



## THE USE OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS

### EL USO DEL APRENDIZAJE BASADO EN TAREAS PARA MEJORAR LA HABILIDAD ESCRITA

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#### ABSTRACT:

This study examined the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving writing skills among beginner EFL learners. The research addressed the need to move beyond traditional teacher-centered approaches by adopting communicative methodologies that promote meaningful language use in real contexts. The main objective was to evaluate the impact of structured task-based activities on students' writing performance, motivation, and engagement. A mixed-methods design was implemented, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Pre- and post-writing tests were administered to measure students' performance, while classroom observations and an emotional perception survey provided insights into learners' experiences and attitudes. The intervention was conducted over six weeks and was organized through structured task sequences, guiding students from initial preparation to post-task reflection. The findings revealed significant improvements in vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, coherence, and task completion. Additionally, students reported increased motivation, greater confidence, and reduced anxiety when participating in writing activities. These results suggested that TBLT supported both linguistic development and emotional engagement. The study highlighted the importance of incorporating structured communicative tasks into EFL writing instruction at the beginner level.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language Teaching, Writing, English as a Foreign Language, Student Motivation, Authentic Tasks

#### RESUMEN:

Este estudio examinó la efectividad de la Enseñanza de Lenguas Basada en Tareas (TBLT) para mejorar las habilidades de escritura en aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel inicial. La investigación respondió a la necesidad de superar los enfoques tradicionales centrados en el docente mediante la adopción de metodologías comunicativas que promovieran el uso significativo del idioma en contextos reales. El objetivo principal fue evaluar el impacto de actividades estructuradas basadas en tareas en el rendimiento escrito, la motivación y el compromiso de los estudiantes.

Se empleó un diseño de métodos mixtos que integró técnicas cuantitativas y cualitativas. Se aplicaron pruebas de escritura antes y después de la intervención para medir el desempeño de los estudiantes, mientras que las observaciones en el aula y una encuesta de percepción emocional proporcionaron información sobre sus experiencias y actitudes. La intervención se desarrolló durante seis semanas y se organizó mediante secuencias estructuradas de tareas.

Los resultados evidenciaron mejoras significativas en el uso del vocabulario, la precisión gramatical, la coherencia y la realización de tareas. Además, los estudiantes reportaron mayor motivación, confianza y menor ansiedad.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza de idiomas basada en tareas, Escritura, Inglés como lengua extranjera, motivación del alumnado, Tareas auténticas.



## INTRODUCTION

Research in language education demonstrates a clear transition from traditional teacher-focused methodologies towards communicative and learner-centered strategies, particularly in the development of productive skills such as writing. Within this evolution, Task-Based Language Teaching emerges as one of the most prevalent models. It is founded on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and theories of second language acquisition (Van den Branden, 2006). This pedagogical approach emphasizes real-world tasks in which learners undertake meaningful activities that simulate authentic situations. Such instructional experiences enable students to utilize the target language deliberately, engaging in authentic written communication that mirrors actual language use in practical contexts (Nunan, 2004).

Writing is fundamental across academic, professional, and daily settings. Nevertheless, it is one of the most complex language skills to acquire, particularly for novices. A1 learners frequently encounter difficulties in producing coherent texts due to limited vocabulary, less advanced grammatical control, and insufficient organizational skills. Consequently, the incorporation of Task-Based Language Teaching into writing instruction has garnered increased interest within applied linguistics. Evidence indicates that engaging in meaningful, real-world writing exercises enhances language abilities and communication skills, as learners practice authentic activities that involve crafting messages with specific purposes (Long, 2014).

Despite its educational benefits, implementing task-based instruction in writing poses certain challenges. Successful execution requires meticulous planning, creativity, and organizational clarity on the instructor's part. When tasks lack clear structure or explicit communicative objectives, learners may struggle to complete activities effectively or achieve the targeted learning outcomes. Furthermore, novice students working in pairs or groups might confront distractions that affect their focus and performance, particularly if task objectives and expected outcomes are not clearly communicated (Azizah et al., 2021). An additional challenge lies in learners' limited linguistic range. A constrained vocabulary and grammatical knowledge impede their capacity to initiate and develop written work. Furthermore, understanding the specific type, purpose, and structure of each writing task imposes an extra cognitive burden on novice learners, as writing necessitates familiarity with rhetorical conventions and appropriate linguistic forms for each context.

Considering these pedagogical conditions, this study explores the use of Task-Based Language Teaching as a strategy to enhance writing skills among A1 learners of English as a foreign language. Its primary aim is to assess the effects of structured communicative tasks on

written performance, learner engagement, and skill development. This research is important because it offers empirical evidence to the field of communicative language teaching and provides practical guidance for educators aiming to improve beginner learners' writing ability through meaningful, task-focused instruction. However, limited research has explored the combined impact of TBLT on both writing performance and emotional engagement among beginner-level learners in military educational contexts, although recent studies indicate that task-based approaches contribute to improved language proficiency and increased learner engagement in EFL environments (Nguyen, 2024; Sharmin, 2023).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design to investigate the development of writing skills among 50 A1-level English learners from ESFORSE School, a public military institution in Ecuador. All participants were male students, reflecting the institutional context, and their ages ranged from 19 to 22 years. Mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative methods to offer a comprehensive understanding of a research problem, thereby enhancing both measurement and interpretation (Creswell & Plano, 2018). The quasi-experimental part enabled comparisons between groups without random assignment, while the qualitative part provided insights into students' emotional experiences during instruction. This design enabled the researchers to assess both linguistic performance and emotional engagement within the same study framework.

The quantitative component involved administering pre- and post-tests to assess changes in students' writing performance before and after the instructional intervention. The qualitative component was supported by an emotional perception survey designed to collect students' attitudes, motivation, and emotional responses toward the learning process. Integrating these data sources enabled methodological triangulation, improving the validity and depth of the interpretation, since mixed-methods research integrates quantitative and qualitative data to strengthen validity, reliability, and interpretive depth (Rana & Chimoriya, 2025).

The target population consisted of 50 A1-level English learners from ESFORSE School. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group that received instruction through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and a control group that followed traditional grammar-based instruction. This grouping structure facilitated the comparison of instructional effects by analyzing differences between pre-test and post-test results, while also allowing qualitative analysis of students' emotional

perceptions collected through the survey. Therefore, the design enabled a systematic evaluation of both linguistic and affective outcomes of the intervention, as quasi-experimental designs with experimental and control groups using pre- and post-tests are commonly employed to measure the effectiveness of TBLT interventions in EFL contexts (Nasir, 2025).

### Instruments

The main tools for assessing writing development were the pre- and post-tests, administered before and after the TBLT intervention. Both assessments were scored using the same analytic rubric to ensure reliability, consistency, and objectivity (table 1).

Table 1: Writing Skill Assessment Rubric (A1 Level)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Basic (2)	Limited (1)
Vocabulary	Uses appropriate basic vocabulary accurately; few or no errors; words clearly express meaning.	Uses basic vocabulary with minor errors; meaning is generally clear.	Limited vocabulary; repetitive use of words; meaning sometimes unclear.	Very limited vocabulary; frequent errors; meaning often unclear.
Grammar	Correct use of simple grammatical structures; errors do not affect comprehension.	Some grammatical errors in simple structures; meaning is mostly clear.	Frequent grammatical errors; comprehension is occasionally affected.	Persistent grammatical errors; meaning is difficult to understand.
Spelling	Correct spelling of most basic words; minimal errors.	Some spelling errors, but they do not interfere with understanding.	Frequent spelling errors that sometimes affect comprehension.	Numerous spelling errors that significantly hinder understanding.
Coherence	Ideas are logically organized and easy to follow.	Ideas are generally organized, with minor issues in flow.	Organization is weak; ideas are not always logically connected.	Lack of organization; ideas are unclear or disconnected.
Cohesion	Appropriate use of simple connectors (e.g., and, but, because); sentences are well linked.	Limited use of connectors; sentences are mostly connected.	Minimal use of connectors; weak sentence connections.	No use of connectors; sentences are isolated and disconnected.

Source: Adapted from Alias (2001).

Furthermore, an emotional perception survey was administered to collect students' perspectives regarding the writing activities and the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) methodology. The survey consisted of 10 Likert-scale items designed to measure students' motivation, confidence, interest in tasks, anxiety reduction, and perceived improvement in writing skills. Sample items included statements such as "I feel more confident when writing in English" and "The tasks helped me improve my writing skills." Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating internal consistency. This instrument generated qualitative data about learners' motivation, self-confidence, and engagement in writing tasks, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the learning process (Atefeh, 2012).

### Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to fundamental ethical principles in educational research to safeguard and support all participants. Authorization was secured from the ESFORSE School administration prior to data collection, and informed consent was obtained from all students and, where necessary, from their parents or legal guardians. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were assured that their academic grades would not be impacted by their involvement in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were preserved by using coded identifiers instead of real names, and all collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes and stored securely. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences, thereby upholding their rights, dignity, and integrity throughout the research process, as ethical research standards emphasize informed consent, confidentiality, and protection from harm as core principles when working with human participants (Boden-Stuart, 2026).

### Procedure

The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing writing skills and was carried out over a six-week period.

Week 1: The pre-test and a classroom observation checklist were administered to establish baseline data on students' writing performance and classroom behavior. Weeks 2–4: Students in the experimental group engaged in task-based activities aimed at developing key writing skills, including vocabulary, grammar, spelling, coherence, and cohesion. These activities were designed following TBLT principles, enabling learners to engage in meaningful language use through guided tasks and collaborative work. Meanwhile, the control group continued with traditional grammar-focused instruction. Week 5: The emotional survey was given to collect students' feedback and perceptions about their learning experiences and progress during the intervention. Week 6: The post-test was conducted and assessed using the same analytic rubric as the pre-test. This approach allowed for a systematic comparison of students' writing performance before and after the instructional intervention.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved fifty A1-level English learners from ESFORSE School, selected through convenience sampling. Participants were divided into an experimental group (n = 25) that received instruction via Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and a control group (n = 25) that received traditional grammar-focused instruction. All participants were male, thereby reflecting the school's demographic composition. Their ages ranged from nineteen to twenty-two years (Table 2).

Table 2: Sample Population by Age Group and Gender

Age/Group	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
19–20	Male	25	50%
21–22	Male	25	50%
Total	—	50	100%

#### Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test Results

The comparison between pre- and post-test results illustrates improvement in students' writing performance following the implementation of the TBLT intervention. The results reveal noticeable differences in the evaluated criteria, including vocabulary, grammar, coherence, spelling, and task completion. Figure 1 presents the variation in mean scores obtained before and after the instructional intervention.

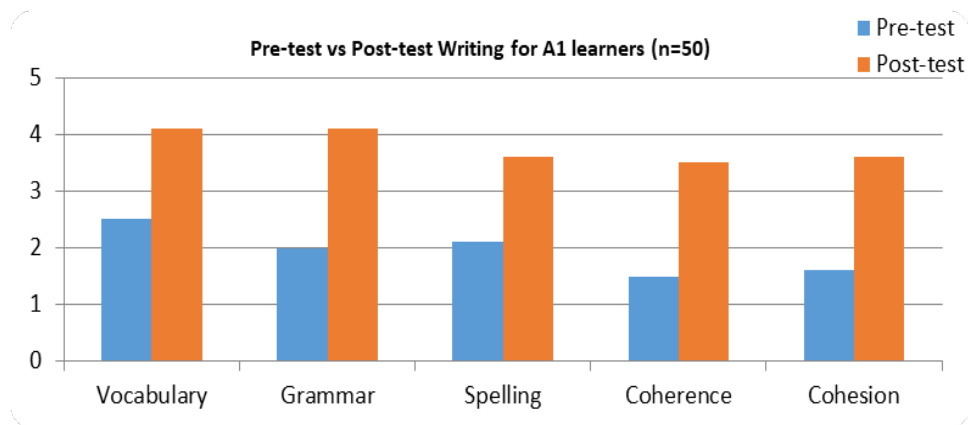


Fig 1: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Writing Scores

#### Pre-test Results

The preliminary assessment results indicated an overall low level of writing proficiency across all evaluated criteria, including grammar, vocabulary, coherence, spelling, and task completion. The mean scores reflected limited mastery of sentence structures, restricted lexical variety, and weak organizational coherence of ideas. Notably, coherence and cohesion received the lowest average scores, indicating that students struggled to connect ideas logically. These findings substantiate that student initially exhibited beginner-level writing skills, characterized by frequent grammatical mistakes and limited lexical resources.

**Post-test Results**

After the six-week instructional intervention, improvements were seen in several areas of students’ writing skills within the experimental group. Students showed better use of basic vocabulary, improved sentence structure, and a greater ability to organize ideas clearly in short paragraphs. Additionally, spelling accuracy and task completion improved as students became more familiar with the communicative tasks used during the intervention. In contrast, the control group showed only minor progress in writing skills. Although there was some improvement in vocabulary and sentence formation, the development was less noticeable compared to the experimental group that engaged in task-based activities. These findings are consistent with previous studies that report improvements in writing performance when learners engage in communicative task-based activities (Azizah et al., 2021).

The control group showed only a slight improvement in writing performance, with mean scores increasing from 2.10 in the pre-test to 2.30 in the post-test. This limited progress suggests that traditional grammar-based instruction had a less significant impact on students’ writing development compared to the task-based approach used in the experimental group (table 3).

Table 3: Comparison of Control Group Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Group	Test	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Control	Pre-test	2.10	0.50
Control	Post-test	2.30	0.47

The experimental group showed a greater increase in mean scores compared to the control group, indicating a stronger impact of task-based instruction on writing performance. Although no inferential statistical test was applied, the descriptive differences suggest a meaningful improvement associated with the TBLT intervention.

**Analysis of Emotional Survey Results**

Students’ emotional perceptions of the task-based learning experience were evaluated through a survey administered during the fifth week of the intervention. The results reflect learners’ motivation, confidence, interest in tasks, reduction of anxiety, and perceived improvement in writing skills. Figure 2 illustrates the average responses obtained for each emotional variable.

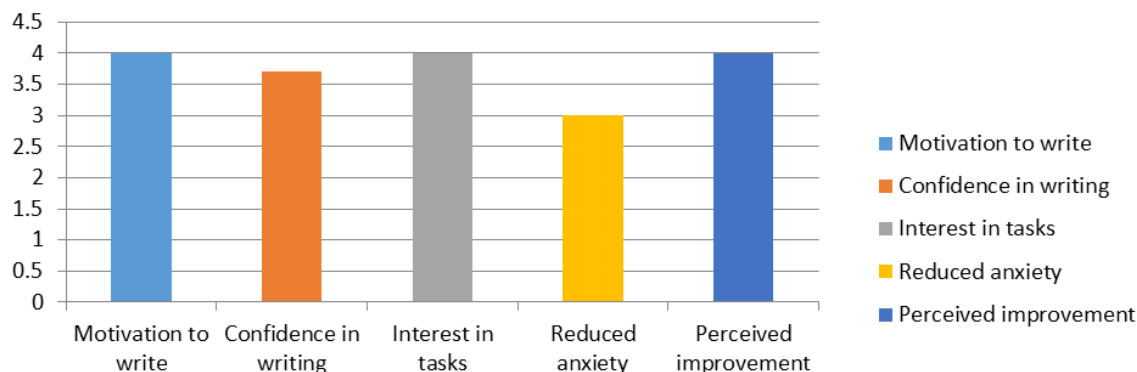


Fig 2: Students’ Emotional Perceptions of TBLT after the Intervention (n = 50)

**Analysis of Emotional Survey Results**

The emotional perception survey conducted in Week 5 measured five emotional variables: motivation, confidence, interest in tasks, reduced anxiety, and perceived improvement.

Overall, the results demonstrated positive perceptions among learners regarding TBLT. The highest average score was observed for perceived improvement, suggesting that students recognized progress in their writing abilities. Motivation and interest in tasks also received high average scores, reflecting active engagement with task-based activities.

While confidence and anxiety reduction recorded slightly lower average scores, these remained above the neutral mid-point of the Likert scale, indicating an overall favorable emotional response to the teaching approach.

### Implementation of the TBLT Intervention

Table 4 presents the chronological organization of the six-week instructional intervention, including the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) stages, instruments administered, instructional focus, and observable evidence of learners' writing progress.

Table 4: Stages, Instruments, and Learners' Writing Progress.

Week	TBLT Stage	Instruments Used	Focus of Instruction / Assessment	Evidence of Progress
1	Pre-task (Diagnostic)	Pre-test, Observation Checklist	Baseline writing skills: grammar, vocabulary, coherence	Initial low accuracy; limited vocabulary
2	Task Cycle	Writing Tasks, Observation Checklist	Vocabulary development; simple sentence structure	Improved word use; basic sentence formation
3	Task Cycle	Writing Tasks, Observation Checklist	Grammar accuracy, spelling, and short paragraph writing	Fewer grammatical errors; clearer ideas
4	Task Cycle	Writing Tasks, Observation Checklist	Coherence and task completion	Better organization; increased task fulfillment
5	Post-task (Reflection)	Emotional Survey	Motivation, confidence, and learner perceptions	Increased confidence and positive attitudes
6	Post-task (Evaluation)	Post-test, Analytic Rubric	Overall writing performance	Measurable improvement across all rubric criteria

#### Week 1: Diagnostic and Pre-task Stage

During the first week, a pre-test and a structured classroom observation checklist were administered to evaluate students' initial writing skills and classroom behavior. The pre-test served as a diagnostic instrument to assess learners' baseline competencies in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, spelling, and task completion, which are fundamental components of writing at the A1 level (Nunan, 2004). Concurrently, the observation checklist enabled the researcher to collect qualitative data on student participation, engagement, and interaction, which are essential elements of the pre-task phase in TBLT. During this phase, learners were introduced to the objectives of the writing tasks and familiarized themselves with task-based procedures, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing confidence for active participation (Willis, 1996).

#### Weeks 2–4: Task Cycle Stage

According to Ellis (2003), the task cycle stage fosters meaningful language utilization by encouraging learners to concentrate on message construction rather than on isolated language forms. During weeks two, three, and four, students engaged in a series of task-based writing exercises to progressively enhance vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and basic text organization. These assignments involved composing brief paragraphs concerning daily activities, personal information, and straightforward explanations of real-world scenarios. Throughout this period, students were able to negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and employ language structures within authentic communication contexts by working both autonomously and collaboratively. Classroom observations during this period indicated increased student engagement and consistent improvement in lexical choices and sentence structure.

#### Week 5: Post-task Reflection and Emotional Survey

During the fifth week, an emotional survey was administered to collect students' perceptions, attitudes, and emotional responses regarding task-based writing activities. This instrument aimed to assess learners' motivation, confidence, and self-perceived progress in writing. In this research, survey outcomes complemented the quantitative data by

providing insights into students' experiences of the learning process and the impact of TBLT on their willingness to write in English. As stated by Dörnyei (2005), affective factors such as motivation and emotional engagement are crucial in the development of a second language, particularly for beginner-level learners.

### Week 6: Post-test and Evaluation Stage

In the final week, the post-test was administered using the same task format and analytic rubric as in the pre-test. This ensured consistency and reliability in measuring students' progress. Because the rubric assessed grammar, vocabulary, coherence, spelling, and task completion, it allowed for a direct comparison between pre-test and post-test results. According to Brown (2004), the use of analytic rubrics enhances the objectivity of writing assessment and provides clear evidence of learners' development. As a result, the post-test results reflected the overall impact of the TBLT intervention on students' writing skills after six weeks of instruction.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) improved the writing skills of A1-level learners. The increase observed in post-test performance in the experimental group suggests that structured, task-oriented instruction contributed to measurable language development. In contrast, the control group showed only slight improvement, reinforcing the effectiveness of communicative task-based instruction over traditional grammar-focused approaches. These results corroborate Ellis (2003), who asserts that TBLT facilitates language acquisition by engaging learners in meaningful, goal-directed communication.

These findings are also consistent with previous studies that report improvements in writing performance when learners engage in communicative task-based activities (Azizah et al., 2021). Similarly, Willis (1996) emphasizes that the task cycle promotes authentic language use, which enhances learners' ability to produce coherent written texts.

Furthermore, the results can be interpreted in light of recent empirical research, which highlights the importance of interaction and contextualized language use in second language development. Current studies suggest that learners benefit more from communicative tasks requiring the integration of skills than from traditional approaches focused on isolated grammar practice. In this sense, the findings of this study support the view that TBLT fosters both fluency and accuracy by encouraging learners to produce meaningful written output in authentic contexts.

The observed improvements in vocabulary, organization, and task completion support Nunan's (2004) claim that beginner learners benefit from communicative practice that integrates form and meaning. Through collaborative writing activities, students expanded their lexical range and improved their sentence construction.

In addition to linguistic gains, the results of the emotional survey highlight the importance of affective factors in second language learning. As suggested by Dörnyei (2005), motivation and emotional engagement play a crucial role in language development. The increased motivation and reduced anxiety reported by participants may have positively influenced their writing performance.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the findings should be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations, such as the relatively small sample size and the short duration of the intervention. Future research could explore longer implementations and more diverse populations to validate and extend these results.

In summary, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings strengthens the conclusion that Task-Based Language Teaching constitutes an effective pedagogical approach for improving both writing proficiency and learner engagement among beginner-level learners.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) resulted in significant improvements in the writing skills of A1-level EFL learners. Compared to their initial performance, students in the experimental group exhibited measurable progress in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary diversity, textual coherence, and task accomplishment. Elevated levels of motivation, participation, and engagement were also observed, suggesting that the tasks' contextualized, meaningful nature fostered greater involvement in the writing process. Despite challenges associated with limited language proficiency and the necessity for explicit instructional scaffolding, the overall results endorse the pedagogical value of TBLT for beginner EFL learners.

From a methodological perspective, the study confirms that effective implementation of TBLT requires systematic planning, structured task sequencing, and ongoing instructional monitoring. The six-week intervention, organized from diagnostic assessment to summative evaluation, supported the gradual development of learners' linguistic resources and writing confidence.

Data reliability was enhanced through the use of validated tools, including questionnaires, observation checklists, and pre- and post-tests, while the experimental-control

group design allowed for clear attribution of observed differences to the instructional treatment.

Beyond its local scope, this research provides empirical evidence to the field of communicative language teaching by demonstrating the applicability and effectiveness of TBLT for early-stage writing development. The study highlights the importance of aligning task design with learners' proficiency levels and offering sustained teacher support during task execution. Future research may explore longer intervention periods, larger participant groups, and the integration of technology-mediated tasks to broaden the generalizability and pedagogical impact of TBLT in diverse EFL learning environments. Despite these positive outcomes, the study was limited by the relatively small sample size and the short duration of the intervention. Future studies could extend the instructional period and include a larger population to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study highlights the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching as a practical approach for improving writing skills among beginner learners. By engaging students in meaningful and context-based tasks, TBLT not only enhances linguistic competence but also promotes motivation and confidence in language use. These findings provide valuable guidance for EFL teachers seeking to implement more interactive and student-centered writing instruction. Furthermore, the results reinforce the relevance of integrating communicative approaches in beginner-level EFL contexts.

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