robinson, 2001). Implicit focus-on-form instruction nurtures learners’ procedural knowledge by only prompting them to correct their interlanguage. In one of the implicit types of corrective feedback, recasts, instructors only repeat or reformulate learners’ linguistic errors in their utterances. Recasts’ minimal interventions not only promote smooth L2 interactions, but also provide the message to the learners that their ideas are the primary focus (Long, 2014).

However, several TBLT researchers have different views on focus-on-form instruction. Skehan (1998) claims that learners’ attention to form should be implicitly induced by manipulating task complexity instead of immediately providing feedback. Skehan (1998) believes instructors’ interventions hinder learners’ interlanguage automatization. His trade-off hypothesis argues that learners’ fluency and accuracy improve without instructors’ interventions by easing task complexity. Robinson (2001, 2005) believes both focus-on-form instruction and manipulating task complexity improve learners’ interlanguage. In these different views on pedagogical interventions in TBLT, the present study took the position of Ellis (2003) and Long (2014), which regard explicit and implicit teacher interventions as

essential elements of TBLT pedagogy, and utilized focus-on-form instruction. The conceptual diagram of TBLT is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*The conceptual diagram of TBLT*



### TBLT Studies on Learner Affective Variables

Even though Moyer (1999) and Skehan (1989) mention that the nature of affective variables is ambiguous and difficult to measure, there are several Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies that depict the influence of affective variables on their L2 acquisition (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2008; Birdsong, 2007; Bongaerts, 1999; DeKeyser, 2000; Ioup et al., 1994; Krashen, 1982; Moyer, 1999). One of the most well-known studies was Krashen's (1982) study presenting Affective Filter Hypothesis. It indicates that negative affective factors such as negative emotions, low self-confidence, and anxiety become psychological obstacles, which hinder language learners' L2 comprehension.

TBLT studies have also investigated the relations between affective variables and TBLT. Chen and Brown's (2012) study found the computer mediated TBLT lessons stimulate adult English learners' intrinsic motivation toward L2 writing. Intrinsic motivation, as Brown (1994) puts it, is learners' needs, wants, or desires for the target language itself. Han's (2018)

TBLT study also found that Chinese students in a teacher training program increased their self-confidence as well as their linguistic sophistication through writing weekly reading journals and receiving feedback from the instructor. As shown in these studies above, it is reasonable to state that the learners' affective states influence their attitudes toward L2 learning.

Ooyoung Pyun's (2013) study investigated the learners who benefited from TBLT in a L2 classroom, exploring how L2 learners' attitudes toward TBLT relate to learners' affective variables: anxiety, integrative and instrumental motivation, and self-efficacy. In this study, 91 college students of Korean as a foreign language received TBLT instructions and completed a questionnaire afterward. Its correlation analysis revealed that the learners' attitudes toward TBLT positively correlated with their self-efficacy and integrative motivation, which was their personal interests in the target language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The learners' attitudes toward TBLT also negatively correlated with their anxiety. The findings of its multiple regression analysis also suggested that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of the learners' positive attitudes toward TBLT.

Ooyoung Pyun (2013) argues that choosing tasks that satisfy or activate learners' integrative motivation makes TBLT learning meaningful. She suggests not only incorporating authentic materials such as songs, magazines, broadcasts, movies, and internet resources that exemplify the culture of the target language community, but also promoting actual interactions with native speakers of the target countries stimulate their integrative motivation.

Ooyoung Pyun's (2013) correlation analysis also revealed that learners who did not enjoy TBLT lessons were likely to possess high anxiety in L2 learning. She postulates that TBLT is an output-based pedagogy, which strongly demands learners' active and constant L2 communication with others, so that it might cause some learners who are not good at it to feel anxiety. In order to alleviate their anxiety, Ooyoung Pyun suggests that instructors provide various levels of scaffoldings as well as creating relaxed and unpressured environments where students can make mistakes when producing L2 outputs and communicating with others.

Ooyoung Pyun's (2013) finding of self-efficacy as the significant predictor of positive attitudes toward TBLT indicates that learners can tackle TBLT activities well if they have confidence in their L2 learning. As described above, TBLT learnings demand active and constant L2 communication with others, so the learners with high self-efficacy are likely to approach and overcome complex interactive tasks with positive attitudes and ease. Even when mistakes and errors are made in front of instructors and peers, these learners tend to recover

quickly from them. To improve the learners' self-efficacy, Ooyoung Pyun suggests that instructors provide personalized positive feedback to each learner and help their learners set small goals needed for achieving their long-term goals. The feelings of success they experience when achieving small goals lead to their long-term goals and eventually elevate their self-efficacy.

### The Present Study

The present study was a replication of Ooyoung Pyun (2013). The same affective variables used in Ooyoung Pyun's study were applied to explore the relations with the students' attitudes toward TBLT. These variables were anxiety, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, and self-efficacy.

Anxiety in this research, as Ooyoung Pyun (2013) puts it, was situational language anxiety that learners feel only when they study and use their L2 language. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) also label this type of anxiety as foreign language anxiety, defining it as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (p. 284). Foreign language anxiety is described in various SLA studies (e.g., Guiora, 1983; Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Horwitz et al., 2010) and has been seen as a significant predictor of L2 achievement (Woodrow, 2006). Foreign language anxiety is particularly seen in novice L2 learners, who experience psychological difficulties to comprehend and produce new language forms because their explicit L2 knowledge has not been proceduralized or automatized (Paradis, 2004). This is also attributed to several sociopsychological factors including learners' personality and life philosophies (Dörnyei, 2005) and directly interferes with L2 learning and production (Horwitz, 2000, p. 256). High levels of foreign language anxiety discourage learners from their L2 learning and sometimes cause strong rejection even after taking the language courses (Philipps, 1991, 1992).

This research study adopted two types of motivation concepts introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972): integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Defining motivation is always controversial (Dörnyei, 2001), because motivation is complex, dynamic, constantly changing, and interacting with other affective variables (Dörnyei, 2015). However, motivation has also been regarded as a significant affective variable that directly influences L2 learning and has been included in many L2 research studies (Ooyoung Pyun, 2013). Integrative motivation refers to personal interests in the people and culture of the target language group (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Learners with integrative motivation have a desire to be



“integrated” into the target language culture. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, refers to the L2 learning motivation to achieve rewards, such as obtaining job employment/promotion or attaining academic grades. The influence of these two types of motivation on L2 learning depends on the L2 learning environment and context (Dörnyei, 2001).

Self-efficacy was another affective variable that the current study included as a potential predictor of learners’ attitudes toward TBLT. According to Bandura (1999), self-efficacy is each learner’s belief in their abilities to perform and accomplish assigned tasks and has been a vital variable for predicting learners’ performance. Self-efficacy also predicts the effort learners make on assigned tasks (Schunk, 2003).

In addition to these four affective learner variables from the study of Ooyoung Pyun (2013), the current study incorporated L2 proficiency as another variable. According to Ishikawa (2006), even though there is a growing number of research studies on TBLT, the effect of L2 proficiency on task performance has rarely been investigated. Robinson (2005) postulates that the scarcity of L2 proficiency as a learner variable for research manipulation in a class setting is due to the fact that L2 learners are likely to be classified by their levels, and it is assumed that all class members share the similar L2 level. The participants of this study were also from the same level class. However, the school institution of this study prepared only two levels for L2 classes: intermediate and advanced. Therefore, it was assumed that there were discrepancies in the participants’ actual L2 levels, even though all were assigned to the same class. Due to this assumption, it was worthwhile to examine the relation between the learners’ attitudes toward TBLT and their scores of the external L2 proficiency test conducted a week before the TBLT sessions started.

### Research Questions

This research study explores the following questions:

1. What are high school students’ attitudes toward TBLT?
2. Are there any correlations between students’ attitudes toward TBLT and their affective variables: anxiety, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, and self-efficacy?
3. Are there any correlations between students’ attitudes toward TBLT and their English proficiency?
4. To what extent do students’ English proficiency and their learner variables predict their attitudes toward TBLT?

## Method

### Participants

Sixty male high school students aged 17-18 participated in this project. They were the students of two English Communication III (CEIII) classes of a boys' school in Japan. In this school, CEIII classes were divided into two levels: intermediate and advanced, and all the participants of this study belonged to intermediate level classes. The first language (L1) of all the participants was Japanese, and none of the participants had stayed more than one year overseas.

### Procedures

The study employed a quasi-experimental design focusing on intermediate level high school English learners. During the second half of the school year, the participants regularly received TBLT English lessons besides a 20-minute weekly grammar session and vocabulary test, which were additionally implemented to expand their' syntactical and lexical knowledge. The participants also received explicit instructions on academic essays and presentation structures for their output production.

In the four-month TBLT sessions, the participants of this research study engaged in task-based communicative activities such as role plays, research presentations, information gap activities, and discussions. Oral and written corrective feedback were constantly incorporated as focus-on-form instructions during teacher-students' interactions during meaning-focused activities. Essay exams were conducted twice at the beginning of TBLT lessons as the pre-task and at the end of the TBLT lessons as the post-task in order to assess the participants' task achievement. All the TBLT lessons were conducted entirely in English, and there was no language focus on grammatical patterns or expressions in the sessions. At the end of the school year, a questionnaire survey on the participants' TBLT learning experience was conducted online.

### Materials

The task goal of the TBLT learning in this experiment was to locate the participants' own sense of justice in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020. This task area and topic were carefully chosen from the needs analysis conducted at the beginning of the semester. The reading and listening materials used in this study were article excerpts from newspapers and magazines, news segments, and other online materials. These materials were carefully

picked by the instructor for the purpose of providing diverse viewpoints on several different issues related to the BLM movement. The protests around the world, Black history, and US politics were also covered in the participants' research presentations to stimulate background information about BLM.

### **Instruments**

The questionnaire from Ooyoung Pyun's (2013) study was incorporated to elicit the participants' attitudes toward TBLT and their affective factors (see Appendix A). It was translated into Japanese and modified to suit the context of the sessions. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items: 6 items assessed the participants' attitudes toward TBLT, 6 items derived from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) assessed participants' anxiety for English Learning, participants' English learning motivation was assessed through 6 items based on Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery Inventory including 3 items for integrative motivation and the other 3 items for instrumental motivation, and the remaining 6 items assessed participants' self-efficacy. A five-point Likert-type scale was adopted, and the participants were asked to choose one from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (5 points).

The internal consistency of the instrument was measured through Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for each scale were 0.75 for the attitudes toward TBLT, 0.79 for anxiety, 0.57 for integrative motivation, -0.11 for instrumental motivation, and 0.53 for self-efficacy. The internal consistency values of the instrument were relatively acceptable except for instrumental motivation. Based on the item-total statistics for instrumental motivation, item 22 was a flawed item not targeting instrumental motivation, and it was dropped to increase the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value for the instrumental motivation without item 22 increased to 0.57, which was in the low but acceptable range.

The participants' English proficiency had been assessed through the Global Test of English Communication (GTEC) for Students Advanced a week before the experiment started. This test was developed by Benesse Group with the support of the Government of Japan's Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (MEXT) to provide a measure for students to reflect on their English development and for instructors to reflect on their teaching methods. The test assessed three skills (reading, listening, and writing) of the participants. Due to the implementation difficulties, especially under the Covid-19 situation, the speaking section that the original GTEC Students Advanced offers was not conducted during the test. The average

of the participants' GTEC score was 646.7 out of 960.0. This average score was equivalent to A2.2/B1.1 of CEFR-J (Benesse, 2018).

## Results

### Students' attitudes toward TBLT and Affective Variables

The descriptive statistics show the mean scores and standard deviations for the students' attitudes toward TBLT and their affective variables (Table 1). The mean score for students' attitudes toward TBLT was 3.75, which indicates that the students had relatively positive attitudes toward task-based activities. On the other hand, the mean score of 3.43 for the anxiety variable represents the moderate anxiety the students experienced during the TBLT sessions. The mean score for the integrative motivation variables was 3.81, which reveals that students' interests in English speaking countries, people, and cultures were relatively high. The mean score of 4.51 for the instrumental motivation resulted from the deduction of item 22. Focusing on this mean score of the two questionnaire items, the students were highly motivated to study English for their school grades and future job opportunities. The average mean score for the self-efficacy variable was 3.61, which shows, on average, the students were confident in their English and English learning skills.

Table 1

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

| Scale                                      | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>N</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|
| TBLT attitude                              | 3.75     | 0.60      | 60       |
| Anxiety                                    | 3.43     | 0.83      | 60       |
| Integrative Motivation                     | 3.81     | 0.87      | 60       |
| Instrumental Motivation<br>without item 22 | 4.51     | 0.65      | 60       |
| Self-efficacy                              | 3.61     | 0.57      | 60       |

### Correlation Analysis

Correlation coefficients were computed among the students' six variables, as shown in Table 2. The results show that TBLT attitude was weakly correlated with integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, self-efficacy, and GTEC scores. Statistically significant correlations were also observed between the attitudes toward TBLT and integrative motivation and between the attitudes toward TBLT and self-efficacy. The correlation between the attitudes toward TBLT and motivation variables indicate that highly motivated students were likely to appreciate TBLT, or students who enjoy TBLT were likely to increase their L2 learning motivation. Particularly, the weak but significant correlation between the attitudes toward TBLT and integrative motivation implies that students' interests in L2 speaking countries, people, and cultures were elicited by experiencing TBLT, or experiencing TBLT aroused these interests. Self-efficacy also weakly but significantly correlated with the attitudes toward TBLT, which indicates that students who were confident about their L2 skills and L2 learning were likely to appreciate TBLT, or experiencing TBLT helped them improve their self-efficacy on learning and using L2. GTEC scores also weakly correlated with the attitudes toward TBLT, which implies that the higher the students' L2 proficiency, the more likely that they were to favor TBLT. Since the students took the GTEC before experiencing TBLT, there is no possibility that GTEC scores were influenced by the experience of TBLT.

Table 2

#### *Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Among Variables*

|                | TBLT<br>Attitude | Anxiety | Integrative<br>M | Instrumental<br>M | Self-<br>Efficacy | GTEC   |
|----------------|------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------|
| TBLT Attitude  | —                | -.18    | .38**            | .31*              | .39**             | .29*   |
| Anxiety        |                  | —       | -.11             | -.20              | -.23              | -.41** |
| Integrative M  |                  |         | —                | .48**             | .25               | .22    |
| Instrumental M |                  |         |                  | —                 | .52**             | .31*   |
| Self-Efficacy  |                  |         |                  |                   | —                 | .30*   |
| GTEC           |                  |         |                  |                   |                   | —      |

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed).

\*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed).

### Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well the students' affective variables and English proficiency predicted their attitudes toward TBLT. The scores of the students' anxiety, integrative and instrumental motivations, self-efficacy, and GTEC scores were set as independent variables, and the students' attitudes toward TBLT was set as the criterion variable. The combination of the five learner variables was significantly related to the students' attitudes toward TBLT,  $F(5,54) = 3.63, p < .01$ . The multiple correlation coefficient was .50, indicating that approximately 25% of the variance of the attitudes toward TBLT can be predicted by the combination of the five learner variables.

As presented in Table 3, among the five learner variables, integrative motivation was the only significant predictor of the students' attitudes toward TBLT ( $\beta = 0.29, t(59) = 2.12, p < .05$ ), which accounts for 14% ( $.38 = 14\%$ ) of the variance of attitudes toward TBLT. The other four learner variables did not show significant contribution to the prediction of the students' attitudes toward TBLT.

**Table 3**

*Multiple Regression Analysis Between Learner Variables and Attitudes Toward TBLT*

| Model          | Unstandardized Coefficients |           | Standardized Coefficients | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | Correlations |         |      |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|----------|--------------|---------|------|
|                | <i>B</i>                    | <i>SE</i> | $\beta$                   |          |          | Zero-order   | Partial | Part |
| (Constant)     | 1.37                        | 1.00      |                           | 1.36     | .181     |              |         |      |
| Anxiety        | -0.27                       | 0.09      | -0.04                     | -0.29    | .773     | -.18         | -.04    | -.03 |
| Integrative M  | 0.20                        | 0.09      | 0.29                      | 2.12     | .038     | .38          | .28     | .25  |
| Instrumental M | -0.02                       | 0.14      | -0.02                     | -0.16    | .876     | .31          | -.02    | -.02 |
| Self-Efficacy  | 0.30                        | 0.15      | 0.28                      | 1.99     | .052     | .39          | .26     | .23  |
| GTEC           | 0.01                        | 0.01      | 0.13                      | 0.97     | .337     | .29          | .13     | .11  |

## Discussion

The aim of the current study was to investigate the attitudes of Japanese high school students toward TBLT and the relations between their attitudes toward TBLT and their learner variables. The first research question investigated what the high school students' attitudes toward TBLT were. The results revealed that high school students' perceptions toward TBLT were relatively positive ones. It seems many high school students enjoyed the TBLT approach, where there were constant interactions with peers and the instructor on the authentic topics and materials picked through the needs analysis. The result implies that the instructor was able to alleviate not only the students' linguistic obstacles by providing scaffoldings including summarizing sheets and the reading passages with explicit explanations and hints, but also their psychological obstacles that they faced when they interacted with others by creating an atmosphere where they could speak out without feeling the fear of making errors and mistakes.

Despite the result showing high school students' positive perceptions toward TBLT, it also suggests there were still several students who did not enjoy TBLT. One of the possible reasons is simply the linguistic scaffoldings and psychological supports were not enough for them to offset the stress experienced. Since each class consisted of about 30 students, and their L2 skills were varied, it is doubtful whether the instructor sufficiently accommodated satisfying support for all the students. Another possible reason is that some students were not attracted by tasks and the task materials. Since the number of the students in each class was high and their interests were varied, the tasks selected from the needs analysis possibly could not satisfy the intellectual interests and needs of all the students. The third possible reason is that students were confused by the TBLT pedagogy. Before taking this class, most of the students had experienced only the traditional Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) approach and focus-on-forms instructions, where students systematically develop their syntactic and lexical knowledge. Those who preferred PPP might have been skeptical about the TBLT approach, where presenting own views and exchanging arguments were mandatory, and its focus-on-form instructions took a nonsystematic reactive approach to students' linguistic errors.

The second research question asked if there were any correlations between students' attitudes toward TBLT and their affective variables. To begin with, the positive correlation between their attitudes toward TBLT and the motivation variables suggests that students' motivation, especially integrative motivation, was highly related to their attitudes toward

TBLT. This implies that either TBLT pedagogy stimulated the students' interests in English speaking countries, people, and cultures, or those who were originally intrigued by them appreciated TBLT pedagogy, or both. The correlation between the students' attitudes toward TBLT and their integrative motivation also provides the evidence that the tasks implemented in this study followed the theoretical framework of TBLT, in which tasks are selected and developed through conducting needs analysis on learners' intellectual and communicative interests and needs. These thoroughly selected tasks might have sufficiently satisfied the intrinsic interests of many students on the English language and the people, countries, and cultures behind it. This result also suggests TBLT instructors include materials such as songs, magazines, broadcasts, movies, and internet resources that depict the culture of the target language community, as Ooyoung Pyun (2013) suggests, to stimulate students' integrative motivation.

Next, the weak correlation between the students' attitudes toward TBLT and their self-efficacy provides support for the implications of Bandura (1997) and Ooyoung Pyun (2013). Namely, since the students with high self-efficacy believed in their abilities to perform and accomplish assigned tasks, they were likely to engage actively and willingly in the activities with much effort and dedication. The implication for TBLT instructors is that since building students' self-efficacy helps them increase their positive attitudes toward TBLT, instructors should focus on providing sufficient positive evidence in their corrective feedback to develop students' self-esteem. For example, instructors praise students in front of their peers when they perform well during task activities, and when they do not, instructors provide more encouragement rather than criticism.

The third research question asked if there were any correlations between students' attitudes toward TBLT and their English proficiency. The result showed that there was a significant but weak correlation between students' attitudes toward TBLT and their GTEC scores. Since TBLT pedagogy requires the learners to actively interact with instructors and peers in L2 during meaning negotiations and focus-on-form instructions, proficient L2 learners with ample L2 knowledge were able to engage in more smooth and productive interactions and enjoyed TBLT instructions. However, the weak correlation also suggests that some students with low L2 proficiency also enjoyed studying in TBLT. They might have enjoyed the task due to the fact that the topic was one of the highest profile topics derived from the students' needs analysis, or simply enjoyed utilizing English as a communication tool during the L2 interactions with peers and the instructor. The implication for instructors is that



they always have to make sure that the tasks are sufficiently interactive and provide a lot of communication opportunities to the students. In order to do so, the task types presented by Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) serve as an excellent reference and should be followed in task development. The five task types introduced by them are the following: jigsaw, information-gap, problem-solving, decision-making, and opinion-exchange tasks. These task activities are most likely to facilitate students' active interactions with others.

The last research question was to what extent high school students' English proficiency and affective variables predicted their attitudes toward TBLT. The research found that the students' integrative motivation was the significant predictor of their attitudes toward TBLT. Unlike Ooyoung Pyun's (2013) study, the students' self-efficacy variable was not significant enough for it to become another predictor of their attitudes toward TBLT in this study. However, the finding of the students' integrative motivation as the significant TBLT predictor supports the theoretical framework of TBLT. In TBLT, the dedication and proactive participation of L2 learners on their constant output development toward task goals are essential, and learners' personal interests in the English language promote their active involvement to these output-based task activities.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that high school students' integrative motivation plays a significant role on how they perceive TBLT instructions, which implies that stimulating students' integrative motivation supports their effective TBLT learning. In order to facilitate their integrative motivation, instructors need to carefully select tasks based on what their students are truly interested in and what language skills they have to develop for their current and future communicative needs. Instructors also have to utilize intellectually interesting materials, enjoy discussing these issues with students, and help them enjoy discussing with their peers. Since instructors are not specialists in the task topic fields, it is also important for them to have an attitude of learning topic issues together with students, which makes their classroom interactions more valuable and authentic in a true sense.

## Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One of the limitations of this study is the questionnaire used to measure the students' variables included the flawed item for the instrumental motivation construct. Item 22 says 「英語は必須教科だから勉強している」 (“I need to study English to fulfill my foreign language

requirement”). Several students might have thought that the sentence had a negative connotation that implied the rejection of English learning and might have avoided giving high scores. In order to ensure the validity of each item of the questionnaire, a review by other ESL researchers and a small-scale pilot study, as done in Ooyoung Pyun’s (2013) study, should have been implemented.

Another limitation is that the internal consistency values of the instrument were not as high as the ones in Ooyoung Pyun’s (2013) original study. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  values for integrative motivation and self-efficacy were relatively low despite demonstrating moderate reliability. As Dörnyei (2007) puts it, the desirable Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for consistency analyses is more than 0.7. There are two possible reasons for the low scores. First, it was caused by the small number of items in the questionnaire. Green (2013) argues that it is difficult to achieve a high level of reliability if the number of items in a questionnaire is small. The number of items for self-efficacy was 6, and the number of items for integrative motivation was only 3. Second, since the original questionnaire used in Ooyoung Pyun’s study was made for the L2 Korean context, the expressions might not have been suited for the Japanese English-learning context. In order to ensure the reliability of each item of the questionnaire, a review by other ESL researchers and a small-scale pilot study should have been implemented, as mentioned earlier.

The last limitation to this study is that focus-on-form instructions during the TBLT sessions were insufficient due to large size classes. Since each experimental class consisted of 30 students, and the number of oral and written focus-on-form feedback to each member was limited, in order to increase the efficiency of the corrective feedback, the instructor can adopt an external online grammar checking system for correcting common grammar errors in students’ written output in order to alleviate teacher burden and can use the extra time for targeting more personalized errors of students’ written outputs. Training students for focus-on-form instructions and implementing them among peers would help increase more opportunities for students to experience oral focus-on-form instructions.

For future reference, it is worth implementing a factor analysis to take a closer look at the relations of the variables and look for unique attributes that the students with high attitudes toward TBLT and integrative motivation all share. More effective and approachable ways of implementing TBLT for any L2 instructors, especially the feasibility in Japanese school settings, should also be discussed.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire

#### タスクを使用した授業や英語学習について

英語をツールとして使用し、タスクの達成に向かう授業（Black Lives Matter を多角的に理解し、自分なりの正義を見つけること）と自身の英語学習について星の数で答えてください。

☆☆☆☆ = 強く思う

☆☆☆☆ = そう思う

☆☆☆ = 何とも言えない

☆☆ = そう思わない

☆ = 全く思わない

1. タスク学習（BLM における正義を探す学習）において、教員や他の生徒と英語を使用してコミュニケーションを取ること（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーション）を楽しんだ。

☆☆☆☆

2. タスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーションなど）中、英語で発言するのはとても緊張した。

☆☆☆☆

3. タスク学習（BLM における正義を探す授業・学習・活動）は全体的に楽しかった。

☆☆☆☆

4. タスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーションなど）中、他の生徒の前で発言するのは緊張した。

☆☆☆☆

5. ほかの生徒の前で英語で発言する時（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーションなど）に、ミスをしてしまうことを恐れなかった。

☆☆☆☆

6. ほかの生徒の前で英語で発言する（スピーキングコミュニケーション、プレゼンテーション活動中など）ためにしっかり準備したにもかかわらず、緊張してしまった。

☆☆☆☆

7. タスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーションなど）は、活動中の自発的（自然発生的）な英語運用、コミュニケーションを高めた。

☆☆☆☆

8. タスク学習（BLM の正義を探す学習）は将来の英語使用への良い準備になった。

☆☆☆☆

9. タスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーションなど）中、覚えてあるはずの単語や文法、予習した内容、すでに理解している内容を忘れてしまうのではないかと心配してしまった。

☆☆☆☆

10. タスク活動（BLM 授業とその中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーション、エッセイなど）は私の英語コミュニケーション能力を高めるのに効果的だった。  
☆☆☆☆☆
11. 簡単な英語表現を用いて、自分自身や、自分の趣味について話すことができる。  
☆☆☆☆☆
12. タスク活動（BLM 授業とその中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーション、エッセイなど）はすでに習って知っている単語、表現、文法の実際の使用を高めた。  
☆☆☆☆☆
13. 教員や生徒と英語コミュニケーションをとるために習った単語、表現、文法を使用することができる。  
☆☆☆☆☆
14. 英語を勉強することはアメリカやイギリスなど英語を母国語とする国やその文化を知るのに役立つ。  
☆☆☆☆☆
15. 英語のみを使用し、タスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーション、エッセイなど）をすることができた。  
☆☆☆☆☆
16. 私はアメリカやイギリスなど英語を使用する国の映画、ドラマ、音楽、文学を理解できるようになるために英語を勉強している。  
☆☆☆☆☆
17. しっかり準備すればタスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーション、エッセイ）を英語でうまく行えた。  
☆☆☆☆☆
18. 英語ネイティブの友達が欲しい。  
☆☆☆☆☆
19. 私は中間試験の BLM に関する問題、期末試験の BLM のエッセイはしっかり書けた。  
☆☆☆☆☆
20. 英語を学ぶことは自分の将来の可能性を広げる。  
☆☆☆☆☆
21. もっとリスニングとスピーキング能力を高めていれば、もっとタスク活動（BLM 授業中のスピーキングコミュニケーション、簡単なスキット、プレゼンテーションなど）で活躍できたはず。  
☆☆☆☆☆
22. 英語は必須教科だから勉強している。  
☆☆☆☆☆
23. 英語を勉強することは私をより知識豊富な人間にさせるのでとても重要だ。  
☆☆☆☆☆
24. クラスのみんなが私より英語をうまく使えるので不安になる。  
☆☆☆☆☆



The following is the English version of the questionnaire. Wording is the same as the one used in the study of Ooyoung Pyun (2013) except for replacing the word “Korean” with “English.”

☆☆☆☆☆ = Strongly Agree

☆☆☆☆ = Slightly Agree

☆☆☆ = Neutral

☆☆ = Slightly Disagree

☆ = Strongly Disagree

1. I enjoy the opportunities of communicative exchanges through various forms of tasks.  
☆☆☆☆☆
2. I usually feel nervous during the performance of oral tasks in the classroom.  
☆☆☆☆☆
3. Task performance in the Communication English class is fun to me.  
☆☆☆☆☆
4. I tremble when I am called on to perform an oral task in front of other students.  
☆☆☆☆☆
5. I don't worry about making mistakes when I perform oral tasks in the classroom.  
☆☆☆☆☆
6. Even though I am well prepared for the task performance session, I feel nervous about it.  
☆☆☆☆☆
7. Tasks help me engage in spontaneous interactions in English.  
☆☆☆☆☆
8. Task performance in the classroom will prepare me to cope with communicative challenges in the real world.  
☆☆☆☆☆
9. When performing oral tasks, I can get so anxious that I forget things I know.  
☆☆☆☆☆
10. Tasks are an effective means to facilitate my communicative skills in English.  
☆☆☆☆☆
11. I can tell about myself and my hobbies in English using simple sentences.  
☆☆☆☆☆
12. Tasks help me make actual use of expressions and grammar patterns I have learned.  
☆☆☆☆☆
13. I can use English vocabulary and expressions that I have learned to interact with my instructor or friends.  
☆☆☆☆☆

14. Studying English will help me understand and appreciate the English way of life.  
☆☆☆☆☆
15. I am capable of performing classroom tasks/role-plays using only English.  
☆☆☆☆☆
16. I am learning English because I hope to be able to understand English dramas/films, songs, or literature.  
☆☆☆☆☆
17. When I am well prepared, I can perform classroom tasks well in English.  
☆☆☆☆☆
18. I would like to have many native English-speaking friends.  
☆☆☆☆☆
19. I can do well on the final oral interview test in English.  
☆☆☆☆☆
20. Studying English would give me more opportunities in my future career.  
☆☆☆☆☆
21. If I practice speaking and listening more, I will get better grades in oral performance tests.  
☆☆☆☆☆
22. I need to study English to fulfill my foreign language requirement.  
☆☆☆☆☆
23. Studying English is important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.  
☆☆☆☆☆
24. It worries me that other students in my class seem to speak English better than I do.  
☆☆☆☆☆

Note: Question items are classified into the five learner variables.

Attitudes toward TBLT: 1, 3, 7, 8, 10, 12

Anxiety: 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 24 (The scores for No. 5 were inverted)

Integrative motivation: 14, 16, 18

Instrumental motivation: 20, 22, 23

Self-efficacy: 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21.