Evaluating the effectiveness of a task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach to improve the language skills of mature students in a Ghanaian university

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ABSTRACT

Mature students' admission into universities in Ghana is increasing rapidly. Both private and public universities admit students who are 25 years and above through the mature entrance admission process. The language proficiency of these mature students is often low, which affects their comprehension abilities, communication, and academic work. Yet they have to compete with their counterparts who have had secondary education and continuous learning without a break. Unfortunately for these mature students, their break from formal education, coupled with demands of family and work, makes it difficult for them to cope in the same class as their non-mature counterparts. Although access tutorials and examinations are held for mature students, oftentimes, these tutorial sessions are for just a short period and geared towards entrance examinations. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a task-based language teaching approach to improve the language proficiency of these mature students. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature and non-mature students at Valley View University in Ghana? (quantitative)
2. How can a TBLT programme be designed and an intervention conducted in relation to the specific context and needs of mature university students in Ghana?
3a. What will be the effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT? (quantitative)

3b. Will mature students, after an intervention with a TBLT programme, be at par in language proficiency with their non-mature peers who have gone through secondary education? (quantitative)
3c. What are the cohort of mature students' opinions on the TBLT intervention programme? (qualitative)

3d. How do students respond to the application of TBLT in the classroom and what insights may be gained from the intervention? (qualitative)

A convergent parallel mixed design based on Creswell (2013) was used for the study. The tools utilised were pre- and post-tests, pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, an outsider's observation, a researcher's log, and interviews. The intervention was conducted with an instructional model designed in relation to the specific needs of mature students to improve their language skills. The principles of constructivism and the principles of cooperative learning formed the basis of the instructional model on which teaching and learning activities were built for the four phases of the TBLT approach. The intervention was conducted on a group of mature students (experimental group) while another group (control) of mature students and a group of non-mature students were instructed using the traditional approach. In all, 65 participants were sampled for the study. The quantitative data were analysed with frequencies, percentages, T-test, ANOVA, pairwise comparison, multiple comparisons, independent samples median testing and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. The qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. The effectiveness of the intervention was determined by the post-test results, which showed that when all the tests were put together, the mature experimental group scored better than the mature control group and was at par with the non-mature group. Results from the qualitative data supported the findings of the quantitative data. Frequent feedback, enthusiasm and willingness among students, an enabling classroom environment, motivation, collaborative learning and having a mature-only class contributed highly to the positive results of the intervention group. Recommendations are made based on the findings at the institutional level, on classroom environment, and on pedagogy and curriculum.

Keywords: Task-based language teaching (TBLT) method, English as a second language, mature students, student-centred, language skills, task-oriented activities, cooperative learning.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	Affective response
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BICS	Basic interpersonal communication skills
CALP	Cognitive academic language proficiency
CBLT	Content-based language teaching
CER	Cross-enrolment ratio
CLL	Community language learning
CLT	Communicative language teaching
DM	Direct method
EF EPI	EF English Proficiency Index
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
GTEC	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
GTM	Grammar translation method
HL	Home language
ICELDA	Inter-Institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LoLT	Language of learning and teaching
MAT INT	Mature group with intervention (experimental)
MAT NON-INT	Mature non-intervention group (control)
NALAP	National Literacy Accelerated Programme
NON-MAT	Non-mature group (control)
OWL	Online Writing Lab
PTE	Pearson Test of English
SBLT	Student-based language teaching
SLA	Second language acquisition
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
TALL	Test of Academic Literacy Levels
TBI	Task-based instruction
TBLT	Task-based language teaching
VVU	Valley View University
WASSCE	West African Secondary School Certificate Examination

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

According to the world population review rankings of 2022, the English language is the third most common native language spoken throughout the world, after Mandarin and Spanish. Overall, English is spoken by more people than any other language in the world. Globally, only about 400 million of the population are native English speakers, but the language is used by about 1.5 billion people worldwide (Szmigiera, 2022). The English language is not only used as a medium of international communication but is also used in education, commerce, politics, careers, and tourism. Many countries in which English is not the principal or dominant language have adopted it as their second language, and others utilise it as their official language; countries falling into the latter group have adopted the English language for official duties such as in the judiciary, legislature, administration, media, and schools. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) report of 2021, countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Singapore, and South Africa are among the top ten countries in which English is utilised as a second language with a high degree of proficiency. In Africa, South Africa tops the proficiency index, followed by Kenya, Nigeria, and then Ghana. The UK-based organisation British Council (2014) reports that 24 nations in Africa (including Ghana) have adopted the English language as their second language. In Ghana, English is the language utilised for all government business at the executive, legislative and judiciary levels. The media space is also flooded with English-language reporting in the country's major media outlets. On the whole, the English language is of great prominence in Ghana and is a language that is spoken in most homes these days. Afrifa et al. (2019) argue that the English language is fast becoming the first language of some children as it is the means of communication at home. In

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the basic, secondary and tertiary schools, English is the language of teaching and of learning; its importance cannot therefore go unnoticed.

Ghana's cross-enrolment ratio (CER) in tertiary education increased from 0.01% in 1971 to 16% in 2017, with an average annual rate of 28.47 % (World Bank, 2006). Despite the national increase in tertiary education CER, only 3.1% attained bachelor's degrees (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017). The need for higher education in the country is therefore significant considering the increase in tertiary education enrolment.

A paucity of language proficiency has been considered a barrier to successful learning and subsequently has a negative effect on academic performance (Light et al., 2018; Abedi, 2010). Researchers (Martirosyan, 2015; Aina et al., 2013; Racca & Lasaten, 2016; Ozowuba, 2018) have all emphasised a direct correlation between English language proficiency and academic performance. From their research, there is a directly proportional relationship between the English proficiency level of students and their academic achievements. There is, therefore, the need to have an effective teaching methodology to enhance language teaching and learning.

The total enrolment of mature students has become a common feature in tertiary educational institutions and is increasing yearly. Tertiary educational institutions in Ghana are currently populated with a large proportion of mature students. For example, at Valley View University (VVU), the number of mature students has been increasing yearly. Since 2012/2013, when there were 71 registered mature students, this number has increased to 122 in 2013/2014 and to 281 and 252 in 2016 and 2017, respectively. The number of mature students in 2016 and 2017 was almost half that of non-mature students (VVU, 2018). Although the former group is increasing in number and they seemingly have uniquely specific academic needs, there is little

support available in most institutions in Ghana and in Africa to help them succeed academically.

According to Tones et al. (2009: 509), mature students in Queensland, Australia, reported in interviews that "it can be hard going back into education after so long…" and that "class can be intimidating because younger students seem to catch on more quickly and find things easier because they are in the habit of studying". Tones et al. (2009: 509) further report that a number of mature students indicated that "it's been a long time since [they were] at school and [that their] work notes are different from academic writing". The students added that "the lecturers and tutors should not assume that [they] know how to write" (Tones et al., 2009: 509).

Some institutions, such as Surrey University in the United Kingdom, have some support services in the form of student advice, a mature students' association, personal tutors and learning support, as well as the availability of study and personal skills sessions. Special support services for these mature students are likely to greatly enhance the quality of their university education. However, in most universities, support services are aimed at the general university body, and there are no designated similar resources available to mature students.

When it comes to mature student language teaching, it is important to be cognisant of the unique challenges faced by these students and the special attention they require. The teaching approaches used for non-mature students are, therefore, unlikely to be helpful for mature students, hence the need for a tailored approach to address their specific needs.

1.2 Background, rationale, and problem statement

1.2.1 Ghana educational system

The Ghanaian education system comprises two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of secondary education. Polytechnic educational institutes offer two-year and three-year diploma programmes as well as four-year degree programmes. Universities offer diploma and degree programmes for two years and three years, respectively. Admission to senior high school is based on performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) examinations, the results of which are obtained at the end of Junior High School. Admission to tertiary educational institutions is achieved through the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), through the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE), through a diploma qualification or through mature entrance programmes.

Currently, the entrance requirement for admission into a bachelor's degree programme as a mature student in Ghana is to be at least 25 years old at the time of application with some work experience. While some institutions require a secondary education certificate in addition to the age prerequisite, others do not. An entrance exam is written, and successful candidates who are 25 years of age or above are admitted. Tutorials are usually organised by the admitting university before these entrance examinations are written, and it is expected of these tutorials to serve as a refresher course for those who may have been out of school for a while. Most institutions run tutorials in mathematics, English language proficiency and a general paper. The standard of the entrance examinations is expected to be on par with the national secondary school examination, commonly known as the WASSCE. It is therefore believed that students

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who are able to pass these entrance examinations and gain admission successfully should perform at the same level as students who gain admission via other avenues.

During admission at Valley View University, mature students have the option to enrol in regular mode, distance mode, sandwich mode or the evening stream, depending on their programme choice and preference. Those who are admitted in the regular mode stay in the same class as younger students. The sandwich mode is run during the semester breaks and is currently available for nursing and education programmes. Although contact hours in the sandwich mode are equivalent to those of the regular mode, they occur within a shorter time period: a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of one month. Several lecture meetings are held within a week, unlike the regular mode, where meetings are held weekly. The distance mode is tailored towards workers who seek higher education but are unable to terminate their employment. Most of the interaction is done online, with a few contact hours, only on Sundays, for tutorials and examinations. The evening mode is currently available only to professional nurses who seek further/higher education and are willing to attend lectures in the evening. All lectures and examinations are conducted during the evening, when these workers are not at work.

The English language has been part of the educational system of Ghana for a very long time. Before independence, the language of education depended on the colonial masters and English was predominantly used as the medium of instruction, depending on who was in power (Owu-Ewie, 2017). However, since independence, there have been several policies as to which language should be the medium of instruction, especially at the lower level. From 1969 onward, Ghanaian languages were included as media of instruction, but this changed between 2002 and 2007, when Ghanaian languages were excluded from the languages of teaching and learning by government (Owu-Ewie, 2017). However, this was not adhered to in practice. Currently,

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according to the language policy that was developed under the National Literacy Accelerated Programme (NALAP), which was implemented in 2006, students in primary grades one to three are to be instructed in their home language or first language (HL or L1), while English was taught as a subject (Ministry of Education, 2007). From primary grade four, the medium of instruction would change to English, while an indigenous Ghanaian language would be taught as a subject. English would become the mode of instruction from upper primary and beyond (Ministry of Education, 2007). English is also an official language in Ghana and a second or additional language for the majority of the population (Hartwell & Casely-Hayford, 2010). The English language is considered one of the core subjects at both the junior and senior levels. A passing grade in English is a requirement for admission into secondary school and university (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2007).

As has been emphasised, being proficient in the English language will increase academic achievement because as Martirosyan (2015) argues, being multilingual increases a person's cognitive skills needed for academic work. Racca and Lasaten (2016) also contend that language functions play a vital role in the critical and analytical thinking required in other subjects, especially science and mathematics. As a result of such functions, the more proficient students are in language, the more effective their thinking is. Mature students, as a result, need language proficiency that will improve their overall academic performance.

1.2.2 Rationale

A number of mature students in Ghana do not have basic secondary education and consequently have very poor reading and writing skills, which translates to very low academic literacy levels. Yet, at the core of successful higher education are efficient reading and writing skills – in essence, higher academic literacy levels. The primary challenges faced by the majority of

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mature students, especially those without secondary education, are coping with university education and being able to use the English language at the required level (Burnell, 2016). English is an official language in Ghana and also the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) at all levels. However, the majority of mature students struggle with academic reading and writing in English and lack the required cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), as introduced by Cummins (2008). Moreover, a significant number of mature students also struggle with speaking English (Leherr, 2009). These challenges have been said to emanate from the supposed gap between basic education and university-level language proficiency requirements (Tones et al., 2009: 509) and the fact that the majority of mature students have been out of the education system for some time (Burnell, 2016).

These assertions indicate that a number of mature students have been out of school for some time and seem to have lost touch with academic activities. Burnell (2016) notes that some of these mature students have low confidence because they may have attempted entrance into university previously and may have failed. Also, as Burnell (2016) explains, having been out of the education system for some time, these mature students have difficulty with academic writing when they return to an educational environment. In other words, most of these mature students are not able to operate at the required CALP level, as most of their activities have been at the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) level.

With the experience I have had with some of these students as a lecturer, I have realised that most of them are aware of their weaknesses and are willing to work on the difficulties and challenges they face. Unfortunately for them, the university environment is quite demanding, and the majority of these mature students find it difficult to cope. Early-morning and late-hour lectures, examinations, quizzes, and deadlines for submitting assignments and projects are among the demands that must be met by these mature students in addition to their family and

employment obligations. Lecturers are not prepared to slow down teaching for these older students, as that would delay the entire delivery of the course content. In other words, the syllabus for the semester may not be covered if the lecturers moved at a pace that suited these students.

There is a need to find an appropriate solution to these mature students' challenges in order to assist them in fitting into the higher education system. In Ghana, all tertiary institutions that admit mature students organise tutorial sessions for them. Unfortunately, because the major focus is usually on the entrance examination, preparation towards these examinations takes priority, and there is little focus on preparing students to cope with the general academic demands of higher education after they attain admission to tertiary educational programmes. Tones et al. (2009: 507) believe that mature students have the potential to succeed in their studies but indicate that "research on support services to assist and promote retention among this demographic is virtually non-existent". O'Carroll et al. (2017) suggest that universities need to reassess their teaching and learning strategies to enhance mature students' learning experience in higher education. They add that a student-centred learning approach (e.g., task-based language teaching (TBLT)), which ensures a collaborative and interactive environment, would be more appropriate.

With the TBLT approach, students are allowed to communicate in the target language by engaging in a series of activities. These activities differ from role-playing in that students are given specific goals to attain. They are given tasks based on real-life situations like buying a bus ticket, asking for directions, as well as more academic tasks such as asking permission from a supervisor to absent oneself from work, seeking clarification from a lecturer on a topic, consulting a head of department or course advisor to assist with registration challenges, explaining to a lecturer the reason for not submitting an assignment on time, and interacting

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with a librarian to assist with locating a book. In an academic second language environment, their tasks are related to the academic syllabus. The students are given the opportunity to work with other students, either in pairs or in groups. Zuniga (2016: 15) explains that these tasks seek to "stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competency by challenging them to complete clear, purposeful, and real-world tasks which enhance the learning of grammar and other features as well as skills".

This approach offers students the opportunity to identify and learn the linguistic items they need at a point in time. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) assert that second language acquisition (SLA) research supports this use of analytic syllabi because SLA research indicates that learners do not learn linguistic items one at a time. "Instead, they induce linguistic information from the language samples they work on, and they acquire language items only when they are ready to do so" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011: 192). Since mature students have basic knowledge and a level of proficiency in the English language already, it would be helpful to work only on the areas of the language with which they struggle rather than going through a step-by-step approach to language teaching as is done in synthetic syllabi. The analytic approach was therefore adopted for the study.

1.2.3 Problem statement

Despite several efforts by the Ghana Education Service to provide quality education, students' proficiency in the English language remains a challenge (Stoffelsma, 2013). The outcomes of external examinations at both the primary and secondary levels have demonstrated a decline in learners' English language proficiency, and examiners have raised several concerns pertaining to this phenomenon (West African Examination Council, 2016, 2017). Every year, after the external examinations at the basic and secondary levels, English Language consistently comes

up in the chief examiner's reports as one of the subjects where learners have difficulties. In the 2017 report, for instance, the chief examiner reports (among other findings) difficulty in spelling, lack of vocabulary, and lack of grasp of the mechanics of the language (WAEC, 2017). Similarly, in 2016 the chief examiner reported spelling challenges, punctuation problems and mistakes related to subject-verb concord, among other problems (WAEC, 2016).

Several senior high school graduates re-sit the English language examination annually in order to attempt to gain admission to university. Others have given up on a university education because of their inability to pass an English language proficiency assessment. Those who still desire a university education but are unable to do so for various reasons and are 25 years or older have the opportunity to enrol for university education through the mature admission policy, but only if they successfully pass the entrance examination.

The majority of these mature students, especially those without secondary education, struggle with the English language. These students gain admission into the university by the mature entrance admission examination with some years of working experience. A number of them are not able to comfortably express themselves verbally in English. Many of them are not able to write and read well, while others struggle to understand written and spoken instructions in English (Burke, 2013; Owusu-Acheaw, 2014; Yeboah, 2014). A number of them also have a limited vocabulary. Burke (2013) is of the opinion that these mature students find it difficult to be successful at university after being absent from education because they have little confidence as a result of their life experiences. Despite efforts by the Ghanaian government, such as upgrading training colleges to colleges of education and allocating a greater percentage of the national budget to education, standards are falling (Yeboah, 2014). Owusu-Acheaw (2014) asserts that this problem is a result of a poor foundation at the primary and secondary school levels. He adds that untrained teachers are also a contributing factor to the Ghanaian

literacy problem. Quagie et al. (2013) are of the view that the challenge posed by English in Ghana is a result of the manner in which the language is taught and learnt at all levels of education in the country. A preliminary investigation into the failure rate in English language and writing skills at Valley View University showed that a higher proportion of mature students fail in comparison to non-mature students. Except for the 2014/2015 academic year, the percentage of mature students who fail the Language and Writing Skills course in English has been consistently higher than that of non-mature students. In the 2012/2013 academic year, 32.14% of mature students failed compared to 13.6% of non-mature students. In the 2016/2017 academic year, there were 21.96% failures in the mature group compared to 13.57% in the non-mature group. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show the exact numbers and equivalent percentages from 2012 to 2018 and illustrate the high failure rates among the mature students in comparison to their peers in the course.

Table 1.1: Failure rate in language and writing skills

Academic year	C- TO F		Number of registered students		Failure rate in percentages	
	Failure grades					
	Mature	**Non-mature**	**Mature**	**Non-mature**	**Mature**	**Non-mature**
2012–2013	9	169	28	1 219	32.14	13.86
2013–2014	31	448	92	1 973	33.70	22.71
2014–2015	64	309	275	1 301	23.27	23.75
2015–2016	75	124	407	1 055	18.43	11.75
2016–2017	74	138	337	1 017	21.96	13.57
2017–2018	62	191	296	1 247	20.95	15.32

Source: VVU ITS 2018

From the tables, it is evident that the mature students had a higher failure rate in the Language and Writing Skills course than the non-mature students.

Another challenge that the mature students face is the inability to participate in class activities. While some can participate in class activities, others are unable to do so for various reasons. Many of them lack confidence in speaking and writing in English. Canning (2010) explains that among the several challenges faced by mature students is their lack of confidence. There is, therefore, a need for early intervention to support these students by improving both their affective and performance levels in speaking, reading and writing in English. Without the necessary support, these mature students may struggle throughout their bachelor's degree programmes, taking longer to complete their degrees and performing poorly in their professional responsibilities. O'Carroll et al. (2017) suggest that there is a need for universities to reassess teaching and learning strategies and to look at different approaches like student-centred learning in order to enhance mature students' learning experience in higher education and enable the majority to succeed. A task-based language teaching approach for developing these mature students' reading, writing and speaking skills may be appropriate to support them by improving their language skills and enabling them to succeed academically.

Our national educational sector, including universities, mostly uses the traditional and conventional way of language teaching, following a synthetic syllabus. At most universities in Ghana, although all first-year students spend at least a semester in an English language class (common topics covered include parts of speech, concord, sentence construction, paragraphing, essay writing, note-taking, sources of information and documentation, punctuation, etc.), a number of students, especially the majority of mature students, continue to struggle using the English language for academic and professional purposes. Yet to my individual knowledge, there have been no studies to identify their specific challenges and to provide appropriate

interventions to support their academic development. While many studies (e.g., Al Muhaimeed, 2013; Lee, 2008; Mao, 2012; Mozhgan, 2016; Murad, 2000; Purna, 2013) have explored how to apply TBLT to successfully improve various aspects of language elsewhere in the world, the approach has not been applied to mature students, and their specific challenges have not been taken into consideration. In the Ghanaian context, interventions using TBLT have not been conducted, nor has there been a focus on mature students specifically. It is often assumed that students at the university level should be able to cope on their own and should be instructed in the same way without taking cognisance of the specific challenges of mature students. In my view, given the appropriate support through an appropriate teaching approach, these students will probably outperform their younger counterparts. The research, therefore, sought to institute an intervention using TBLT to improve mature students' reading, writing, and speaking skills in the English language.

1.3 CALP and BICS

There are two defining elements of language proficiency that second language learners must grasp. Cummins (2014) identified these as BICS (Basic interpersonal communicative skills), or conversational proficiency, and CALP (Cognitive academic language proficiency), or academic proficiency. These acronyms describe the length of time required by non-native speakers of English to develop the required conversational skills and also develop the required academic proficiency skills in the target language.

BICS alludes to the language abilities required in ordinary, social, face-to-face encounters, such as the language used on the phone, on the playground, or to interact with people. Context dictates the vocabulary employed in these social encounters. That is, it is meaningful, non-specialised, and cognitively undemanding. BICS development might take anything from six

months to two years. Mozayan (2015) contend that the language utilised in these situations does not appear to be particularly complex or technical because it is the everyday language that individuals use to communicate socially with one another. Because this type of communication is frequently context-embedded and not extremely cognitively demanding, English language learners typically acquire these abilities fast (Sun, 2016).

CALP focuses on academic language or language used in the classroom in various curriculum areas. Academic language is distinguished by its abstract, context-reduced, and specialised nature. When establishing academic competency, learners must develop abilities such as comparing, categorising, synthesising, assessing, and inferring in addition to learning the language. Khatib and Taie (2016) posit that it can take learners a minimum of five years to develop CALP and may take longer for children with no prior training or guidance in native language development.

1.4 Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

TBLT, also known as task-based instruction, is a language teaching approach proposed by Prabhu (1987) and is believed to be one of the current language teaching approaches. It is believed to have emanated from the communicative language teaching (CLT) method. TBLT focuses on tasks to be completed by students. There are usually three phases of this approach. The first is the pre-task phase, where the task is introduced to the students. At this phase, students also prepare for the task by recalling or learning new words, phrases, clauses and sentences which may be helpful for their given task. In the second phase, the students perform the tasks in pairs or groups and then present the results or findings of their tasks either orally or in writing. In the final phase, the language that was used in the presentation is analysed. The

teacher focuses on an aspect of the language and uses these for teaching and discussion. In this research, the focus was on the reading, writing and speaking aspects.

Although this approach is mostly used in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), it is equally helpful for English as a second language (ESL), especially for mature students, as it can be used to improve all aspects of language: speaking, reading, listening and writing. Zuniga (2016: 14) posits that TBLT "provides an opportunity to experience spoken, reading, listening, and written language through meaningful class assignments that involve learners in the practical and functional use of L2". Instead of learning language items one by one in a specific sequence, as is commonly done in traditional language teaching, learners work on relevant content in the target language.

1.5 Aims and objectives

Although the research on TBLT has been applied in various contexts at various levels of education, it has not been applied to mature students. This research, therefore, adds to the research on TBLT by including a Ghanaian setting and by focusing on mature students. The aim of the study is to design, implement and evaluate a context-specific, task-based approach to improve the language (speaking, reading and writing) skills of mature university students in Ghana. The objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students;

2. design a TBLT programme and conduct an intervention in relation to the specific context (i.e., mature university students in Ghana);

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3a. determine if there will be an effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT;

b. determine if mature students will be at par with non-mature students after the application of TBLT;

c. determine students' opinions of the TBLT intervention programme;

d. determine how students respond to the application of TBLT in the classroom and the insights that may be gained from the intervention.

The research will attempt to answer the following questions based on the objectives:

1. What is the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature and non-mature students at Valley View University in Ghana?

2. How can a TBLT programme be designed and an intervention conducted in relation to the specific context and needs of mature university students in Ghana?

3a. What will be the effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT?

3b. Will mature students, after intervention with a TBLT programme, be at par in language proficiency with their non-mature peers who have gone through secondary education?

3c. What are the cohort of mature students' opinions on the TBLT intervention programme?

3d. How do students respond to the application of TBLT in the classroom and what insights may be gained from the intervention?

1.6 Design and methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used for the study. In other words, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The convergent parallel method design was used based on Creswell (2014). With the convergent parallel mixed method design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected by the researcher and each set is analysed. The results are then integrated into a single research study or an overall interpretation. The quantitative data were tests, outsiders' observations, and questionnaires. The qualitative data were interviews, outsiders' observations, and the researcher's log. A pilot study was conducted before the main study. The participants of the study were mature and non-mature first-year students totalling 62 individuals. Detailed discussions of the methodology are presented in Chapter 4.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study is focused on only first-year mature students at the universities because the study seeks to improve the language skills of these students, and it is in the first year that language designed to enhance writing, speaking, and reading is instructed. These language courses are taught in the first year because they are designed to equip the students in their academic writing and their writing in general. Mature students who have successfully passed the language exams and have moved to the second year or higher are excluded from the research.

The study is focused on three aspects of language: reading, writing and speaking. Listening, though an aspect of language, has been excluded from the research. This is because the students, from interaction, and other observations, do not have a great challenge; they do understand the English language satisfactorily.

Although there are several private and public universities in Ghana, the content of the language courses taught in the first year is similar across the country. This study focuses on one of the private universities.

Only mature students in the first year are used for the intervention and not the non-mature students. It is the mature students who have been identified to have a peculiar need, hence their selection.

This research uses the TBLT method and none of the language teaching methods like grammar translation, the direct method (DM), audio-lingual, communicative language teaching, etc.

1.8 Significance of the study

The outcome of this research, if positive, will hopefully help language teachers in Ghana, especially lecturers who teach mature students at the university level. It will also help to raise awareness of the TBLT approach and its use in the language classroom to improve students' language (reading, writing and speaking) skills. In Ghana, all first-year students at both public and private universities take a general course for a semester or two in the English language. Although the names given to these courses may differ slightly from institution to institution, the content is largely the same. Common topics are fundamental issues in grammar, paragraphing, referencing, composition writing, reading and note-taking. The findings from this research will, therefore, be relevant to all universities in Ghana.

In addition, the findings of the study will help policymakers in Ghana who are responsible for higher education to make decisions from an informed perspective and hopefully introduce a language teaching policy for mature students to improve their reading, writing and speaking skills. The thesis designs a TBLT curriculum specific to the Ghanaian context, which other

instructors could use in their teaching. Furthermore, the study will contribute to research on TBLT, both in general and specific contexts. Finally, mature students are likely to benefit from the findings of this study. For example, they will benefit from collaborative learning, which is associated with TBLT. They will also have a mature-only class and an enabling learning environment, which will increase motivation.

1.9 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis consists of eight chapters: Chapter 1 gave a general introduction to the study, providing the background, aims and objectives, and research questions. The statement of the problem, the scope of research and the significance of the study were also presented in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 present a review of the literature. A theoretical analysis is done on various second language acquisition theories with an emphasis on TBLT and related work in task-based language teaching. Mature age education is also reviewed. Finally, these chapters present and discuss the theoretical framework and instructional model.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology, including the research design, population, participants, research instruments, data collection and data analysis. The TBLT curriculum for the intervention is also outlined.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the quantitative findings of the research.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses the qualitative findings of the research.

Chapter 7 presents an integration of the quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings in relation to the research questions, draws conclusions and makes recommendations. Also, the limitations of the study and areas for further studies are outlined.

1.10 Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has given a general introduction to the entire research. A background has been given in the chapter with the rationale and the problem statement. The TBLT instructional approach and the motivation for its use in mature student education have been outlined. The chapter has also presented the aims and objectives of the research, together with the scope of the research. The significance of the research and the organisation of the thesis have also been presented. The next chapter reviews related literature pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the review of related literature on evaluating the effectiveness of a task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach to improve the language skills of mature students in a Ghanaian university. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section comprises the theoretical review of various language teaching approaches: the history of the approach, the propagators, time frames, and teaching methods, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each approach to provide a background and situate TBLT within the broader framework. Prominence is given to TBLT in the review, as it is the approach under study. The second section encompasses the empirical review, which focuses on research conducted on TBLT in various institutions in order to establish a basis for the current study. The third section discusses learning theories in relation to the study and positions TBLT as a constructivist learning theory. It concludes with a proposed TBLT model for mature students.

2.2 Theoretical review (approaches to language teaching)

There are several approaches to language teaching which have evolved over centuries. Some of these methods have gained popularity, while others remain obscure. When a language teaching method is practised over time, the needs of students or the challenges associated with the particular method cause it to give way to other, newer methods. Some of the approaches are similar to one another mainly because they evolve from the same original teaching method, while others differ greatly. Some of the traditional and conventional approaches are:

- the grammar translation method;
- the direct method, 1900-1930;

- situational language teaching, 1930;

- community language learning, 1960s;

- the audio-lingual method, 1960s;

- the silent way, 1963;

- total physical response approach, 1960s and 1970s; and

- desuggestopedia, 1970s.

Communicative competence or communicative language teaching (1972) and task-based language teaching (1987), which emerged later, are considered contemporary approaches and will be discussed after the traditional approaches. Each of these approaches has strengths and weaknesses, and the approaches are collectively discussed in two broad categories: early language teaching methods (traditional methods) and contemporary methods. The discussion ends with the TBLT, as it is the underlying approach for the current study.

2.2.1 Traditional language teaching methods

The traditional language teaching methods are the oldest language teaching approaches that have guided language teachers for decades. Modern or current teaching methods all have their roots in these traditional methods, and therefore, there is a need to review traditional approaches in order to provide better insight into how language teaching has evolved over the years. A review of these traditional approaches will also enable the relevant components of each to be extracted for the current study.

2.2.1.1 The grammar translation method (GTM)

The GTM was first introduced in Germany in the 1840s to 1940s, which makes it the oldest foreign language teaching method. This teaching method requires students to first translate passages from the second language (L2) into their first language (L1) and then from the L1 into

the L2. The translation is first done in words, then in phrases, and finally in sentences. The primary philosophical basis behind the method, according to Celce-Murcia (2001), is that grammar is the soul of language, and a foreign language can be easily learnt through translation. Larsen-Freeman (2000) is of the view that when students learn the grammar of the target language, they become more familiar with the grammar of their native language, and that helps them to speak and write better in their native language. Three objectives of the method are 1) to enhance students' reading of literature written in the target language, 2) to help students to translate from one language to another, and 3) to develop and/or enhance reading and writing skills. Larsen-Freeman (2000) observed that in the GTM, the goal of the teacher is to enable students to translate difficult passages.

According to Natsir and Sanjaya (2014), within the GTM context, common teaching characteristics are that students learn grammar deductively and memorise the native language in a manner equivalent to memorising the target language. Celce-Murcia (2001) adds that in the GTM, there is little use of the target language and instructions are given in the students' native language. Frequent classroom techniques used in the learning process include:

a. Deductive application of rules: Grammar rules are taught and applied in varied examples; exceptions to the rules are also noted.

b. Fill-in-the-blanks: Sentences are given with some words missing; students are required to provide words to fill in the gaps.

c. Composition: Essay topics are given to students to write in the target language; the topics may be based on a passage that has been read beforehand.

d. Antonyms/synonyms: Words are given to students, and they are required to find the antonyms or synonyms from a reading passage.

e. Memorisation: Target language words and their translated native language equivalents are given to students to memorise. Grammatical rules and paradigms are also to be memorised by the students.

f. Reading comprehension passages: Passages in the target language are given to students, and they are required to read the passages and answer questions related to the passages.

The GTM has been criticised mainly because of the use of translation in teaching. Khan and Mansoor (2016) contend that it is not possible to have an exact translation from one language to the other. Hence, it becomes difficult for students to adequately understand what is being taught, which may delay the learning process. In addition, the method is teacher-centred, which means that students are not actively involved in the learning process. Another major drawback identified with the method is students' inability to communicate effectively in the target language, as little attention is given to the language in terms of speaking and listening (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

Regardless of the challenges associated with GTM, the approach has been seen as an effective method to enable students to better understand the meaning of abstract words as well as complicated sentences. The GTM can also be used to teach any class size (Khan & Mansoor, 2016). GTM can be taught by teachers who are not fluent in the target language because of the use of the mother tongue, which, in effect, makes it a more simplified form of language teaching methodology.

2.2.1.2 The direct method

The direct method emerged as a reaction to the GTM when students could not effectively communicate in the foreign language they had been learning. The direct method was developed

in France in the 1900s by Charles Berlitz (Alkhateeb, 2016). The use of the mother tongue is not permitted (Celce-Murcia, 2001), and therefore, translation is not allowed. Unlike the GTM, the direct method gives little attention to analysis of grammatical and syntactic constructions (Alkhateeb, 2016). All four aspects of language (i.e., speaking, listening, writing and reading) are emphasised, and communication is seen as key. The basic tenet of the method is that second language learning is similar to first language learning; therefore, there is a need for oral/verbal interactions in the language. The proponents of the direct method advocate for the use of pictures and visual aids to help stimulate interactions which, in effect, will enhance communication between learners. The classroom environment using DM is to be as natural as possible in order to improve interactive learning (Kumar Dey, 2013). Celce-Murcia (2001) explains that classrooms in which the direct method is applied are always activity-oriented, and this creates a lively atmosphere. Major principles underlying the method, according to Alkhateeb (2016:24), are that instructions are conducted in the target language and that grammar is learnt inductively. Common instructional techniques used in the learning process are:

a. Reading aloud: Passages are apportioned to students for them to read in turns while the teacher uses pictures, realia or gestures to aid meaning.

b. Self-correction: Students are asked to make a choice between their own answers to questions and proposed alternative answers to the same questions. Another self-correction activity is to repeat an answer given by a student but pause where there is an error to give the student an opportunity to correct it.

c. Paragraph writing: Students are required to write a paragraph either from memory or based on a reading passage they encountered previously.

d. Conversation practice: Students are asked a series of questions in the target language that contain a certain grammatical structure. Students then ask each other their own questions based on the aforementioned grammatical structure.

e. Dictation: The teacher reads a passage three times with varying reading speeds. The students then write down what they have heard.

Cheung (2016) contends that the direct method neglects language skills like reading and writing because speech training is emphasised. Also, the technique encourages inaccurate fluency because native language structures are used in foreign vocabulary. Batool et al. (2017) add that the direct method is expensive to use because of the teaching and learning aids which are required for teaching. The cost makes it difficult to use the approach in schools with fewer available financial resources. Brown and Lee (2015) affirm that it was difficult to implement this method in public schools because of the constraints of classroom size, time and teacher background. Alkhateeb (2016) emphasises that learning a second language does not follow the same process as learning a first language. Using the direct method, therefore, will not make learning effective.

The direct method, although criticised, was very useful in teaching because of the "power of gestures and expressions" (Batool et al., 2017: 38). The various activities in the learning process make the class interesting and not dull. The students in the DM class get a lot of opportunities to listen to the spoken language, which helps them to improve their speech habits. Learners also improve their confidence levels because they can think in the target language (Cheung, 2016).

2.2.1.3 The audio-lingual method

The audio-lingual method was used to teach students how to communicate in the target language. It was developed by Charles Fries in 1945 during the Second World War, and it

became known as the Army Method. It is observed to be firmly grounded in linguistics and psychology. The method uses linguistic and psychological theories as a basis for teaching (Cheung, 2016). Larsen-Freeman (2000) describes the method as an application of the principles of structural linguistics by Fries (1945) and behavioural psychology by Skinner (1995). The underlying principle is reinforcement. In other words, correct behaviour receives positive feedback, while errors receive negative feedback (Alemi & Tavakoli, 2013). There are some similarities between the audio-lingual method and the direct method in that both reject the use of the mother tongue and stress that speaking and listening competencies in the target language take precedence over reading and writing. The primary objective of the audio-lingual method is to achieve accurate pronunciation and grammar. Emphasis is therefore placed on mastery of the building blocks of language as well as the rules pertaining to language. As a result, students are drilled in the use of grammatical patterns, and new vocabulary is learnt through dialogue, imitation and repetition. All four aspects of language are emphasised, although oral/verbal skills receive the most attention. Larsen-Freeman (2000) identifies some principles that guide the method. One of the principles is that learning is a process, and another is that positive reinforcement helps students to develop positive language habits. Others include the concepts that language forms do not occur by themselves and that the purpose of using language is for communication. Some conventional teaching methods in the audio-lingual method are repetition, drills, question-and-answer drills, grammar drills, dialogue memorisations and grammar games.

The challenge that was seen with this approach lies in the fact that students were not able to readily transfer the habits they had learnt in the classroom to outside/extracurricular communication (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The method also failed because only teachers who are resourceful and inventive can use the approach. It requires teachers to be well-

equipped and well-trained (Cheung, 2016). Due to the required training and the need for a language laboratory, it is expensive to use.

Nevertheless, Rhalmi (2014) regards the use of visual aids in the audio-lingual method as an advantage, as they have proven to be useful in vocabulary teaching. Cheung (2016) explains that ordinary learners have access to language learning through the audio-lingual method. According to De Cuenca (2011: 19), "if a method is related to a serious and reliable psychological approach with fundamentals on pedagogy, it is good." This assertion makes the audio-lingual method a reliable approach to language teaching since it is based on a real psychological approach, which is behaviourism (De Cuenca, 2011: 19). Nunan (2000) is of the opinion that the audio-lingual method has significantly impacted second and foreign language teaching to a greater degree than any of the language teaching methods. It was the first approach which could be said to have developed a "technology" of teaching and was based on "scientific" principles (Nunan, 2000: 229). The use of dialogues and drills, which are significant techniques in the AL method, is effective in foreign language teaching as it leads the students to produce language (Mart, 2013).

2.2.1.4 Community language learning

Community language learning (CLL) was introduced by Charles A. Curran in 1955 and is sometimes cited as an example of a humanistic approach. In the CLL approach, the teacher is placed in a counsellor role. The teacher is supposed to perceive students as "whole" persons and consider them beyond solely their intellect in order to understand their feelings, physical reactions, instinctive protective reactions and desire to learn (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Curran is believed to have studied adult learning for several years and to have observed that mature students usually feel threatened by a new learning situation. The method is

therefore designed to help manage the negative emotions which are believed to interfere with foreign language learning in adults. Similarly, Swift (2012) explains that the problems encountered by adult language learners originate from emotional or affective barriers, which are often created by the learners themselves. Best and Curran (1995) are of the view that if teachers could become language counsellors, they would be able to assist students in overcoming this fear. The goal of CLL is for students to learn how to use the target language communicatively in a non-defensive manner. Learners are also encouraged to work together so that during their interactions, they can help each other in a supportive community. According to Curran (1972), learning is a unified, personal and social experience, and the learner does not learn in isolation while competing with others. There is, therefore, the need for students to support each other during the learning process. Curran believes that six elements are necessary for non-defensive learning: security, aggression, attention, reflection, retention, and discrimination. He explains that for security, teachers should help students overcome any feelings or negative emotions that may affect their learning. Regarding aggression, students should be given the opportunity to assert themselves, be actively involved and invest themselves in the learning experience. Pertaining to attention, he states that the skill necessary for learning a second language is to be able to attend to many factors simultaneously, while in reflection, students are to stop at a point to consider the experience they are having. He points out that for retention to occur, there is the need for integration of new materials within the whole self and adds that in discrimination, students should be able to sort out differences among target language forms. The main principles of the approach discussed by Swift (2012) are outlined below. Due to their communicative nature, some of these principles are included as guidelines for the intervention of this study.

1. There is a need to create a mutual relationship between teacher and learner in order to create a learning environment that is safe.

2. Students should be encouraged to communicate as frequently as possible during classes, as language is meant for communication.

3. The teacher and learner can share learning experiences by getting to know each other to build a sense of community.

4. The teacher, as counsellor, is mindful of each student's uniqueness and listens to them, values their ideas, and tries to understand how they feel about the learning process.

5. Students use their native language for interaction to facilitate learning.

6. Cooperation, rather than competition, is encouraged; therefore, students work in groups in order to learn from each other and from the teacher.

Similar to Swift's principles, Richards and Rodgers (2001) present the following teaching and learning activities:

1. Group work (students are encouraged to work and learn from each other)

2. Free conversation (because language is meant for communication, students are encouraged to use the target language to communicate with each other as much as they are able)

3. Reflection and observation (the teacher, as much as possible, observes from afar to allow the students to freely have a conversation; students are allowed time to reflect on their language usage)

4. Translation (students are allowed to use their native language, and the teacher translates it to enable them to apply it in the target language)

Swift (2012) is of the view that the CLL method places unusual demands on language teachers because – in addition to their primary role as teachers – they need to also perform the role of

psychological counsellors, although they may not have the special training required. The method also focuses on fluency rather than accuracy, which may lead to inadequate control of the grammatical system of the target language. The method also lacks a prescribed syllabus, which, according to Swift (2012) and Richards and Theodore (2014), makes objectives unclear and evaluation difficult to accomplish (Swift, 2012: 11). Another drawback which has been observed with the CLL method is its application in large class sizes. As opined by Richards and Theodore (2014), it is difficult to effectively apply the method when the class size is too large because the teacher cannot effectively play the counselling role in such a situation.

Despite the disadvantages identified with the approach, CLL is known to be beneficial to foreign language learners if applied appropriately. Because the method is learner-centred and the humanistic side of language is stressed, the approach is seen as useful. CLL can be used in an international class because the teacher assesses the needs of these international students and counsels them to mitigate their anxiety (Nurhasanah & Kunci, 2015). Ayan (2013) contends that the method is very effective for teaching adults who come into higher education with some level of anxiety because the approach uses the "whole person" concept, which is effective for teaching adult/mature learners, as would be the case for this study. CLL also uses group work or a collaborative approach, which helps learners to interact easily with their fellow students (Ayan, 2013). In this study, collaboration in the form of group work is used during classes to enable students to learn from each other. It would also enhance free and easy communication among students, which is a key component of adult learning. Observation by the teacher, as in CLL, will also be adopted for this study during the task phase of the intervention to allow students to work on their own. Students will be allowed to ask their questions freely and share their thoughts without hindrance, and they will be expected to show the same respect to the teacher.

2.2.1.5 The silent way

The silent way method of language teaching was introduced in the 1970s by Caleb Gattegno based on the principle that the teacher should be silent as much as possible during class sessions. Students, on the other hand, should be encouraged to produce as much language as possible in order to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The students first learn the sounds of the language, then later move on to the spelling and then to reading. As stated by Alkhateeb (2016), the teacher works with what the student already knows and builds on it. The method is known to be a visual approach to language teaching and utilises as its main instrument a collection of coloured wooden sticks (coloured Cuisenaire rods) of various sizes to illustrate meaning. Gattegno later developed other objects, including sound and colour cards, Fidel charts, word charts and spelling charts, for use in the language classroom. Caner (2019) points out that these items are employed in the teaching of pronunciation and vocabulary, as well as basic grammatical structures such as prepositions of place, comparatives, superlatives, determiners, tenses and adverbs of time & manner. Unless the need becomes apparent for the teacher to add new items, the rods are mainly used in the learning process (Budiharto, 2018). Brown (2007) explains that learning is facilitated if the learner discovers rather than remembers or repeats. Also, learning is aided by physical objects, and problem-solving is central to learning.

There have been some criticisms levelled against this approach, mainly relating to the fact that there is a lack of communication using this method. As a result, Alkhateeb (2016) is of the view that it is difficult to take the approach beyond the very basics of the language being taught. The silence of the teacher has been seen as a weakness because the teacher is expected to direct students in language use, so their silence might encourage students to use the language incorrectly. It seems only students who are highly motivated will be able to develop real

communication abilities because of the rigid nature of illustrations using the rods. In addition, the method is limited to a relatively small group of learners, which means that large class sizes will not benefit from it.

In spite of the critiques, all four aspects of language (i.e., reading, writing, listening and speaking) are addressed in this approach which makes it a useful language teaching method. The problem-solving feature of this approach has been seen as a strength, which has led to the use of task-based learning and other problem-solving activities in different methods. The problem-solving feature of this method will therefore be incorporated into the teaching of adult learners for the current study, as it deals with all four skills of language (Córdoba Zúñiga, 2016).

2.2.2 Contemporary language teaching methods

2.2.2.1 Communicative language teaching

It has been observed that most of the language teaching approaches used prior to the 1970s were aimed at teaching students to communicate; however, the ability to communicate requires more than linguistic competence (Hymes, 1972). Because of this, there was a shift away from a linguistic structure-centred approach towards a communicative approach between the 1970s and 1980s. It was during this period that the communicative competence or communicative language teaching (CLT) approach emerged. This approach was popularised by Hymes in 1972 as a response to Chomsky's theory of linguistic competence.

According to Hymes (1972), linguistic competence is understood as being concerned with the knowledge available for spontaneous response. On the other hand, performance is language usage in concrete situations. Four areas are discussed in this approach:

- Sociolinguistic competence, which deals with how language can be used appropriately within a given social context

- Linguistic competence, which addresses four major aspects of language (i.e., phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax)

- Discourse competence, which deals with the knowledge of understanding written materials or reading correctly

- Strategic competence, which deals with having the skills to restore communication gaps (Hymes,1972)

Richards (2006) presents the following learning activities, which are carried out in pairs or groups in CLT:

1. Information gap activity (allows students to request information or to ask for clarification in order to complete a task)

2. Jigsaw activities (students are given segments or parts of an entire work to read and later explain to the group)

3. Task-completion activities (students put pieces of information together to complete a given task)

4. Opinion-sharing activities (students are asked to contemplate and share their opinions, beliefs, and values)

The challenge with this approach lies in the fact that errors are not generally corrected by the teacher, with the result that students may continue to use the wrong vocabulary for an extended period. When errors are continually made over a significant period, there are usually difficulties in correction. In addition, although students engage in role-play, the setting cannot be equated to a real-life situation where language is used and lacks the typical interaction setting that would

require effective communication, as required by the approach. The inadequacies of the CLT methods enumerated above are said to have led to the introduction of TBLT, which was seen as a better alternative (Richards, 2006).

The strength of the CLT approach emerges from the fact that students are allowed to work in groups. When students work with each other, they can learn some essential details faster, which enhances their fluency, especially in a language setting. Group work not only promotes interpersonal communication but also provides the learner with opportunities to improve linguistic proficiency (Pyun, 2004). Richards (2006) contends that students are also likely to be motivated when they learn in groups. Another strength of the CLT method lies in the role-playing aspect, as students are allowed to engage in several role-playing activities to enable them to communicate effectively in the target language. Materials used in CLT are authentic, such as newspapers, weather forecasts and menus. As stated earlier, this approach is useful for developing all aspects of language.

Researchers like Brown (2000) and Ellis (2003, 2009) perceive that TBLT emerged from CLT. Among the reasons for this assumption is that in both methods, students work on all four skills of language. Also, just as CLT emphasises communication, TBLT also stresses the need for students to use the target language (in this case, English) appropriately in a given context.

TBLT includes, to a large extent, all aspects of CLT with some extensions. Both CLT and TBLT require students to work in groups. Interacting with one another not only increases students' fluency in the language but also reduces anxiety, which may be associated with adult/mature learners. Again, both TBLT and CLT require the use of authentic materials (materials that are used in real-life situations, such as newspapers, menus, videos, posters, flyers, etc.). These materials enable the use of language in a natural environment as much as

possible, and students are also able to associate with them easily. Both CLT and TBLT are useful in the enhancement of all four skills of language, and this work seeks to improve on three aspects: reading, writing and speaking. Thus, both CLT and TBLT are essential.

The extension of TBLT mainly deals with the phases required of a given lesson: pre-task, task and post-task. Unlike CLT, which may allow students to commit errors repeatedly without correction, the post-task phase of TBLT focuses on the deficiencies or errors of students so that corrections can be made in real time. Again, in CLT, the focus is primarily on communication and not on form, whereas in TBLT, communication and the language form are dually attended to at the post-task phase. Concentration is centred on the language deficiency that occurs during the task phase.

2.2.2.2 Task-based language teaching

TBLT, also known as task-based instruction (TBI), is a student-centred approach to teaching language. It allows students to learn language through activities or tasks. Prabhu popularised this approach in 1987. Researchers such as Brown (2000) and Ellis (2003, 2009) perceive it as emergent from CLT – this is understandable because of the many similarities they share, including the use of authentic materials, collaborative or group work, free communication, and the development of all four aspects of language.

TBLT can be classified as an analytic syllabus (Wilkins, 1976). An analytic syllabus looks at the needs and purpose for which students are learning a language, with the goal being to determine how components are ordered. In contrast, a synthetic curriculum is a curriculum made up of linguistic units comprising grammatical structures, vocabulary items and functions of grammatical elements, among other aspects. Usually, the components are logically ordered from simple to complex (Wilkins, 1976). TBLT is thus classified as an analytic syllabus

because the needs of the students indicate the aspect of the language component upon which the focus should be.

With TBLT, students are allowed to communicate in the target language by engaging in a series of tasks. The concept of tasks in TBLT forms the central tenet underlying its approach and has been defined differently by several researchers. Nunan (2004), for instance, describes tasks as the pragmatic usage and meaning of language in a defined context. He further classifies tasks into pedagogical tasks, real-world tasks, listing tasks, ordering and sorting tasks, matching tasks, comparing tasks, problem-solving tasks, experience-sharing tasks and creative tasks. Similarly, Prabhu (1987) defines a task as "An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process" (p. 24). He provides three classifications of tasks:

- Information-gap tasks, which allow an exchange of information among participants in order to complete a task

- Opinion-gap tasks, in which students present their personal preferences, feelings, or attitudes in order to achieve a task

- Reason-gap tasks, which require students to derive some new information by inferring it from information they have

Similarly, Willis's (1996b: 28) definition of a task is "an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose to achieve an outcome". He further classifies tasks into six components, similar to Nunan's (2004) classification, and presents them as listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. Ellis (2003: 16), on the other hand, defines a task as "a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms

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of whether or not the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed". Further to his definition, Ellis (2009) classifies tasks into unfocused tasks and focused tasks.

The former, he explains, provide learners the opportunity to communicate generally, and the latter is designed to provide opportunities for communication using some specific linguistic item, typically a grammar structure. He makes a distinction between input-providing and output-prompting tasks. The differences are concerned with which aspect of language the task seems to tackle. While input-providing tasks engage learners with the receptive skills of listing and reading, output-prompting tasks productively stimulate the students to write or speak meaningfully.

All the definitions of tasks have "a primary focus on meaning, inducing learners to draw on their linguistic and cognitive resources, and being outcome-oriented in the sense that learners are required to use language to accomplish some real-world activity (telling a story, solving a problem, giving directions, etc.)" (Ahmadian, 2016:1). Huang (2010) proposes four fundamental questions to ask in order to determine if an activity is a task:

1) Is there a primary focus on meaning?

2) Does the activity relate to real-world activities?

3) Is there a problem to solve?

4) Can it be assessed in terms of outcome?

When all these four questions are answered in the affirmative, then according to Huang, an activity can be considered to be a task.

For this study, a task will be defined as an activity that is carried out by students in groups or in pairs, mainly utilising the target language to reach a targeted goal determined by the teacher. The classification of tasks or task activities for this study is drawn from the various explanations discussed above. These are the task-performing options and task-processing options from Ellis (1993), information-gap activities and opinion-gap activities from Prabhu (1987), and problem-solving activities from Nunan (2004) and Willis (1996a). These activities are explained in Chapter 3 under "teaching and learning activities".

The most common stages of the TBLT approach comprise three phases. The first is the pre-task phase. At this stage, the task is introduced to the students, and this allows them to prepare for the task by recalling or learning new words, phrases, clauses and/or sentences that would help in their given task. The teacher ensures that students understand the instructions for the task by breaking down the requirements needed for the task into smaller steps to alleviate any challenges. The teacher also examines the extent of difficulty of the task to allow the learners to make the necessary adjustments (Prabhu, 1987). Ellis (1993) affirms that the pre-task stage prepares students to perform the task to enhance language acquisition. He proposes four ways that the pre-task stage can be approached procedurally. The first is supporting learners to complete a task similar to what they will perform in the task stage. The second is requiring students to observe how a task is performed. The third is requiring students to observe a model task similar to what they will perform. The fourth way involves engaging students in a non-task activity that will prepare them for and strategically plan the performance of the main task.

The second phase of the approach is the task phase or during-task phase. During this phase, students perform the task, usually in groups, and then present the results or findings of the task either orally/verbally or in writing. The teacher monitors and encourages students but observes from afar most of the time and assists only when necessary. Ellis (1993) suggests two

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methodological options available to teachers: task-performing options and process options. The former relates to options available to the teacher to enable planning prior to the performance of the task, while the latter deals with the decisions the teacher and students take while the task is ongoing.

Task-performing options could include questions such as whether students will be given a specific time within which to complete a given task or whether they should be allowed to have access to input data (such as pictures or documents) while performing the task. Another question is whether the teacher should introduce some surprise element (a piece of information that was not made available before the task) during the task.

These questions, when answered by teachers, enable them to decide which methodology will fit the task assigned to the students. Ellis (1993) further points out several process options teachers and students should consider striving for during the task phase. Some options include provisions for students to take risks. Another one is precise formulation of messages. Although achieving the process options may be challenging, with proper orientation, the teacher and students can adjust and accomplish a successful task phase.

The post-task phase is the final phase in TBLT and comprises the analyses of the language used. The teacher focuses on one aspect of language (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, or listening) for teaching and discussion based on the report received from the students. Ellis (1993) outlines three major pedagogical aspects for this phase: the teacher provides an opportunity for the task to be repeated, allows for a reflection on how the task was performed and gives attention to forms that were problematic during the task.

The framework for the three-phase approach presented by Ellis (1993) and Willis (1996b; 1998) and discussed here is illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

Pre-Task
Introduction to the Topic and Task

Task Cycle
Task Planning; Report

Post-Task
Language Focus; Analysis; Practice
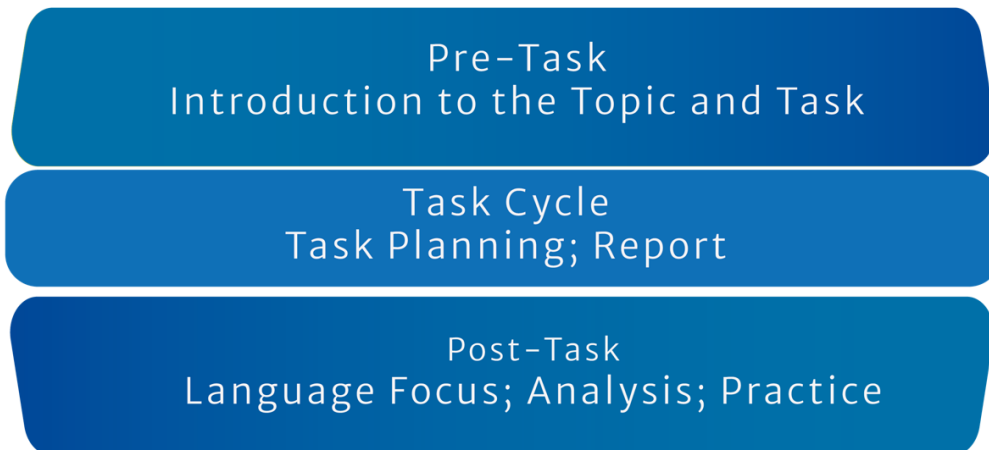
Figure 2.1: Three-phase approach by Ellis (1993) and Willis (1996b)

At the pre-task stage, learners are provided with language support or language information that will prepare them for the task. The teacher helps students to become familiar with the task topic. Vocabulary that may be needed for the task is provided. The task stage is given to learners to perform the task in pairs or groups utilising the target language while the teacher observes. The learners have the opportunity to communicate with one another during this phase. Learners also plan how to report their outcomes. When the task is completed, the pair or the group presents an oral/verbal or written report. The post-task phase is used to examine or analyse the reports given by the students. At this stage, the teacher gives feedback and points out errors in the language used during the reporting. Students may have the opportunity to repeat the task (Willis, 1996).

For this intervention, an additional phase – the preparatory phase – has been added. This phase precedes the main lessons but is considered very important. It is used to set the most optimal learning environment for students so that they are comfortable and feel ready for the lesson. During the preparatory phase, students are encouraged to set personal goals before classes

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begin, and they are motivated to do the best they can. The inclusion of the preparatory phase

has therefore generated a four-phase TBLT approach, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.
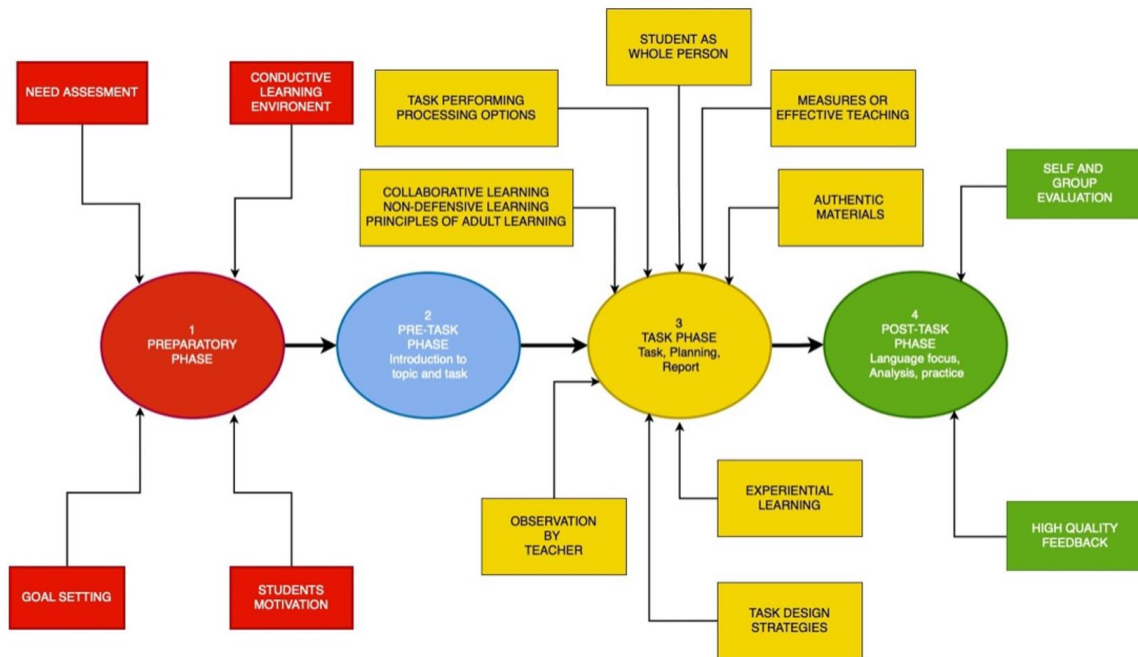
Figure 2.2: Proposed TBLT framework for mature students

As can be seen from the diagram, the first phase allows students to set personal and group goals

for the learning process. In this phase, the teacher assesses the students in order to identify their

needs and ways to motivate them. A conducive classroom environment is created for learning

while the needed teaching and learning materials are set appropriately. In addition to task-

performing options and task-processing options, which are available during the task phase,

learning is done collaboratively. Students are seen as whole persons and are therefore treated

with the utmost respect. The teacher observes during the task phase and uses authentic materials

to develop all the language skills. The task phase is also characterised by principles of adult

learning, measures of effective teaching, experiential learning, and non-defensive learning. The

post-task phase is characterised by high-quality feedback as well as self-evaluation and group

evaluation. Detailed discussions on the four-phased TBLT approach are done in Chapter 3 under the instructional model.

2.3 Review of empirical literature on the application of TBLT

Several language researchers have researched and applied TBLT in various countries and educational institutions at multiple levels (Zuniga, 2016; Mao, 2012; Malmir et al., 2011; Mozhgan, 2016; Purna, 2013; Le, 2014, among others). A number of these researchers have implemented the method in EFL and ESL classrooms. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 205) state that TBLT is the one teaching method that has strong support from SLA researchers.

Zuniga (2016) applied TBLT in an EFL programme in Florencia, Colombia, and found that it could be used to integrate language abilities. Six students (ages ranging from 16 to 22 years) who were first-year university students were used for the research. Unlike Mao (2012), who concentrated only on the reading aspect of the language, Zuniga discusses all four facets of language: reading, writing, listening and speaking. His work, however, was not on mature students but rather on regular students. Zuniga (2016: 14) strongly believes in the integration of language abilities and explains that students should learn all four aspects of language together. He states that:

> "Many researchers and teachers have shown the benefits of integrating language skills in English education. They all state that learning English is more productive when students learn the four skills in a single lesson because it is the way in which learners will probably use the language in their daily lives." (Zuniga, 2016: 14).

Similar to other studies, Zuniga's (2016: 22) qualitative study used three "phases": the pre-task, during-task, and post-task phases. The findings of the study revealed that the

implementation of TBLT facilitated the integration of the four skills in an English-as-foreign-language context. He concluded his research by reiterating that "TBLT is a meaningful approach to integrate language skills in an EFL program". His study affirms that TBLT works efficiently in improving the language skills of students. Zuniga's work did not demonstrate whether students would be able to work independently when they transition into their main programme of study. His students were yet to be in the mainstream university programme. With the current research, efforts will be made to determine whether mature students will be able to work independently and successfully and consequently continue their university education just like students who come to university straight from high school.

Mozhgan (2016) applied TBLT with 60 freshmen medical students in Iran and discovered that the approach helped enhance the reading comprehension ability of medical students at the university. This study was conducted within a comparative setting with the traditional GTM. In the quasi-experimental study conducted by Mozhgan, 30 of the 60 participants received instruction through TBLT, and the other 30 were taught utilising the GTM. These first-year students were taking a general course in English, similar to the participants of the current study. However, the participants in Mozhgan's study were younger, unlike the mature students in this study. The results of Mozhgan's study showed that the experimental group's reading comprehension skills had substantially increased, as was shown in the mean scores.

In a similar study, Mao (2012) worked on the application of TBLT in English-reading classrooms in China. He adapted Willis's (1996b) classification of tasks: listing, ordering, sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences and creative tasks. He divided the experimental process into three phases, as is usually done in TBLT: the pre-reading stage, the reading stage and the post-reading stage. The strength of Mao's paper lies in the in-depth discussions on the six components of tasks. He also admitted to challenges associated

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with TBLT. The article helps readers to identify possible solutions that may be used to address such problems. He also explicitly selected one aspect of language in isolation (i.e., reading) with which to experiment. Although the work centred on reading and did not discuss the other aspects of language, the result is congruent with other studies in the application of TBLT and stimulates interest in the implementation of the approach in the other aspects of language.

Malmir, Sarem, and Ghasemi (2011) did similar work on the effect of TBLT on the Iranian intermediate ESP learners' reading comprehension. What was different from their work was a comparison with content-based language teaching (CBLT). CBLT is a second language teaching approach which organises teaching around the content that students need in language acquisition (Schmidt, 2002). In other words, this approach focuses on the teaching of language to enable students to acquire the skills that they will need in their regular classroom environments for learning their content subjects such as history, accounting, biology etc. Malmir et al.'s (2011) participants were 60 students at a university who underwent 12 sessions of teaching. It was observed that students who were taught reading comprehension using the TBLT approach outperformed students who were instructed with CBLT. The T-test analysis showed that participants in the TBLT group performed better in the reading comprehension post-test, which illustrates that TBLT was more effective than CBLT in teaching reading comprehension to Iranian ESP learners. The research affirms that TBLT is "more effective than previous traditional methodologies" such as CBLT, the grammar translation method and the silent way, among others (Malmir et al., 2011: 92). This research also endeavours to add to the literature on the effectiveness of TBLT in improving reading in university students but specifically in mature students.

Al Muhaimeed (2013) conducted a comparative study between TBLT and the traditional/conventional methods of English teaching. These conventional methods are

collectively described as "prompting and drilling", mainly because they employ the practices of memorisation, answering questions, individual learning and teacher-centredness as opposed to group learning and student-centredness. Al Muhaimed's study had 122 participants divided into the control and the treatment group. The treatment group underwent ten weeks of English language instruction through TBLT, whereas the control group was taught through traditional/conventional methods. The results proved that teaching via TBLT helped to increase students' achievement scores in reading comprehension more than the traditional teaching methods.

Purna (2013) concentrated on the effectiveness of TBLT in developing the writing skills of secondary school learners in Nepal. Fifty (50) grade 9 learners (25 control, 25 experimental) were used for the study. The learners received instruction via TBLT over a two-and-half-month period. Pre-and post-test results showed considerable development in every component of writing. The experimental group's performance had significantly improved, but no significant change was found in the performance of the control group. The conclusion was that learners' writing skills could be significantly developed through TBLT by using various learning strategies such as collaborative writing, adequate written and oral/verbal feedback, authentic teaching materials and holistic-based learning, which are strategies characteristic of TBLT.

Murad (2000) investigated the effect of TBLT on speaking skills among Palestinian EFL students in Israel, as well as their attitudes toward English. He found that TBLT enhanced the speaking skills of the students in the experimental group significantly and also affected their attitudes towards English. Several researchers like Zhou (2017), Rozati (2014), González-Lloret and Nielson (2015), and Yuan (2016) continue to research and apply TBLT in various sectors of education in different countries.

Researchers such as Le (2014), Xhaferi and Xhaferi (2013), and Zhu-Xiu (2016) concentrated on teachers who applied TBLT and made various discoveries. Zhu-Xiu (2016) conducted focused research in order to identify misunderstandings of TBLT from theoretical and practical perspectives and to subsequently provide suggestions as to what teachers should do to successfully implement TBLT in the Chinese EFL context. He found that many English teachers in China have a misunderstood notion that language form is not essential in TBLT. On the contrary, the teachers asserted that meaning should instead be primarily focused on during lessons.

2.4 Challenges and benefits of TBLT

Although the TBLT seems to stand out as a desideratum for language teaching, it does have some challenges, which are often eclipsed by its apparent benefits.

2.4.1 Challenges with TBLT

As with any learning approach, a number of challenges associated with TBLT have been identified, such as the required presence of the teacher, the monetary expense/investment necessary for its application, difficulty in assessment, and scarcity of required textbooks.

Firstly, Al Muhaimeed (2013) points out that the approach requires the physical and mental attendance of teachers for successful implementation, which means that teachers should always be present, unlike other methods where students are occasionally able to learn on their own. He further adds that much time is required to apply TBLT. In a school setting, where several learners receive instruction in TBLT within a limited timeframe, implementation of the approach becomes problematic. Still, a well-planned TBLT lesson requires adequate time devoted to planning, compilation of materials, and performance of the task.

Secondly, Ganta (2015) and Murad (2000) argue that a lot of resources are needed, which makes the approach quite expensive to apply. Thus, institutions with limited resources may struggle with the method's implementation. Ganta (2015) adds that learners who are beginners in a new language find it challenging to take part in the task because they are required to present their work both orally/verbally and in writing. For example, beginners might not be able to engage in a conversation during the task stage, let alone conduct a presentation. She also argues that the needs of learners are neglected in TBLT, as a task may not interest some learners depending on their cultural background and gender.

Thirdly, assessment is seen as a challenge with TBLT. Carless (2003) explains that TBLT does not prepare learners for form-oriented tests, which they frequently face. As a result, TBLT is not compatible with examinations. The argument is that TBLT primarily focuses on effective communication in the target language; students use the language in their day-to-day activities and not necessarily for formal academic examination/evaluation. This claim can, however, be dealt with as tasks performed by students can be assessed. Additionally, inputs are given by the teacher in the post-task phase, which concentrates on language usage. At this stage, the focus is not only on communication but also on the language form used. Assessment can be done to determine students' performance in these language forms either during the teaching period or at the end of the teaching period.

Fourthly, another challenge associated with the method is the scarcity of access to course books based on TBLT. There is an inadequate number of textbooks with topics that are designed to guide teachers in their teaching, which will naturally impact the design of tasks; teachers must create task activities out of the available resources. This challenge can be addressed by developing task activities from existing textbooks which have been recommended for teaching. For example, Wicking (2010) explains that classroom activities can be designed into TBLT

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task activities. Although there are a number of challenges discussed in this section, according to researchers, these challenges are peripheral, and many of them can be overcome.

2.4.2 Benefits of TBLT

The aforementioned challenges notwithstanding, several advantages have been discovered with the TBLT approach. To begin with, Al Muhaimeed (2013) and Murad (2000) explain how the approach fosters cooperative learning, which means students learn from each other more than from the teacher. Linguistics-focused collaborative learning approaches and research concerning cooperative learning itself date back to the work of Dewey (1986) and fit well with learner-centred approaches like CLT and TBLT. Within cooperative learning environments, students learn in small groups with the help of each other, rather than competing, as is done in the current education system (Singh & Agrawal, 2011).

In addition, because the TBLT method uses a student-centred approach, students tend to be very active in class by asking questions and providing responses. These activities do not create anxiety, which is very beneficial in any learning environment. During TBLT lessons, students can engage in meaningful communication, and it enhances their language acquisition. Another advantage identified by most researchers (Al Muhaimeed, 2013; Ellis, 2009; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) is the ability of students to use the target language to communicate while at the same time emphasising accuracy.

Because students' needs are largely considered in the preparation of task lessons, students are more likely to be interested in tasks. Motlagh et al. (2014: 2) argue that "Classroom activities are not pre-determined by teachers but instead, are adopted, derived, adapted and revised to meet the needs of those specific groups".

Motlagh et al. (2014) further point out that TBLT promotes learners' confidence and enthusiasm. This is a result of the relaxed classroom environment, as students are not afraid of making mistakes and are able to interact freely with their colleagues and fellow students. The unintimidating nature of the classroom environment promotes effective teaching, learning and enhancement of language acquisition (Masaazi, 2015).

TBLT is effective in teaching all four aspects of language (Motlagh et al., 2014). While other methods enhance aspects of language development, TBLT is a versatile approach. The language which is practised in the approach is not pre-determined; it is used naturally.

Ganta (2015) considers TBLT to be an appropriate approach which supports experiential learning. He explains that learners bring to the fore their experiences in the learning process rather than depending on the teacher to transmit knowledge. During the performance of tasks, students do several reflections and use the experience they already have with the language to support themselves in the completion of the task (Tawil, 2018). Intellectual growth occurs faster in experiential learning than when the teacher transfers knowledge passively. Kolb (1984), who proposed experiential learning, argues that ideas are not fixed and unchallengeable elements of thought but are formed and reformed through experience. He further explains that learning is not a one-time activity but rather occurs through a process of continuous modification of experiences. TBLT, therefore, allows for such a learning process to take place.

Other advantages of TBLT include the ability to use the approach alongside other traditional methods, the capability of improving vocabulary due to its communicative nature, the motivation of students to use the target language, and the focus on meaning or understanding.

The advantages and benefits of TBLT are far-reaching, and according to prominent researchers (Al Muhaimeed, 2015; Ellis, 2001; Long, 1985; Mohanraj, 2013; Prabhu, 1987; Zuniga, 2016),

the approach remains one of the most recommended in language teaching and can be used to improve all aspects of language.

This section has reviewed various language teaching methods that have been used over the years, with an emphasis on the TBLT method. The next section presents a review of learning theories.

2.5 Learning theories

Theories of learning are vital for effective teaching because they highlight the different components of the learning process. As a result, educational theorists have attempted to understand how information is accumulated, transferred and comprehended (Alanazi, 2016). This section discusses some of these theories which are related to this work. Discussions are centred on the behaviourism theory of learning, the cognitivism (cognitive) learning theory, the humanistic theory of learning, the constructivism learning theory, the affective response theory, and the adult learning theory.

2.5.1 Behaviourism theory of learning

Behaviourists interpret all learning to be the result of habit formation through imitation, positive reinforcement and practice (Kramsch & Throne, 2002). They contend that the only laudable behaviours of study/learning are those that can be observed directly. Thus, emotions are not the rightful object of investigation (Zhou & Brown, 2014).

Displeased with behaviourism's profound emphasis on observable behaviour, many dissatisfied psychologists contested the fundamental principles of the behaviourism response. Winne and Hadwin (2008) asserted that previous knowledge and mental processes not only play superior roles to stimuli in shaping behaviour or response but also interfere with memory

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detail. Matlin (1994) also contended that human beings are not machines or animals that generally respond to environmental stimuli in the same manner.

In this proposed intervention, students would be made to develop the habit of appreciating each other's views without ridicule or intimidation – thus, students who have developed the behaviour of not allowing others to share their views (especially when they do not agree with them) would have to unlearn such behaviour. When students give positive responses, they will be rewarded by giving them positive feedback and encouragement. This theory will, in effect, have a positive impact on our study.

2.5.2 Cognitivism (cognitive) learning theory

The beginnings of cognitivism as a learning theory date back to the early twentieth century. The turning away from behaviourism to cognitivism was engineered by the failure of behaviourist tradition to elucidate why and how individuals understand and process information (Yilmaz, 2011). It is worth noting that cognitivism as a concept of theory of learning is based neither on the works of a single theorist nor those of a unified group of theorists. It is rather informed by the contributions made by quite a few separate theorists, and it is somewhat multifaceted.

Piaget's theory of individual cognitive development (1936), Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory (1957), Spiro's cognitive flexibility theory (1990), Sweller's cognitive load theory (1988), and Bruner's cognitive constructivist learning theory (1961) are all examples of theories which have contributed to the continual development of cognitive theories.

Piaget's (1936) theory of cognitive development illustrates how a mental model of the world is constructed by a child. The theory does not agree with the idea that intelligence is a fixed trait but rather proposes that intelligence is developed through interaction with the environment

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and through maturation. Piaget's theory is based on three basic components: schemas, adaptation processes and cognitive development stages. Schemas, in Piaget's view, are categories of knowledge that help learners to interpret and understand the world, which includes a subset of knowledge and the process of obtaining that knowledge. As new things are subjectively experienced, new information modifies, adds to, or changes existing information or schemas (Lefa, 2014). The adaptation process, according to Piaget (1936), is the inborn quality or tendency that allows individuals to adjust to changing environmental conditions. These processes are "equilibration", which deals with the physical and social experiences within an individual's environment; "assimilation", which deals with the addition of new experiences to old ones; and "accommodation", which handles the building of new experience by both old and new ones. The final component, cognitive development stages, indicates that there are four stages that children progress through for their cognitive development, and their understanding is dependent on the particular stage they have reached.

The educational implication of Piaget's theory is that teachers are to employ student-centred learning techniques within a flexible curriculum that practices the use of the environment, discovery learning and problem-solving, among others. These teaching and learning variations will help reach a larger proportion of students to process information successfully.

2.5.3 Humanistic theory of learning

McLeod (2015) points out that the humanistic theory was introduced by the syncretised works of Maslow, Carl Rogers, Malcolm Knowles and Jack Mezirow. These works originated in response to concerns that were raised against the perceived limitations of theories that were considered to be psychodynamic theories because those theories failed to adequately address issues regarding the nature of growth and human behaviour. Earl and Kemp (2013) indicate

that the main aim of the humanistic theory is to provide quality of life and that learning is student-centred and personalised, and the teacher's role is that of a facilitator.

Madsen and Wilson (2012) further add that the humanistic theory involves the concept of human learning by observing the behaviour of others and the results of that behaviour. The teacher is a role model in that they model appropriate behaviour and make an effort to correct inappropriate behaviour. Students, in this approach, are first seen as human beings who have emotions, feelings and social needs. Teaching and learning hence have to consider this in praxis.

The teacher's role is to provide reason and motivation for tasks, to teach learning skills and to foster group work. At the same time, the student is required to use self-evaluation techniques, employ concepts and methods for stimulating learning, growth and development both in individual persons and in society so as to enhance well-being, and, overall, practise observation of their own behaviour and make necessary changes. They are required to be responsible for their own learning and keep their goals realistic (Huitt, 2001).

The student-centeredness of the theory is what this research seeks to use in the intervention. Unlike other theories where the teacher is the main actor in the teaching and learning process, our intervention will allow the student to explore by undertaking a series of tasks in groups. The teacher facilitates the process but does not lead throughout the class session.

2.5.4 Constructivism learning theory

Bruner's (1984) theory on constructivism advocates that learners can form new ideas based on their past and current knowledge because the process of learning is an active one. The theory further adds that information selected by the learner is transformed, constructed and decided upon based on cognitive structures. These structures contribute to the organisation of meaning.

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Students in constructivism are encouraged to learn on their own by discovery. They are expected to bring their own ideas and own experiences to bear in the process of experimentation in order to understand how things work. Additional constructivist strategies include presenting others' viewpoints, promoting dialogue, and emphasising conceptual understanding rather than rote learning. Further discussions on constructivist theory are done in Chapter 3 under the section on the theoretical framework.

In TBLT, activities used during lessons enable students to think critically about the topics being treated. These are problem-solving activities that give students a chance to think through a particular problem and generate their own solutions while engaging with others. Such a combination of thought and interaction develops intelligence, as posited by Piaget's theory of cognitive intelligence. Students' group/project activities where they think through their group projects with their colleagues bring in their own experiences and perceptions, which is also linked to Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social cognitive growth and constructivism. Students actively process information that is presented through experiential learning, discovery learning and dialoguing, which can be linked to Bruner's constructivism.

2.5.5 Affective response theory and theory of human motivation

Haile, Gallagher and Robertson (2015:1) define *affective response (AR)* as the "general psychological state of an individual, including but not limited to emotions and mood, within a given situation." Rosenblatt (1938) is one of the researchers who believe that understanding a new concept depends not only on the text but also on personal beliefs and conceptualisation. Rosenblatt (1938), as cited in Waninge (2015), postulates that for literature to be understood, the reader must "be given the opportunity and courage to approach literature personally, to let it mean something to [them] directly" (Rosenblatt, 1938: 81).

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In line with affective response, the intervention with TBLT for mature students is conscious of the affective side of students. It therefore selects tasks carefully because, as Phung (2017) notes, students respond positively to topics that they find to be relevant and emotionally engaging. Also, students prefer tasks that give them the opportunity to think and communicate, and they do not enjoy topics with which they are unfamiliar. During the intervention, topics that are selected for a task are based on the daily activities of students, such as buying items from the grocery, registration, appointments with academic advisors, etc.

Another aspect of affective response is the theory of human motivation developed by Herold Maslow in 1943. As a humanist psychologist, Maslow claimed that human beings have an innate desire to be who they want to be (self-actualised), but in order to attain that, there are basic needs that need to be met first as well as security needs. Belongingness and love needs generally take precedence over esteem needs. Maslow believes that when these needs are met, an individual will require self-actualisation: at this stage, people are not concerned with the opinions of others but with their personal growth and self-awareness.

Rutledge (2011) criticises the approach mainly because the definition of self-actualisation is deemed as problematic as it cannot be scientifically tested. Graham and Messner (1998) claim that there is no empirical data to support the model and that the theory cannot be applied universally.

Despite these criticisms, educators and teachers see this theory as very efficient and necessary in teaching and learning. Burleson and Thoron (2017) point out that when learners are worried or preoccupied with certain basic needs, it becomes difficult for them to focus on content learning and academic achievement. There is, therefore, the necessity for these needs to be met so that teachers can effectively teach. Although teachers cannot provide all the basic needs of

students, they can create supportive environments in order to make sure that the needs of students in an academic environment are satisfied.

For this intervention, because mature students are the target population, it is vital to ensure that these students have met their basic needs to motivate their learning. For the basic needs, although they cannot be met by the teacher, a conducive environment will be created such that students will be able to meet them. Classes will be fixed at a convenient time such that students will have time to have their meals at the appropriate time. Students will also have time to have their routine sleep/rest because classes will not take place too late into the night nor too early in the morning.

On safety, love and esteem needs, the classroom environment will be such that students do not feel threatened during classes. Group discussions are a way to encourage efficient communication among students, which will reduce any anxiety they may experience. Students (and, by extension, their personal views) will be treated with the utmost respect so as to encourage them and boost their self-esteem. During the intervention, class rules will be set out and discussed at the beginning of the class. Such rules will include avoidance of ridicule and intimidation, respect for each other's views as well as respect and appreciation of individual differences. This practice will hopefully create an environment that will encourage students to take risks in asking and answering questions without fear of ridicule from their fellow students. Because most mature students have families, they are often worried about their welfare when they are away at school. During the intervention, the students will be made to know that they are loved and cared about (occasionally, enquiries will be made about their families). Time will be allocated outside of class periods to interact with students to inquire about their fears, worries, aspirations, expectations, and general well-being. This interaction will hopefully give them some sense of belongingness and love.

2.5.6 Adult learning theory

Androlgy (within a linguistic contest), also known as the theory of adult learning, was postulated by Knowles (1975). It is a self-directed learning process whereby the locus of regulation in learning rests with the adult learner (Knowles, 1975; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). A fundamental tenet of adult learning theory is that when developing lessons, one must focus on the experience of the learner (e.g., entry behaviour). Adult learners are at liberty to direct their own learning, have gained worthy life experience, have specific expertise and personal goals, are internally motivated, are problem centred, and seek out the usefulness of new knowledge. The theory spurs learners on to fully enmesh themselves in the learning experience and masterminds choice of teaching approaches that encourage experimental learning. Information regarding entry behaviours, attitudes toward content and delivery method, academic motivation, universal learning preferences, and group features are of incredibly critical importance and influential in shaping the development of lessons (Khalil & Elkhider, 2015). There are five assumptions that underline this learning theory, according to Knowles (1975); these are self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, and motivation to learn.

The first assumption, self-concept, explains that as people mature, they move from dependent personalities to independent personalities, which makes them self-directed human beings. The same maturity is seen in their learning: they are self-driven to learn, unlike non-mature students.

The second assumption, experience, explains that as people mature, they accumulate a growing pool of experiences on which they rely as their resource during learning. The experiences are from their jobs, past education, and life in general.

Thirdly, as people mature, their readiness to learn becomes focused on the task of their social role. This means that they tend to be interested in learning things that can aid them in accomplishing relevant tasks. They are interested in knowing how the things they are learning will be beneficial to them. That is why it is essential to develop real-world tasks as is done in the TBLT method.

Fourthly, adult learners are interested in solving problems. They are not only interested in concepts but also in how to solve problems. Scenario-based learning is of great significance to them.

Finally, as people mature, what motivates them to learn is internal and not external, which means they are self-motivated. Adult learners may be in school to improve their skills, improve their social status, or attain occupational promotion.

Within the context of these five assumptions inherent in adult learning theory, lessons designed for adult learners should take into consideration how differently their learning takes place and should provide the needed support.

2.6 Summary of chapter

In this chapter, relevant literature related to TBLT has been reviewed. The review was done under two major themes, thus a theoretical review and an empirical review. Under the theoretical review, the various language teaching approaches were discussed, with TBLT taking prominence. The empirical review was done to look at the literature on the TBLT method. Learning theories have also been discussed in the chapter. The behaviourism, cognitivism, humanistic, constructivism, affective response, and adult learning theories were all reviewed.

2.7 Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has been used to review the related literature on TBLT. In addition, various learning theories have been discussed in the chapter. Considering the review of literature related to TBLT and the presentation of the three-phase approach by Willis, a context-specific four-phase TBLT framework was designed for the study. The next chapter expounds on this framework.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of the literature on various methods of language teaching, including TBLT. The chapter discussed the various ways in which language was taught utilising these methods, their advantages, as well as the criticisms levelled against each method to home in on TBLT. Empirical studies on TBLT at various institutions were discussed in support of the method. The chapter concluded with a discussion on learning theories to situate the language learning and teaching of mature students for the current study.

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework centred on constructivism and relates it to mature students and TBLT. In addition, various theories and guidelines are discussed to derive the components of the instructional model, which was used to guide the intervention for the current study. The major components of the instructional model are the principles of constructivism, the phases of task-based language teaching, the principles of cooperative learning and the activities that guide language teaching and learning.

3.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is based on the constructivist theory, which was briefly discussed in the previous chapter. The theory is based on observations and scientific studies concerning how people learn (Bada, 2015). The theory propounds that individuals construct much of what they learn and understand (Bruning et al., 2004). This means that when we come across something new, we must reconcile it with our pre-existing ideas and experience, perhaps

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changing what we believe or possibly discarding the new information as immaterial. This theory was chosen because this study concentrates on mature students who have some experience, either from their previous study, from work, or from life in general, and they apply these experiences in their learning.

3.2.1 Constructivist learning theories

Constructivist theories are learner-centred and view the learner not as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) but as an individual who brings their past experiences and cultural factors to a situation. The learner is considered to be an information constructor, and this information is from the learner's previous knowledge. Some famous contributors to this theory are Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (1896–1943), Jean Piaget (1896–1980), John Dewey (1859–1952) and Jerome Seymour Bruner (1915–2016). Constructivists advocate that "learning is a social advancement that involves language, real-world situation, and interaction and collaboration among others" (Bawa & Zubairu, 2015: 75). They further argue that human learning is created and that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of earlier learning. Two important notions revolve around the basic scheme of constructed knowledge. First, learners create new understandings based on what they already know. Suffice to maintain that there is no tabula rasa upon which knowledge is created. Instead, learners come to learning conditions with knowledge obtained from earlier experience, and that previous knowledge influences what new or adapted knowledge they will create from new learning experiences (Phillips, 1995). The second is that learning is active rather than passive. Learners approach their understanding based on what they come across in the fresh learning situation. Should learners come across a conflict with their present knowledge, their understanding can change to contain the new experience.

The philosophy of constructivist learning theory enhances students' logical and conceptual development (Driscoll, 2000). This development causes the individual to develop new viewpoints, rethink what were once misapprehensions, and evaluate what is important, ultimately altering their perceptions. Driscoll (2000) argues that with the constructivist theory, knowledge only exists in the human mind and need not reflect reality. Thus, learners must continually try to generate their personal model of the real world from their observations of that world. As learners recognise each new experience, they will continuously fill in their mental models to replicate the new information, hence creating their own interpretation of reality (Bada, 2015).

Limiting it to the classroom, the constructivist standpoint of learning can point toward several diverse teaching practices. It typically means encouraging students to employ active approaches (for instance, experiments and real-world problem-solving) to form more knowledge and to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their comprehension is shifting (Bada, 2015). The teacher ensures that students understand their existing conceptions and directs the activity to resolve and build on them (Oliver, 2000).

3.2.2 TBLT and constructivist learning theories

As has already been discussed, TBLT as a language teaching approach employs a series of real-world and not abstract tasks or abstract phenomena. Students also work in pairs or groups, which promotes interaction and collaboration and which enhances learning. Constructivists also hold the view that although "students are responsible for their own learning, they should be guided by the teacher, who acts as a facilitator" (Bawa & Zubairu, 2015: 75). During the task phase of TBLT, the teacher observes from afar and guides the students when necessary. The learners are considered central to the process. The teacher is expected to encourage the

learners to discover things for themselves rather than give learners direct instructions as to what to do. Thus, in line with constructivism, TBLT allows more learning to take place through a balance between autonomy and the teacher's guidance.

In line with constructivist theories, Bruner (1973a) gives these three underlying principles that should guide teaching in general:

- Instruction must be concerned with the experiences and contexts that make the student willing and able to learn (readiness).

- Instruction must be structured so that it can be easily grasped by the student (spiral organisation).

- Instruction should be designed to facilitate extrapolation and/or fill in the gaps (going beyond the information given).

With TBLT, the three principles are applied in teaching and learning. For the first principle, during the pre-task phase, the teacher is expected to explain the nature of the task to students and get the students ready for the task ahead. Some researchers suggest that the teacher should negotiate with the student before giving the assigned task. This negotiation enables the student to apply their own experiences in order to choose the appropriate task. Students in TBLT are allowed to work in pairs or groups, which creates an environment conducive to learning and enables students to easily grasp what is being instructed. It also enables the students to learn from each other. Additionally, during the post-task phase, the instructor, based on the report from the task, concentrates on language gaps observed during the report presentation and works on these gaps. Principles two and three are met by the task and post-task phases of TBLT accordingly. Thus, TBLT is aligned with the constructivist theories.

The constructivist theory, however, has been welcomed with a barrage of questions. Quite a few arguments were advanced to criticise the constructivist approach to learning. Kirschner et al. (2006) have, for instance, asserted that constructivism promotes a teaching approach with unregulated or minimally regulated instructions for students. Critics also maintain that with this approach, students have to connect their knowledge to tangible objects in order to enable them to acquire knowledge and that the constructivist approaches fail to sustain this learning-related need. For these opponents, cognitive learning is insufficient for individuals because an individual must illustrate knowledge by producing artefacts Stewart (2021).

Hmelo-Silver et al. (2007: 2) are, however, of the view that the approach does not lack guidance as its critics postulate, "but rather they provide strong forms of scaffolding guidance during activities in learning environments". During TBLT lessons, for instance, the teacher guides the students in accomplishing the task. During the pre-task phase, teachers direct the students as to what is expected of them and also guide them during the task phase. Students are not left on their own to struggle. Kirschner et al. (2006) additionally add that minimal guidance is enough to direct students during the learning process because students (whether old or young) know how to construct knowledge and therefore do not need to be given excessive guidance.

3.2.3 Mature students in relation to TBLT and constructivist learning theories

Mature students in Ghana are not new English language learners. Most of the lessons outlined in the general English course are a review of what the students may have learnt at high school or at some point in their collegiate years, but challenges are still encountered. Instructing these mature students using TBLT seems appropriate as it would give the teacher a chance to meet the individual needs of these students. Mature students, who are the focus of this research, have experiences which can help them create knowledge. Thus, when given the minimum guidance,

they should be able to create knowledge efficiently in their learning process. As a result of students being guided, they will undergo transformation into learners who participate actively in the learning process rather than just being the recipients of information (Ackermann, 2001). Larsen-Freeman and Long (2014) also believe that teachers' guidance is essential, as without it, students might not be able to note errors they commit during interactions. He notes that teachers use the post-task phase to work on students' errors so that the students can correct these errors. This study will adopt guidance for students instead of merely providing information for them to receive.

Another aspect that relates to mature students is motivation. Masashi (2016) points out that because TBLT works on motivation, which is very important to adult learners, it is beneficial to apply the approach in teaching them. As has been indicated, mature students come to the university with some anxiety and low confidence and therefore need motivation to keep them going Masashi (2016). Brown asserts that in a TBLT approach to teaching, the tasks performed by students reduce their anxiety and generate high motivation. As the students work with their colleagues who may have similar challenges, they appreciate and understand that they are not alone, thereby reducing their anxiety. Furthermore, because the tasks are not complex, students can, in general, complete them and be assured of success.

Furthermore, Amponsah et al. (2018) argue that most mature students who pursue higher education are employed in one trade or another and, as a result, are mostly interested in practical courses that will have a direct impact on their job. TBLT, although not a course but a teaching approach, provides language competence for mature students both in their everyday language use as well as for their education and professional development. The TBLT approach, therefore, seems more appropriate for teaching mature students.

Moreover, another reason which favours constructivism in adult learning is that those mature students come to the university with varied experiences and cultural backgrounds, which they build on during their learning. They also build on their existing knowledge and do not necessarily create new knowledge, a position posited by constructivists. Bawa and Zubairu (2015) further argue that constructivists advocate for learning to involve real-world situations, as well as collaboration with others. Mature students need to engage in both real-world tasks and collaborative learning with their peers to enhance their university studies.

Finally, Bruner's (1973a) principles of constructivism (readiness, spiral organisation and going beyond the information given) are essential in mature students' instruction. Instruction is to be given with the experiences of these mature students in mind in order to enable them to be willing to engage. Simple illustrations, language and tasks are to be given first before complex ones are given so as to help mature students progress gradually, and mature students are to be allowed to bring new ideas into their learning. These students are required not only to rely on information given by the teacher but to generate their own ideas.

3.3 Mature (age) students' education in Ghana

Mature age students are students who are admitted into universities and colleges at an older age than the usual age of traditional admission. These students do not enter with high school or secondary school certificates but with a mature entrance examination. Universities and colleges have varied admission protocols, one of these being the mature entrance admission process. It is usually designed for persons who may have left school for a longer period of time but who could not enter university for varied reasons. When such persons are ready to re-enter formal educational environments, they usually do so through non-traditional means. The criteria for such entrance often include work experience, age (usually 25 and above but may

vary depending on the county), and any other prior educational certification if available. An entrance examination is generally written to determine who qualifies for admission. These examinations are internally conducted by universities after some tutorial periods. In Ghana, the mature age is 25, based on the requirement by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (www.gtec.edu.gh). Some studies conducted on these students, mostly on the challenges they face at university, are discussed below.

3.3.1 Specific challenges of mature student education from research studies

Mature students have been known to have specific challenges besides the general challenges faced by tertiary students. Mature students have varied language challenges depending on their backgrounds (Baharudin et al., 2013; Souto-Otero & Whitworth, 2017; Topham, 2015). Usually, those with secondary education have fewer difficulties than those without secondary school (Cullity, 2006). In a research conducted by Kantanis (2002) in Monash, Australia, it was discovered that mature students have challenges distinct from those of "school leavers". Among several issues seemingly limited to mature students are: not being catered for adequately during orientation, the need for training in computer usage, and low self-esteem in communicating effectively in writing and speaking. For this research, the primary concern is with the last point raised. Some mature students may have a problem with academic language. This situation is typical in Ghana and has necessitated this research. It is believed that this research will help improve their language proficiency.

In a related study by Tone et al. (2009), two main barriers were reported by mature students. The first was responsibility conflict, where mature students have varied pre-existing responsibilities at work, school and in their families, and they face the challenge of having to combine all of these responsibilities. The second was an adjustment to university life: they found it a bit difficult to fit in, and some were not aware of support services on campus, like

the counselling units. Teachers were encouraged to be mindful of these challenges when instructing adult learners.

In a similar study, Adu-Yeboah and Forde (2011:410) investigated the experiences of mature women students in higher education in Ghana. It was discovered that a higher number of them faced academic challenges because of their "inability to recollect, memorise and retain information due to preoccupation with other (domestic and/or business) commitments, especially commitments to their children". The women who also had lower socio-economic status struggled during their studies because they had to occupy smaller spaces at the hostels with younger students. They also struggled to secure financial aid for their fees and other necessities while studying. It was recommended that institutions should provide support services for mature women students and that lecturers and teachers should also "create a teacher-learner interaction that highlights cooperation, collaboration and sharing" (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011: 12). This current study attempts to address this challenge through the use of the TBLT approach, which incorporates collaborative learning to enhance interaction and sharing among students.

Similar to other research on the challenges of mature students is the work carried out by Dawborn-Gundlach and Margetts (2018) in Australia. Their study revealed that just like all first-year students, mature-age students face many challenges, such as academic anxiety, social dislocation and unrealistic expectations. These mature students also are more likely to have other problems that may affect their ability to adjust to higher education. These factors may include financial commitments, lack of familiarity with ICT, social dislocation and loneliness on campus, and dependants to care for, among others. The research discovered that although the mature-age students had high degrees of academic adjustment, their social and personal adjustments were lower. Mature-age students are thus at risk of not adjusting to university.

Institutions are, therefore, encouraged to be mindful of the unique needs of these mature students in order to assist them in adjusting to the university environment (Souto-Otero & Whitworth, 2017).

In a study aimed at providing insight into the experiences of mature-age students' transitioning to university, Boston (2017) discovered that mature-age students were more likely to drop out of school than traditional students. They also had unclear expectations and felt academically challenged. The research also discovered that they experienced anxiety regarding academic writing. It was, however, discovered that these students were aware of their challenges and were determined to be successful. As a result of this awareness, they "engaged in learning process[es] that were proactive in employing strategies that clarified and enhanced their learning" (Boston, 2017:92). The life experiences of mature students were seen as helping them adjust to the learning environment. A university setting that encourages them to bring their experiences to bear is healthy as it tends to boost their confidence and encourage their long-term stay in school. This is what TBLT does; the approach helps students to bring their experiences to the learning process. In the TBLT approach, teachers allow students to engage in tasks while they observe and support them. Students' constant interaction with their peers during the task process also encourages them to push ahead in their academics.

In their contribution to TBLT and mature students' education, Van den Branden (2016) focused on the role of teachers and approached it from three perspectives. He states that the teacher's role is threefold: (a) the teacher as a mediator of the students' language development, contributing to the effectiveness of TBLT as a pedagogical approach to second language education, (b) the teacher as a key figure in the implementation of TBLT, and thus as a change agent in the innovation of second language education; and (c) the teacher as researcher, and therefore an active contributor to the development and further refinement of TBLT as a

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researched pedagogy. The three perspectives were based on the "7 Cs" of the expert teacher, which were derived from the Measures of Effective Teaching Project (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010).

The 7C's are as follows: care, challenge, clarify, captivate, confer, consolidate, and control. Each description is explained in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Description of 7Cs as Measures of effective teaching

7 C's	Description
Care	The teacher gives the students the feeling that she or he really cares about them. The teacher tries to understand how students feel about things.
Challenge	The teacher tries to make sure that the students learn a lot and expects full effort from the students. The teacher asks the students to explain about the answers they give. The teacher doesn't let students give up when the work gets hard. The teacher wants the students to learn from their mistakes.
Clarify	The teacher explains difficult things clearly. The teacher has several good ways of explaining each topic that is covered in class. When students don't understand something, the teacher explains it another way.
Captivate	The teacher introduces topics and content that captivate the students' interest. The teacher makes lessons enjoyable. The teacher tries to make sure that students do not get bored.
Confer	The teacher gives the students ample opportunity to share their ideas and express their thoughts. Students have a say in how things are done in class. The teacher respects the students' suggestions and ideas.
Consolidate	The teacher checks to make sure the students understand what she or he is teaching. The teacher gives feedback and useful comments on students' work and helps the students understand how they improve their work and correct their mistakes. At the end of the day or lesson, the teacher summarizes what the students have learned.
Control	The teacher makes sure the class stays busy and doesn't waste time. Students treat each other and the teacher with respect.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2010:166)

According to Van den Branden (2016), if teachers for English to adult learners apply these 7 Cs to their TBLT, they would successfully recognise the numerous challenges their students face and be able to offer innovative ways of addressing these challenges. These measures have been incorporated into this study.

Huang (2010: 34), on the other hand, focuses his discussion on TBLT in the context of second language learners. He argues that TBLT "offers a promising grammar-teaching approach to adult second language learners". His argument is based on the ten principles outlined in Ellis (2005). He states that if the principles are carefully followed in the application of TBLT, they will be beneficial to adult English learners. The principles are outlined in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Principles in adult English learning

Principles	Details
Principle 1:	Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence.
Principle 2:	Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.
Principle 3:	Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.
Principle 4:	Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the second language but should not neglect explicit knowledge.
Principle 5:	Instruction needs to take account of the learner's built-in syllabus.
Principle 6:	Successful instructed language learning requires extensive second language input.
Principle 7:	Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.
Principle 8:	The opportunity to interact in the second language is central to developing second language proficiency.
Principle 9:	Instruction needs to take account of individual differences among learners.
Principle 10:	When assessing learners' second language proficiency, it is important to examine free as well as controlled production.

Ellis (2005)

Ellis's principles point out that meaning and competence are to be developed by ensuring a deep knowledge of the language form. In addition, teachers must provide input to ensure that

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individual innate/built-in knowledge is not ignored. Again, students should be given a chance to interact while being mindful of individual differences, and assessments should be varied. Both measures of effective teaching and principles of adult English learning, as outlined by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010), in Van den Branden (2016), and Ellis (2005), in Huang (2010), are incorporated into the instructional model for this research.

3.3.2 Challenges of mature students as English second language speakers

Mature students are usually second-language speakers of the target language. Second language students (or L2 students as they are sometimes referred to) are learners who have already achieved proficiency in all aspects of their first language (or L1) and are learning an additional language (the L2). The second language can be indigenous or foreign. In the context of this research, the L2 is English; thus, the students are already proficient in a first language and learn English as an additional language, mostly at school. A number of researchers have recognised challenges these L2 students face in their studies. Al-Gharabally (2015) points out how L2 learners often are overwhelmed with completing a writing task and that it is difficult for these students to start a writing task and complete it with ease. Fareed et al. (2016) further add that the writing challenges L2 students face are mostly in grammar, concord, plural formation and word classes. Similarly, Moses and Mohamad (2019) identify lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor spelling, and lack of exposure to books and reading materials as some challenges that L2 students face. They further add that lack of motivation is another challenge faced by some L2 learners – a challenge which affects their learning. Nawaz et al. (2015) additionally explain that L2 learners are confronted with problems such as correct usage of verbs, sentence structure, vocabulary, the past tense, spelling difficulties and punctuation. As has been enumerated, our cohort of mature students faces peculiar challenges because of their age and also experience the abovementioned challenges as L2 learners. The instructional model

designed for the current study considers the above challenges of mature students and aims to assist in alleviating them.

3.4 Instructional model

After considering the learning theories, language teaching approaches, constructivism, learners' difficulties, the teaching of mature students, etc., an instructional model for the teaching of mature L2 students has been designed. This instructional model focuses on the principles, strategies, activities, skills and knowledge that should be available for the effective teaching of mature L2 students to improve their skills in reading, writing and speaking. The major components of the model are the principles of constructivism from Bruner (1973a), the phases of task-based language teaching, adapted from Ellis (1993; 2003, 2009), Willis (1996a;1998) and the (modified) principles of cooperative learning from Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991), as well as activities to guide the teaching and learning from Prabhu (1987) and Richards (2006). The model is also informed by experiential learning and non-defensive learning. Each component has a particular element that is vital for the effective teaching and learning of L2 by mature students.
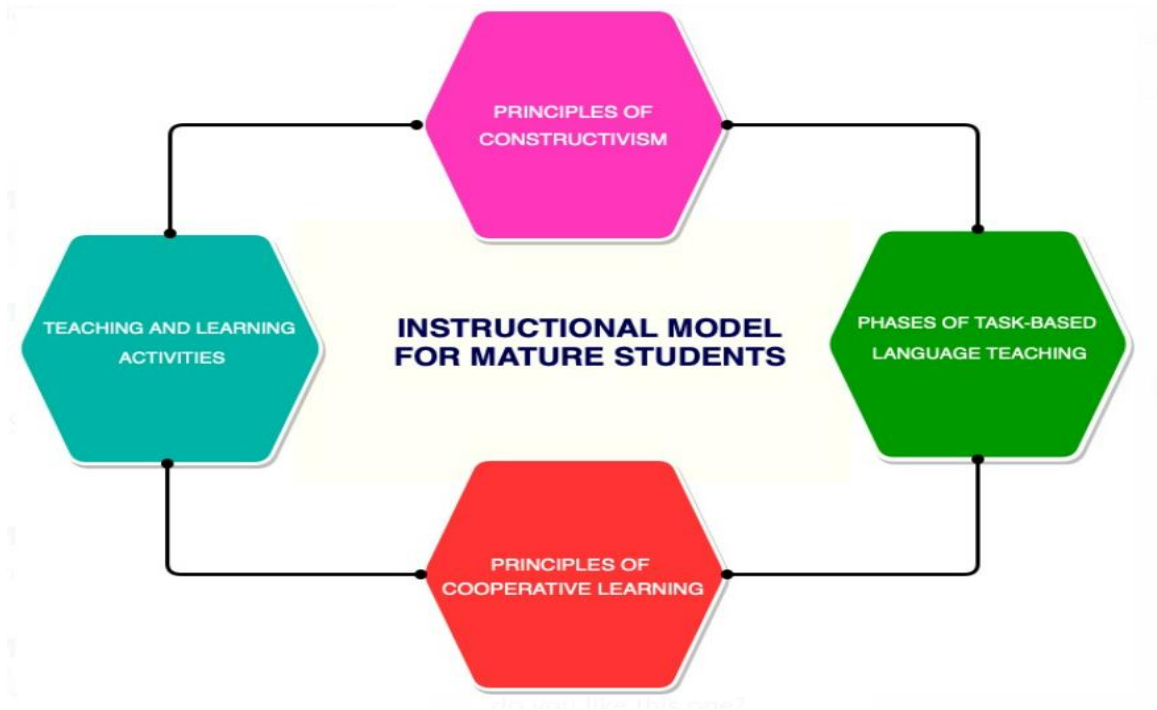
Figure 3.1: Instructional model for mature students

In the instructional model for mature students, the different components work together in synergy. All four components (see Figure 3.1) are necessary to provide a complete instructional framework for teaching mature students. The principles of constructivism and the principles of cooperative learning collectively form the basis of the instructional model. They are the foundation on which the teaching and learning activities and the phases of TBLT are built. The principles are presented below and explained.

3.4.1 Constructivism principles

Bruner (1973a) provides three principles that should guide teaching: readiness, spiral organisation and going beyond the information given. These principles guide this model.
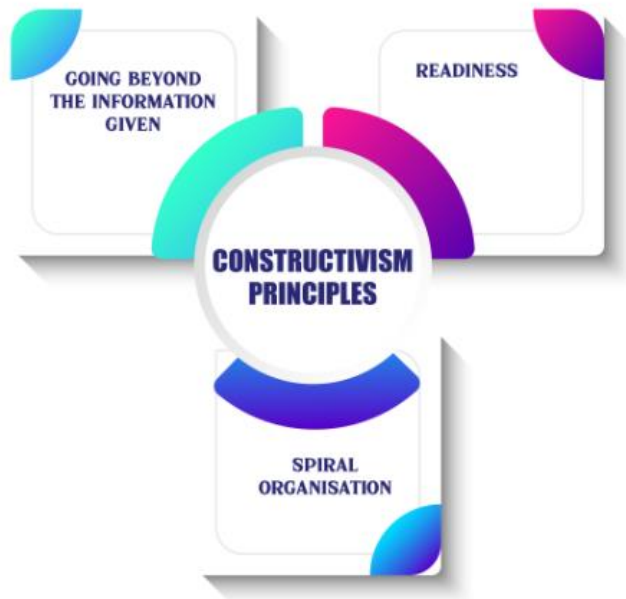
Figure 3.2: Constructivism principles

The first principle, which is *readiness,* proposes that instruction must be concerned with the experiences and contexts that make students willing and able to learn (readiness to learn). Difficult texts and tasks do not encourage students' participation in the classroom because they are often unclear regarding the correct way to initiate/commence activities. Tasks that are concerned with the experiences of learners (i.e., what they are familiar with) help them engage actively in activities. In this intervention, there is a strive to remain mindful of this principle and to carefully select tasks that bring to bear the life experiences of mature students.

The second principle proposes that instruction must be structured so that it can be easily grasped by the student (*spiral organisation*). Lecturers are to use simple language and illustrations to enable students to effectively comprehend that which is being taught. Day-to-day tasks and examples are to be used during lectures to fulfil this principle. Based on this principle, the English language, which is used in teaching during the intervention, is used with simple vocabulary that is easy to understand. This process may be seen as a form of scaffolding

where tasks of a less challenging nature are given to students for easy understanding before progressing to difficult or more challenging tasks.

The final principle states that instruction should be designed to facilitate extrapolation and/or filling in the gaps (going beyond the information given). Students are to bring in new ideas by engaging in thought-provoking activities or tasks. These activities bring out new knowledge and make the class a challenging yet exciting one. Guided by this principle, some classroom activities are information-gap activities where students are not given all the information needed for a task but are required to bring in new ideas and information from their research. Students are given the opportunity to research on their own to gain the knowledge needed for their tasks.

3.4.2 Principles of collaborative learning

Another major component of this model is the principles of collaborative learning. In collaborative or cooperative learning, instructions are not teacher-centred but rather student-centred. Students benefit greatly not only from their teachers but also from their colleagues through group activities or paired activities. Students sit in pairs or groups not facing the teacher during the intervention. This arrangement enables them to access the skills and knowledge from one another. Due to the unique nature of mature students at university, collaborative learning is essential so that students learn from each other. However, collaboration is undertaken with six principles as postulated by Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991) in Figure 3.2.
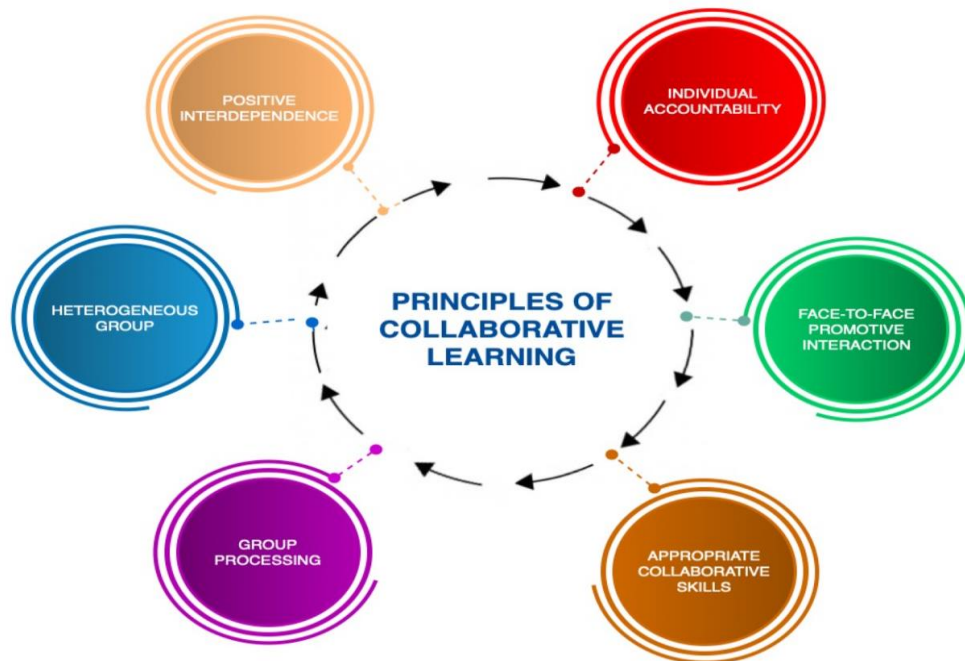
Figure 3.3: Principles of collaborative learning

1. Positive interdependence: Members in the group are required to rely on one another to enhance the process of attaining their target/goal.

2. Individual accountability: Each student assumes an agreed-upon degree of responsibility and must contribute to the overall work. Although classroom activities are mainly done collaboratively, at some point, the students will have to account for the knowledge acquired individually. Some assessments are carried out by individual students and not in the group; students will partake in mid-semester and end-of-semester assessments individually.

3. Face-to-face promotive interaction: There must be interaction among members of the group. Therefore, assignments must be designed to promote such discussions. Students sit facing one another during class. The sitting position supports easy communication among the students

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during class. They do not sit facing the teacher as is done in a traditional classroom session. The teacher usually stands outside the group to observe and guide them during the task phase.

4. Appropriate collaborative skills: Trust building, leadership, decision-making, communication and conflict management are to be developed by students through encouragement. Students are encouraged to learn how to work in groups. They are encouraged to understand that collaboration is essential outside the classroom environment and that they need to develop these collaborative skills.

5. Group processing: Members of a team occasionally assess the group's process to evaluate the need for doing things differently in order to function more effectively. Groups are occasionally given the opportunity to confer and evaluate how they can work effectively through team-building activities. Each group is to have time to reflect and make amends for their shortfalls and improve on their achievements.

6. Heterogeneous groups: There are individual differences in each group, and members are to benefit from these variations. Students come to the learning environment with varied experiences, strengths and weaknesses. Groups are to be formed with these differences in mind. In this intervention, because there is pre-intervention interaction in place, the lecturer gets to know the strengths and weaknesses of students in advance, resulting in rational and balanced group formation so that students with similar weaknesses or strengths are not grouped together Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991).

3.4.3 Phases of TBLT

As was discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Willis (1996b: 98) and Ellis (1993) proposed a three-phase approach: pre-task, task and post-task phases of TBLT. For the intervention, a fourth

phase, which precedes the pre-task phase (the preparatory phase), was included. A diagram and explanations of the phases are provided below.
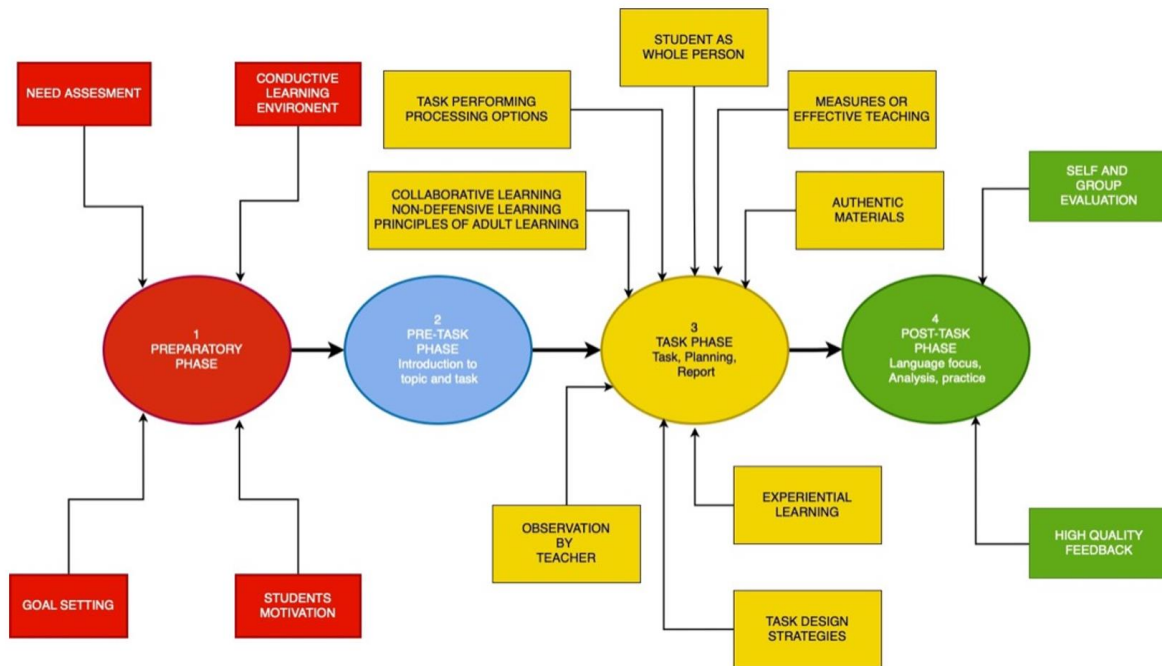
Figure 3.4: Modified four phases of TBLT

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are three phases of the TBLT proposed by Ellis (1993) and Willis (1996b; 1998), which have been adapted for this work. The three phases were ***pre-task***, ***task***, and ***post-task***. With our adapted model, an additional phase preceding the pre-task phase, known as the ***preparatory phase***, has been added. This preparatory phase is characterised by creating a classroom environment conducive to the commencement of classes. The classroom is organised such that chairs are arranged in groups of four rather than all the students facing the lecturer. Classes are scheduled within a timeframe that allows students to have their basic psychological needs met prior to class starting (Maslow, 1943). Classes are not scheduled too late into the night or too early in the day. The lecturer comes to class early before the scheduled

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time. The timing enables them to interact with students in an informal way to find out how they are coping with the learning environment. The interaction also enables the teacher to identify the needs of the students and motivates them for the task ahead. Time is created to talk about both social and academic issues before classes formally begin, and this allows students to feel secure and comfortable. Students are encouraged to set their personal goals before class begins.

The second phase (the pre-task phase) is where the task or topic is introduced to the students. They are given clear instructions as to what is expected of them. Students are allowed to recall vocabulary, and materials needed for the task are provided. Students may, for instance, watch a short video or read a text related to the task ahead. Mature students, because they come to class with prior knowledge of the L2, are required to recollect what they know about the given topic being treated and to use this knowledge in their task performance.

The third phase (the task phase or during-task phase) is where the students perform the task, plan how to report or present the task, and then do the presentation either orally or in writing. The task-performing options that will be used during the task phase are:

1. Time will be allotted for the task. Students will be given a specific length of time within which the task is expected to be completed. This allotment allows students to be focused on the given task.

2. Students will also have access to input data. Materials such as videos or texts that students need to enhance their work will be provided.

3. All relevant information needed for task completion will be provided. There will be no surprises.

In line with task processing options, students will be given the opportunity to take a risk. This means that they will be given encouragement to freely use vocabulary they may not be very

familiar or comfortable with. They will be encouraged not to be afraid, worried or anxious about making mistakes. They will also be allowed to use their L1 sparingly during the task phase. This is different from translanguaging, where two languages are intentionally allowed to be used in turns in the classroom. Translanguaging is guided by the teacher, but with this process option, the students are allowed without strict instruction by the teacher. It is to allow easy communication by and among students without any interference as a result of a lack of appropriate vocabulary. Another task processing option that guides the intervention is that group interaction will be conversational. Students will be encouraged to have a lot of exchanges.

The task cycle is also guided by the principles of adult learning proposed by Ellis (2005). Of these, the principle adopted for the intervention is that which states that "instructors need to take account of the learners' built-in syllabus". Mature students (who are the participants of this intervention) are not new to the English language; therefore, during the task phase, they are not restricted to only using a specific vocabulary set, as may be the case with TBLT for EFL learners. These mature students already have an existing repertoire of the language and are allowed to bring that experience to class. That also explains why they are allowed to take a risk with their language.

The task phase also considers the measures of effective teaching proposed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010). All seven principles are incorporated during the intervention:

Care: Throughout the intervention, the students are made to feel cared for. Because there is a need assessment done prior to the lesson, the teacher is already aware of the needs of the students and therefore understands their difficulties and challenges.

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Challenge: Because students are encouraged to take risks, they are challenged to overcome their difficulties by being asked to explain in detail the answers they provide during class.

Clarify: When students lack clarity concerning the task at hand, the teacher explains it to the students in order to enable them to formulate a clearer understanding.

Captivate: As explained by the affective-response theory, students enjoy tasks to which they can personally relate, so care is taken in choosing tasks for the intervention to keep students active during the lessons.

Confer: Students are given the opportunity to freely share their thoughts during class.

Control: The class is kept busy during the task phase. Students are requested to treat each other and the lecturer with respect throughout the class.

During the task phase, students guided by the principles above perform their tasks in groups while the teacher observes. They are then given time to plan how they will present their work. Presentation is done either orally, written or both. The task phase is also characterised by the use of authentic material. Students are given materials that they can relate to and that are not abstract. Because the students are adult learners, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning is incorporated. These students come to the learning environment with their experience; therefore, tasks are selected that will develop these experiences. Students are allowed to share what they know about a given topic before the lecturer adds to their existing knowledge. Non-defensive learning, as proposed by Curran (1972), is also associated with this model. Students are seen as whole persons and are therefore treated with utmost respect and care; there is an environment of mutual respect between teacher and students. They are allowed to freely and easily

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communicate so as to bring out the best in them. Four strategies that also guide the task phase are proposed by Wicking (2010):

1. Focus on form: Analysis of the language used or the form is done after the task is completed. This means that during the intervention, the lecturer observes and takes note of language challenges students may have. Again, notice is taken during the presentation stage so that these challenges can be discussed in the post-task phase. Interruption during the task phase does not allow students to communicate as freely as is expected of them.

2. Information exchange: Exchange of information is done in a two-way format rather than a one-way format. It is not only the lecturer who provides information in the classroom, but the students are also encouraged to share theirs.

3. Planning: Students are given time to plan their work. Just as time allocation is important in the pre-task and post-task phases, students are allocated time to plan how their work should be presented during the task phase.

4. Task solutions: Tasks that are given to students are designed such that students come to a concrete solution rather than an open one where there are no conclusions. These closed-solution tasks bring a kind of finality to the lesson but do not leave students wondering without certainty.

The post-task phase during the intervention is characterised by giving feedback on the completed task. The language that was used during the task phase is analysed and discussed in this phase. The principle "consolidate" of measures of effective teaching is applied here because comments and useful feedback enable students to improve their work. The lesson that has been taught for the day is also summarised in this phase. This phase gives students a chance to correct mistakes they may have committed during the presentation stage. Students use both

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self and peer evaluation to assess their performance during the task phase. Where time is not adequate for the correction to be done in class, students are allowed to work outside the prescribed class hours, so they are able to report on corrections at the next lesson.

3.4.4 Teaching and learning activities

Teaching and learning activities are used to engage students to participate in the learning process actively. Since students with different personalities and learning abilities share one classroom space, there is a need to vary these activities in order to help every student to benefit. The activities should be engaging and interesting so that students are able to participate without difficulty. The activities below have been designed to engage students during the intervention.

Figure 3.5: Teaching and learning activities

The teaching and learning activities above, the final component of the model, discusses all the relevant activities that are employed to enhance effective teaching and learning of mature students. As has been established already, group work is employed in this TBLT intervention

where students work cooperatively. Common activities employed are jig-saw, voting, think-pair-share, role-playing, information-gap activity, problem-solving activity, task-completion activities, opinion-sharing activities, team-building activities, class building activities. Explanations of these activities, all of which are adopted for the intervention, are given in Table 3.3. Students are required to provide the needed information for task completion. Their opinions, experiences and beliefs are equally required during the assigned task. Whenever they are not clear on any information, they are at liberty to seek clarification. Students are to think and provide solutions during task activities and are to work with their pairs and teams. Tasks are shared for each group, and they are required to report to the class after task completion. Students assume the roles of certain individuals to aid task activities and are also required to vote in class.

Table 3.3: Teaching and learning activities

Activity	Explanation
Task-completion activity	Students are required to put pieces of information together to enable them to complete a task that has been assigned to them. Some of the information they need is provided in the pre-task phase, and they are required to provide pertinent information by expressing their opinion(s) or by formal research.
Opinion-sharing activity	Students are required to formulate and express their opinions, experiences, beliefs and values to enable them to complete an assigned task.
Information-gap activity	Students are at liberty to seek clarification on a given task assigned to them.
Problem-solving activity	Some tasks require students to think critically to enable them to solve a particular assigned task. Students are given

	a specific problem and are required to think it through to provide a solution to the problem.
Class-building activity	Students are engaged in activities that will foster a healthy learning environment. They are involved in setting class rules which govern how members of the class are required to conduct themselves.
Team-building activity	Each group is allowed to set their own rules that will guide how they can function effectively in the class, which will also conform to the general class rules.
Jig-saw	Students are assigned segments of an entire text to read and are later required to share with the rest of the group. This activity is effective in facilitating comprehension of a larger text or document within a shorter stipulated time.
Voting	Students are given the opportunity to vote on a given subject. They are required to choose from three options: "yes", "no" and "not sure".
Think-pair-share	Questions posed to students do not require an immediate response. They are required to think of the answer, share it with their colleague(s) and then share it with the class. This ensures that each student at least has something to say, which will reduce anxiety.
Role-playing	Some tasks require students to role-play in order to complete the task effectively. They assume the roles of certain individuals and personalities to enable them to work on their tasks.

3.5 Summary of chapter

The constructivist theory has been the main theoretical framework underlying this research. The theory is learner-centred and views the learner not as a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) but as bringing past experiences and cultural factors to a situation. Significant principles of readiness,

spiral organisation, and going beyond the information given have been analysed concerning TBLT and mature students. From the discussion, it was observed that considering the challenges faced by mature students who are also second language learners (such as low confidence level, lack of motivation, writing problems, grammar, spelling and vocabulary challenges, among others), TBLT is an appropriate approach to be employed in teaching. Based on the constructivism theory and the unique challenges of mature-age students, an appropriate instructional model was developed/designed for mature students with the four major components (see Figure 3.1): principles of constructivism, principles of collaborative learning, modified/adapted four-phase task-based language learning, and teaching and learning activities that guide the intervention. It is proposed that this instructional model, when used effectively, will enhance effective teaching of mature-age university students to enable them to overcome challenges and improve their language skills.

3.6 Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has discussed the theoretical framework underlying this research, which is the constructivist theory. Based on the theory, an instructional model was designed to enhance the effective teaching of mature students. The next chapter discusses the methodology adopted for the research.

CHAPTER 4: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological aspects pertaining to the study. More specifically, the chapter presents the research design used for the study, the participants, and the setting. In addition, the research procedure employed for the study is detailed with a sample lesson plan given. The data collection tools (i.e., tests, observation, questionnaires, interviews) and the analysis of data are explained in detail in the chapter. Finally, ethical procedures in terms of permission and regulation are presented. A pilot study that was carried out prior to the main research is also reported on, and finally, the challenges faced during data collection are discussed.

4.2 Research design

A mixed-methods approach was used for the study. In other words, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Creswell (2014) explains a mixed study as a method of inquiry that involves both quantitative and qualitative data, merging the two forms of data and using distinct designs that may include philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. Mixed-method study design in recent years has become a common method applied in much educational research. The reason for this is that the mixed-method design helps to yield comprehensive and detailed data, which helps to answer research questions and achieve objectives. The rationale for using this design is influenced by Creswell's (2013) rationale for mixed methods. The mixed-method design enables a researcher to meet multiple perspectives or completely understand the phenomenon under study. He adds that it "provides a stronger understanding of the problem or question …" (p. 264) and that it also enhances experiments.

Hughes (2016) further contends that this design enables the researcher to examine phenomena at various levels. He adds that if the design is appropriately planned, it could benefit several types of research because each study can confirm the findings of the other. Thus, the design offers a comprehensive analysis of the problem under study by combining both quantitative and qualitative data.

Additionally, a mixed-method design is appropriate when there is a need for a better-contextualised instrument or intervention to reach a certain population. This means that when it becomes necessary to design a research instrument or an intervention programme solely for a specific group of people because of their specific needs, such as this research seeks to do, a mixed-method design is appropriate. Finally, he asserts that the method is efficient when needs assessments are done, and tests are carried out to evaluate a programme's success. Johnson and Christensen (2014) are also of the view that for an educational research study, there exists the need to provide solid evidence, which can be attained when a mixed-method strategy is employed. The reason is that mixing strategies provides both a fuller picture of what is being studied and multiple-converging support for an idea. The research discusses an application of a task-based language learning approach to improve mature students' language proficiency. The intervention programme designed to achieve this goal combines ideas from several principles to help design the instructional model. There is, therefore, the need to elicit data with various tools to attain a fuller understanding of the effect of the approach.

There are several mixed-method designs that are both basic and advanced, such as convergent, explanatory sequential, embedded, exploratory sequential, and multiphase, but for this research, the convergent parallel mixed method design, as proposed by Creswell (2013, 2018), was adopted.
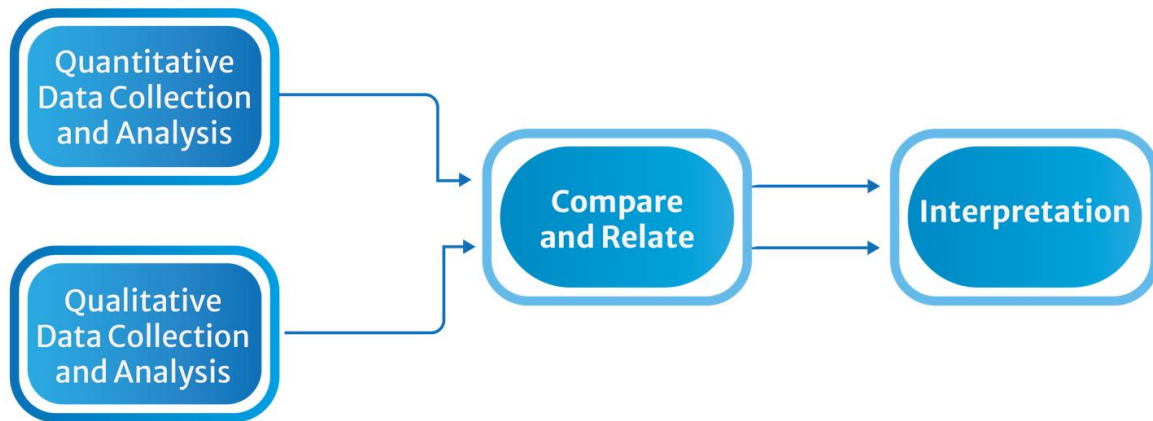
Figure 4.1: The convergent parallel mixed method design (Creswell, 2013; 2018)

Creswell & Plano Clark (2011) describe the convergent parallel design as one of the most well-known approaches when it comes to mixed methods research. With the convergent parallel mixed method design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected by the researcher and each set is analysed. The results are then integrated for an overall interpretation. Creswell (2013) postulates that qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through methods such as interviews or focus groups which attempt to obtain in-depth opinions from participants. This research used observations made during the intervention and semi-structured interviews conducted after the intervention as qualitative data. Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) explain that this design is sometimes referred to as the *concurrent triangulation design* (single-phase) because the data is individually collected and analysed concurrently. The rationale for using the design is for both qualitative and quantitative findings to be mutually corroborated (Doyle et al., 2016) and also to provide a complete understanding of the phenomena (Doyle, 2015) being studied.

Quantitative research, according to Dawson (2002: 14), "generates statistics through the use of large-scale surveys, using methods such as questionnaires, or structured interviews." The quantitative method adopted utilised questionnaires and a quasi-experimental method, the latter

of which involved a pre-test and post-test that were administered to both the control and experimental groups. Babbie (2010) explains that a quasi-experimental design is similar to that of an experimental study that uses control and experimental groups. The difference is that random assignment of participants to the control group may not be possible in the educational setting where this research was conducted. The reason for the difficulty is that in an educational setting, there is no flexibility to alter the designed academic structure required of students to follow. Moreover, students are enrolled in academic programmes and are expected to follow specific courses and requirements. Consequently, any research conducted must conform to the school's structure. Participants who were involved in this research were enrolled first-year students who were required to undertake the course under study. Students who were not assigned to the researcher for the studies could not be involved. However, a complete experimental design can include all students and assign them to specific groups as the research may require.

With regards to the present study, the qualitative research which was employed was done by using an interview guide to conduct interview sessions for the selected participants of the study. The interview sessions were conducted with some selected students from the research settings to solicit their views and opinions of the programme under study, being TBLT. This was done by arranging individual interview sessions for the selected participants, which were recorded for later transcription and interpretation in line with the aims and objectives of the research. The interview guide was developed in line with the stated aims and objectives of the study and the research questions.

The quantitative data sets in this research, which comprised pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires and observations, were collected in numerical form. They were subsequently presented and analysed statistically through descriptive and inferential statistics based on the aims and

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objarchives of the study. Statistical tools such as SPSS Statistics, STATA and Microsoft Excel were used.

4.3 Methodology

According to Howell (2013), research methodology, unlike research methods, is the main rationale for choosing a specific research approach during the conduct of a research study and the lens through which the analysis of the collected data is to be viewed. It is also seen as the steps involved in learning and understanding the numerous techniques and procedures used in conducting tests, experiments, case studies, and surveys for a research study. Mbuagbaw et al. (2020) are of the view that research methodology entails the various procedures and processes by which researchers carry out their work of describing, explaining and predicting any phenomena of interest in any given society. Other scholars see it as a philosophically coherent collection of concepts, theories, ideas, or underlying assumptions that are related to a specific field of study and not as a simple set of methods for conducting a research study. In view of this, it is the expectation that the research methodology will have a significant impact on the type and kind of research methods that a researcher is likely to utilise for the conduct of a research study in order to generate compelling data for the study. Mbuagbaw et al. (2020) point out the need for researchers to have a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the various assumptions underlying various techniques to be utilised for their studies. This understanding will help them properly appreciate the criteria by which they can effectively decide the various techniques and procedures that will be most effective for the conduct of their research study, as well as those that will be less effective. Research methodology, in that sense, aims to inform why a research study has to be undertaken, the definition of the research problem, the formulation and development of the research hypotheses, the processes and methods of data

collection, the particular and specific techniques that will be utilised in the analysis of the collected data, the processes used in the interpretation and discussion of collected data.

4.3.1 Mixed methodology

The mixed-methods approach helps researchers to incorporate quantitative and qualitative research approaches toward analysing data in a single research study. Creswell (2014) posits that researchers collect or analyse not only numerical data, which is employed for quantitative research, but also narrative data which is utilised for qualitative research in the quest to address the research defined for the particular study. In this regard, the mixed methodology approach to research is an extension rather than a replacement for both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to conducting a research study. Utilising the mixed-method approach in the research process is to draw from the strength of both quantitative and qualitative approaches while minimising the weaknesses of both (Almeida, 2018). It is worth noting that the strengths and the weaknesses associated with the various approaches are relative and not absolute to the context and manner in which researchers aspire to address the specific phenomena under study. Mbuagbaw et al. (2020) and Almeida (2018) equally add that using mixed methods helps overcome the limitations associated with either quantitative or qualitative methodology and allows the researcher to gain rich information which would have been difficult to obtain from one method alone. Mbuagbaw et al. (2020) propose that through the utilisation of mixed methodology, which combines data collection and data analysis methods from both the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, researchers can test and build on theories that have been postulated for the conduct of their studies. This knowledge helps in providing researchers with the ability to design a particular study that answers questions about the complex nature of phenomena from the research participants' point of view as well the interlocking relationships between measurable variables. This methodology ensures that

pragmatic assumptions govern claims about the phenomena under study. It also helps to investigate, predict, describe, explore, and understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Mbuagbaw et al., 2020). Based on the identified strengths as well as the benefits of using a mixed methodology to conduct any research study that draws on the strength of both the qualitative and the quantitative research approaches, this was considered ideal for the conduct of the present study. Given this, the researcher opted for the mixed methodology for the conduct of the present research study. The reason is that, in mixed methodology, more information can be gathered as opposed to qualitative-only or quantitative-only methodologies. This study employs varied data collection methods, such as tests, observations, interviews and questionnaires, with the aim of acquiring a deeper level of information and understanding of the questions being researched. In this study, the interest is not only in the students' performance but also in what they think about their performance and how they behave during the intervention programme. Using the mixed methodology is advantageous in achieving these goals.

Again, this methodology is helpful as it can be adaptable to various studies. Educational studies like the current research need a method that is versatile and flexible so that subsequent studies can be related. Using mixed methods for this study gives the opportunity for subsequent studies. The teaching approach (TBLT) can subsequently be applied to other sections of students aside from the mature students and at different levels of education.

4.4 Population and participants

The population of Ghanaian students and the selected participants from Valley View University are described in the sections below.

4.4.1 Population

The target population of this study are first-year students in Ghanaian universities. All first-year students at Ghanaian universities, whether mature (25 years and above enrolled through mature entrance admission) or non-mature (less than 25 years enrolled with certificates or diplomas), take a semester or two of a general English language course. Although the course name may differ from one institution to another, the contents are similar. This English language course is usually a university-required course, which means that all students are required to enrol in it irrespective of their main programme of study. The content includes basic grammar (parts of speech and sentence structure), punctuation, concord, and essay writing. Sometimes, some aspects of study skills are embedded in the course structure in order to teach students note-taking and reading techniques.

At Valley View University, where the study was conducted, all first-year students are required to take two semesters of an academic writing course named "Language and Writing Skills". This course is mandated for all first-year students irrespective of their main programme of study and mode of admission (mature or non-mature). It is out of this population that was assigned for teaching that the participants were selected for the research.

4.4.2 Participants

The participants selected for the study were mature and non-mature first-year students of Valley View University. This institution was chosen because the researcher is a lecturer there, making it convenient to use the students assigned for teaching. The university is an accredited and chartered university that has been granted a presidential charter to award its own degrees and diplomas; thus, the standards and facilities align with the country's tertiary education policy. The courses taught are periodically reviewed by the Ghana Tertiary Education

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Commission, the accrediting statutory body for tertiary institutions in Ghana. The general English course content used in the university is also not different from other sister universities.

The participants were selected from all first-year students at this institution. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), the larger the sample size, the better the representation. Best and Kahn (2007) point out that a sample size of less than 30 is considered small, but 30 or more is considered adequate or large. This study used a large sample size to get a better representation of the population. A total of 140 first-year students (both mature and non-mature) were assigned to the researcher for teaching. The non-mature students were separated from the mature students, and 20 of the non-mature students were randomly selected for the research. All the mature students were then divided into two groups to represent the control and experimental groups. For ethical reasons and the need for informed consent, students were informed of the intervention for the mature students. Some students opted out, and others showed interest. Those who were interested were selected for the intervention. A total of 65 participants (20 non-mature and 45 mature students) were finally used for the study, and all three groups were taught by the researcher. The groups were distributed as follows:

Table 4.1: Study participants

Group	Number
A. Non-mature students	20
B. Mature students (control)	24
C. Mature students (experimental)	21

There were, therefore, three groups of student participants, all in their first year. These groups are mature students who underwent the experiment or intervention, mature students who did not undergo the intervention or experiment, and non-mature students. The mature students were admitted through the mature entrance admission process, as was explained in Chapter 3. These

students are 25 years of age and above. Although some of these students may have had some qualifications prior to their admission, these qualifications could not guarantee their admission, either because they were failing grades or because they did not meet the minimum requirements for admission. The non-mature students were admitted through the regular admission process and were relatively younger. The majority of these students have secondary certificates, while a few hold diplomas. The mature participants were further categorised into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group underwent the intervention and was instructed with the TBLT approach, while the control group and the non-mature group were taught in the traditional teaching method. Although mature students have the option to enrol in regular, evening or sandwich modes of instruction, depending on their preference and availability, only first-year mature students in the regular mode were used for the study. The reason for choosing the regular mode is that mature students in the regular mode have the same contact hours as the non-mature students, unlike the evening and sandwich modes, where the contact hours and methods of delivery vary.

4.5 Setting

Ranjit (2019) explains setting as the brief description of the organisation, agency or community where the study will be conducted. This study took place at VVU in the 2020/2021 academic year. VVU is the first private university established in Ghana in 1979 and received a Presidential Charter in 2006 to award its own degrees and diplomas. It is a faith-based institution owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The university currently has six campuses and learning centres, with the Accra (Oyibi) campus being the main one. Forty-six majors are run for both undergraduate and graduate programmes in business, science,

education, theology and information technology, among others. The university runs programmes in modes such as regular, sandwich, weekend, and evening.

This research was conducted on the main Oyibi campus in Accra because that is where the researcher teaches. The regular mode was used because there was the need to have regular meetings, which was not possible with the other modes.

The intervention was carried out in a classroom setting for both the experimental and control groups. Both classes were held in a similar classroom setting with similar facilities, which did not give one group an advantage over the other. Teaching and learning took place in the lecture halls and virtual classrooms, which participants were already familiar with, so the setting was natural to the students and not newly created. This setting enabled the students to feel as comfortable as possible with the academic activities. The lecture periods were also of the same duration for both groups; each class lasted a maximum of two and a half hours per week as prescribed by the university's policy regarding accreditation.

4.6 Intervention and research procedure

At the beginning of the semester, a list of all first-year students admitted into the university was obtained from the registry. These students numbered 140 in total, consisted of both mature and non-mature students and were assigned to the researcher for teaching. Forty-five (45) of these mature students were then divided into two groups. Twenty-four (24) were placed in the experimental group, while 21 were assigned to the control group. The reason for the non-even number is that some students who had initially agreed to be part of the study withdrew at a later stage when the intervention programme was already ongoing, which made it difficult to replace them. Usually, the groups for teaching are made up of both mature and non-mature students. However, for the purposes of this research, a group comprised solely of mature students was

created. These groups were their permanent classes for the semester. Because the research was explained to the students from the beginning of the semester, those who were unwilling to participate were replaced before teaching began, except for those who opted out at a later time. The mixed group (the control group) was instructed based on the traditional or regular mode of instruction, while the other, the mature students-only group (experimental), was instructed based on the adapted TBLT programme. The lesson plan that was used for the intervention is subsequently presented.

A pre-test was carried out for all groups to determine their efficiency in reading, writing and speaking in English and also to serve as a basis for the analysis after the intervention. Babbie (2010) asserts that ideally, the control and experimental groups should be similar, which can be achieved by randomness. However, due to the research's quasi-experimental nature, which makes randomness difficult, Leedy and Ormrod (2019) point out that a pre-test can be used in terms of the dependent variable (the mature students) to mitigate the validity challenge. Accordingly, there was a need to determine the levels of participants before the intervention. The pre-test was written in the second week of the semester, before lessons began, and was supervised by the researcher.

Before the pre-test was written, students were made to understand the nature of the experiment and were asked to sign an informed consent form to indicate their willingness to undergo the study without compulsion. Their consent for the tests, observation, and questionnaires was sought. Students were also informed of an interview to be conducted with a subset of them at the end of the intervention.

Twelve (12) tasks (lessons) were designed for the experimental group, while the control group underwent their traditional teaching as has been done over the years. Traditional teaching is teacher-centred rather than student-centred. The lecturer leads the instruction by introducing

the topics and explaining the concepts that are vital in a given lesson. Students participate by asking and answering questions. Assessments are mainly in the form of quizzes, an examination and occasional student presentations. Students may also work in groups, although this is not a frequent practice in traditional teaching.

The tasks in task-based lessons were specially designed to handle the three main aspects of language on which the research seeks to focus: reading, writing and speaking. Each task was based on a real-life situation but had an underlying element of explicit grammar instruction.

Although there are four phases of the TBLT approach, as postulated by Willis (1998), this research included an additional phase known as the preparatory phase. This preliminary phase, as proposed, is to set the tone for actual class activities to begin. During the intervention, the phase was used to engage with the students informally to find out other aspects of their non-academic lives and to motivate them for the task ahead. This stage was essential as it helped to create a comfortable atmosphere before lessons began. The second phase, the pre-task phase, was where actual teaching began. Students were introduced to the task for the week and were told what was expected of them. The during-task phase was where the students undertook their tasks under observation. Students planned how their work would be presented, and a write-up was done to that effect. Finally, the post-task phase entailed reporting and evaluation. This was the stage at which the students' language needs were addressed.

A post-test was conducted for both groups at the end of the semester to determine the impact of TBLT on the experimental group and the extent of the impact.

Interviews with 15 selected students were conducted after the post-test based on their performance (high, average, low). Students were interviewed individually to prevent the influence of responses from other interviewees.

Self-answered questionnaires were given to the students before and after the intervention. These were administered only to the experimental group. Each student was required to answer one pre-questionnaire and one post-questionnaire. Students were allowed to answer the questions at their own pace without strict adherence to a specific time.

4.6.1 Sample lesson

The lesson plan below is a sample lesson plan that was used for the experimental class during the intervention period. The lesson plan is based on the instructional model discussed in Chapter 3. This lesson plan incorporates the principles of constructivism, the phases of the TBLT, principles of cooperative learning, and teaching/learning activities.

Table 4.2: Sample lesson plan

Lesson 2		Date: 10th November 2020	
	Punctuations	**Expected outcome**	**Time allocation**
Task type/activities to use, e.g., pair work, group work	Ordering and sorting, story-telling, comparing and contrasting, pair work	Students will be able to work with others to order and sort details from stories	
Task topic	Students should write a story about a movie/story they have read/watched or been told about	Students will be able to write narrative essays	1:00pm to 3:00pm
Aspect of language	Speaking/writing		
Aim	To get students to know the importance of punctuation marks in writing.	Students will be able to use punctuation marks effectively when writing	
Materials needed	Printed text, pieces of paper, projector, markers, dusters, observation check sheet(s), researcher's logbook.		
Preparatory phase	The lecturer ensures that chairs and tables are well arranged for class activities. The lecturer is in class before		

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	class begins and chats informally with students to find out how their day is going. They are asked if they have encountered any challenges since the semester began, especially with their registration. Their general well-being is of interest to the lecturer.			
Pre-task phase	Students read a printed text which has varied punctuation marks in it to give them prior knowledge on punctuation usage.			30 mins
Task cycle	Task	Students write their stories, then share their stories in pairs, compare the punctuation marks used in their neighbours', sort out the most commonly used punctuations to the least used, and then order them.		20 mins
	Planning	Students plan how to report to the class		10 mins
	Reporting	One student represents the pair in reporting to the class		20 mins
Post-task (language focus)	Analysis	The lecturer gives feedback on the report. Errors identified are addressed. Language needs are addressed		40 mins
	Practice	Students rewrite their stories by being mindful of and using correct punctuation.		

Lesson two is a two-hour class that was taught using the TBLT method. The lesson aims at helping the students to effectively use punctuation marks in their writing. The lesson employed ordering and sorting, storytelling, pair work, and comparison and contrast as teaching and

learning activities. The aspects of language targeted in this lesson were speaking and writing. The speaking component was facilitated by the numerous interactions students engaged in during the task stage. They also engaged in writing activities that targeted their writing proficiency. Teaching and learning materials utilised were printed text, pieces of paper, a projector, markers, dusters, observation check sheet(s), and the researcher's logbook.

During the preparatory phase, the lecturer engaged students in informal conversations. They were encouraged to participate fully in classroom activities, and all were encouraged to cooperate and tolerate one another. Students were encouraged to share any challenges they were encountering, academic or otherwise. The lecturer informed students of her availability outside lecture periods for personal discussions if the need arose.

The pre-task phase was used to present the task for the day. Students were informed of the objectives and the expected outcomes. Additionally, they were instructed to set objectives and motivate themselves for the task ahead. Printed texts were given to each student to read while noting the punctuation marks used. Thirty minutes were allotted for this phase.

During the task phase, students were asked to write short stories based on movies they had watched or stories they had read or heard. In writing their essays, they were instructed to use as many punctuation marks as possible. After writing, they were instructed to pair up and identify all the punctuations they had used in their write-up and sort out from the least used to the most used. The students were also asked to prepare a write-up for presentation to the whole class. One of the pairs was to represent them to do the presentation. Due to time constraints, not all the pairs were allowed to give an oral presentation. Five pairs presented, but all presented their write-up reports.

Finally, the lecturer identified that the students used few punctuation marks during the post-task phase. The commonly used ones were full stops, commas, question marks, capital letters and apostrophes. It was observed that dashes, semicolons, colons, parentheses and exclamation marks, among others, were used sparingly. The lecturer realised that students were not familiar with the usage of some punctuation elements. These unfamiliar punctuation marks were explained to them. Students were asked to rewrite their stories inculcating new punctuation marks. This new write-up was to be done as an assignment, as time would not allow it to be done in class. The assignments were to be submitted before the next class so feedback could be given subsequently.

4.6.2 Data collection

Both quantitative and qualitative tools were used to collect data for this research. The quantitative instruments used were tests, observation checklists, and questionnaires. The qualitative instruments used to elicit data were observation and interviews. It is worth noting that observation was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data and will be explained subsequently.

Two major sources of data collection were done: primary and secondary. The primary sources of data involved original thinking and report. They are first-hand information on which other research is based. Examples of primary sources include audio recordings, diaries, interviews, photographs, video recordings, surveys and the like. In this research, interviews were conducted and used in conjunction with observation to collect primary data. Tests and questionnaires, which are primary data, were also collected. The researcher also kept a log (similar to a journal or diary) of classroom activities to complement the classroom observation. Secondary sources of information are discussions, evaluations and interpretations done on the

primary sources. Secondary sources include dictionaries, bibliographies, journal articles, textbooks and websites, among others. This research reviewed literature from journals and research work that had been done in the area of TBLT. Books and websites were also consulted for information. Both the primary and secondary sources have helped ascertain relevant information for the research.

4.6.2.1 Validity

Standardisation of research tools is a vital process in research. The validity conferred by using standardised research tools ensures reliable data collection. The supervisor thoroughly examined all the research tools, including the interview guide, tests, observation checklist, and questionnaire. Corrections were made after several reviews. Additionally, the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria also examined all the tools and gave feedback. Further corrections were made before final approval was given. To determine internal reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated with an alpha value of is 0.893, which indicates that there was a high level of internal consistency in the data sample. It was essential to conduct the pilot study to help ascertain the validity of the tools used and test the methodology so that the needed corrections or adjustments could be made during the actual intervention. Sixty-two (62) first-year students were used for the pilot study. Thirty-one (31) of them were mature students, while the remaining thirty-one (31) were non-mature students. A report on the pilot study is given in this chapter.

4.6.2.2 Tests (quantitative)

A pre-test and a post-test are tools used to take measurements before and after treatment. Dimitrov and Rumrill (2003) assert that "Pretest-posttest designs are widely used in behavioural research, primarily to compare groups and/or measuring change resulting from

experimental treatments". Kumar (2011) further contends that tests can assess the impact of an intervention in experimental research, although they are expensive and difficult to administer because they can take a long time to complete. He further adds that other internal or external variables are capable of causing a change that could affect the result. Despite these challenges, tests are vital in any experimental research. The pre-test is of significant importance as it is administered to determine the participants' existing language proficiency levels before the intervention. Part of the pre-test and post-test tools that were administered to both the control and experimental groups were taken from the Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL), which is managed by the Inter-Institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA) based in South Africa. This test is used to determine first-year university students' literacy and reading skills to help determine their literacy levels. The test consists of six sections. One comprises sentences that are scrambled, which students must reorder. Another section is on vocabulary knowledge, where students choose the best possible answer from a list of options. A third section is on verbal reasoning, where a statement is given for students to select the best choice based on how they understand the test. The remaining sections are on interpreting graphs and visual information, comprehension, and grammar/test relation.

The speaking and writing components of the tests were designed by the researcher based on insights from the PTE academic test from Pearson and OWL Perdue writing lab. The speaking test was an oral session by the students, which consisted of a self-introduction, description of images, answers to short questions and reading aloud (Appendix 1).

The writing components comprised essay-writing, answering short questions and summarisation. The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the intervention and the post-test at the end (Appendix 1).

4.6.2.3 Observation (quantitative and qualitative)

Kumar (2014) describes observation as purposefully, systematically and selectively watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place. It is one of the primary sources of information where the researcher obtains firsthand information. The researcher can observe by participating in the activities or by just observing without participation. In this study, the researcher, as the instructor, does not participate in the observation, but rather another lecturer who is not involved in the teaching, making it a non-participant observation. The participants were aware of the presence of the observer but did not know in detail the specific issues that were being observed. Although Creswell (2014) asserts that a researcher who does not have good attending and observing skills may hinder observation, he believes it is an excellent tool to ascertain firsthand experience with participants. He adds that during observation, any unusual aspects can be noticed. An observation was performed during the intervention phase of the experimental group. Major themes that guided the observation were preparation, language use, students' participation (which included their confidence level), lesson presentation, classroom management and atmosphere, and use of technology. An observation checklist was employed in the collection process based on the themes and was checked appropriately (Appendix 2).

The checklist was used as a tool for collecting the observation data. Kumar (2011) asserts that observation can be done either quantitatively or qualitatively. Quantitative observation is done with a prescribed checklist, which is more specific, more detailed and closed-ended. On the other hand, qualitative observation is open-ended. This research combined both qualitative and quantitative observation. As can be seen, the checklist has closed-ended questions that are checked to indicate the presence and extent of an element, thus quantitative. The comment section is allowed for other observed phenomena but notably not in the prescribed list. It also

helped the researcher to input additional information to help explain the score for a particular element. For instance, if the score for "use of technology" is poor because there was a power outage, then the comment section could be used to note it.

This research took 16 weeks in all. The first week was not used for actual teaching but for students to prepare themselves for the task ahead. Pre-intervention questionnaires and pre-tests were done in the first two weeks, and teaching and learning continued for the subsequent 12 weeks. The final two weeks were used for the interviews, post-intervention questionnaires and post-tests. There are, therefore, 12 observations that were carried out by the observer. The observer is a lecturer who has taught the English language for more than a decade. He was not part of the class activities but exclusively observed as teaching and learning occurred.

4.6.2.4 Questionnaires (quantitative)

Kumar (2011) describes a questionnaire as any written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by respondents. Questionnaires are not expensive compared to other data collection tools but are excellent for collecting data because they offer anonymity. A pre-questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to determine their opinions regarding their own use of the language in oral and written communication and in their reading. A post-questionnaire was also administered to all the students to ascertain their impressions and views on the interventions. Participants were to answer the questions in the classroom immediately after their final lesson to avoid the low response rate from participants that usually characterise questionnaires. Questions were closed-ended and on a Likert scale to enable easy analysis. Questions that were asked dealt with participants' views on the approach used, self-efficacy and confidence in using the language. Other questions were on classroom management and

setting, whether they believed their writing, reading and speaking skills had improved after the intervention, and whether they enjoyed the pair/group work, etc.

4.6.2.5 Interviews (qualitative)

Interviews were conducted with students who were purposely selected based on their performance on the test. The interviews were held at the end of the intervention, after their post-test. Fifteen participants were selected based on their performance in the post-test – selected from the lowest, average and highest ranges – to help get a balance in responses from participants. Although Kumar (2011) asserts that interviews are time-consuming, may be biased, and that the quality of data depends on the quality of interaction, interviews are helpful for in-depth information and have a broader application. Information gathered could also be supplemented with observations or non-verbal responses. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow the participants to express themselves freely on issues about the intervention. The focus of the questions was to ascertain what they think about the advantages and disadvantages of the intervention, what they believe could be done to improve the approach, their overall impression of the method, the role of the lecturer, as well as that of the students, among other things (Appendix 3).

4.6.2.6 Researcher's log (qualitative)

The researcher's log consists of notes and entries that are entered by the researcher at the end of each lesson. The researcher takes these notes after class if they are involved in the teaching or research activities. This reflective journal log is kept to record anything that the researcher notices or observes in the course of the study which might be helpful in the research.

Schram (2006) emphasises that data from researcher logs is rich, detailed and accurate. He further points out that the log can be written in several forms, which include short notes,

paraphrased reports, quotes and conversations. The log can record how students interact with one another, with the teacher and with the study materials provided. For this research, the log was used to record all activities that the researcher recalled after class. It was also used to help reflect on how the day's lesson had gone and how to improve or modify subsequent lessons if necessary.

4.7 Analysis of data

The data collected for this research were both quantitative and qualitative and, as such, were analysed differently. The quantitative data were statistically analysed, while narration was used to analyse the qualitative data. Further discussions on these analyses are given in this section.

4.7.1 Tests (quantitative)

As already stated above, a test is one of the key data collection tools employed during the conduct of a research study. It is also worth noting that the test utilised for the study falls under the quantitative research approach. As such, the results from the conduct of these tests were analysed and interpreted statistically. The test was utilised as a part of the data collection tool because Kumar (2011) asserts that tests can effectively and efficiently assess the impact of an intervention in experimental research. Although the test was used in varied forms such as speaking and writing, reordering of scrambled sentences, vocabulary knowledge, verbal reasoning, graphs and visual information, all these were scored statistically and quantitatively against pre-determined marks that were ranked based on the performances of the participants. Scoring the participants' results on the test and ranking them in a statistical manner in order of performance helped the researcher easily determine each participant's passing mark or otherwise. Since the test was utilised in a pre-test-post-test format, the individual participants' pre-test score was compared to their post-test score after the intervention to assess whether the

intervention had any impact on the participants' performance and to quantify the extent of the impact.

After the test scores had been assigned statistical figures based on the performances of the participants, they were entered into the SPSS Statistics Version 21.0 for further analysis. Descriptive statistics on the pre-tests and post-tests were first done to indicate the general performance of participants in terms of their mean and standard deviation scores. The inferential statistics were further carried out to understand the nature of their performances. For the tests that were normally distributed, Levene's statistics were used to check equality of variance—ANOVA (Analysis of variance). Since the goal of the test was to compare the performances of the participants before and after the introduction of the intervention, the independent T-test was used to run the statistical test for this data. The reasons why the independent T-test was considered ideal for running the scores for the test are that the T-test is used to establish the differences in means and standard deviations between two key variables; in this case, the pre-test score and the post-test score of the participants. More so, the participants were randomly selected from the target population, which makes the collected data from these participants follow the normal distribution (Creswell, 2014).

For data sets that were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests such as pairwise comparisons, independent sample median test, hypothesis test summary and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used. All these underlying assumptions having been met by the selected participants and through the collected data makes the independent T-test the ideal data analysis tool for the test.

4.7.2 Observation (quantitative and qualitative)

The study employed observation methods to collect both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis of the acquired data from the selected participants. The quantitative observation data came in the form of a specially designed checklist. The resource person tasked to do the observation checked against the items on the list during the intervention. The checklist had scores ranging from good = 3, satisfactory = 2, to poor = 1. These scores were put together under each specified item. The list helped identify the researcher's effectiveness during the intervention. Because of the short duration of the observation (12 days), frequency distributions were used to analyse, describe and interpret the data.

Qualitative observation was employed by allowing the resource person tasked with the observation process to make personal comments and remarks on elements encountered during the observation. This helped the researcher acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of underlying issues during the intervention. These comments and remarks were then included in the qualitative data of the study and thematically analysed for interpretation in line with the aims and objectives of the study. The comments and remarks were the personal opinions of the resource person, a trained individual in this field, who ensured that their comments and remarks were objective and professional due to the nature of the work. The observations helped in acquiring in-depth and comprehensive data on the strengths and shortfalls encountered during the intervention application stage from the perspective of an avid professional.

4.7.3 Questionnaire (quantitative)

Creswell (2014) asserts that using a questionnaire is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways of collecting data from targeted participants of a study. As stated above, in the quest to acquire and codify the opinions and views of the selected participants, a developed

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questionnaire was used to acquire needed data for the study. The questionnaire came in the form of a Likert scale and gave the participants a range of responses from which they could select the most applicable. The answered questionnaires from the participants were coded and entered into the SPSS system for onward and subsequent analysis. The questionnaire was analysed using frequency distributions and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. The test was appropriate because the data set was not normally distributed. The test gave a score of the students' responses before and after the intervention and ranked them such that it was easy to determine how many students responded positively to a given question, how many responded negatively and how many were neutral.

4.7.4 Interview (qualitative)

The interview session conducted with the 15 selected participants of the study based on their performances was audio-recorded with their consent. The recorded data were analysed using the qualitative research approach, as already stated above. This was done by transcribing the recorded interview session with the selected participants of the study and using the content analysis technique to interpret and analyse the transcribed data. The content analysis technique was utilised by grouping emerging themes and sub-themes from the interview sessions based on the content of the study in line with the aims and objectives of the research. After the recorded and transcribed data from the interview sessions had been analysed and interpreted, the analysed qualitative data of the study were then infused with the already analysed quantitative data of the study to enhance the comprehension of the analysis section of the study. The content analysis technique ensures that the analysis of the study was done in line with the contents of the developed interview guide of the study. The main objective of the questions in the interview guide was to ascertain what the research participants thought about the advantages and disadvantages of the intervention, what they believed could be done to improve

the approach, their overall impression of the method, the role of the lecturer, as well as that of the students, among other things. These were the themes and contents that guided the qualitative analysis of the acquired interview data.

4.7.5 Researcher's log (qualitative)

The researcher's log was also analysed using the qualitative research approach since the participants' activities were recorded using an open-ended instrument. This was done based on the subjective view and understanding of the researcher, which was recorded from the perspective of the researcher. After taking the journal logs or notes based on the activities undertaken during the research, the researcher incorporated the findings with transcribed data from the interview sessions and, in line with the content analysis technique, presented the findings. Employing the researcher's log, observation, and interview guide helped enhance the richness of the qualitative data collected.

4.8 Report on the pilot study

4.8.1 Introduction

The pilot study was carried out to ascertain the reliability of the instruments to be used for data collection and to test the TBLT approach. The pilot is essential as it helps identify potential problems and deficiencies that may exist in the research tools and procedures before implementation is done in the main study. Moreover, the pilot helps the researcher to be familiar with the methodology before full implementation is done.

This pilot study was carried out between October 4 and December 6, 2019, thus for ten weeks. Sixty-two (62) students participated in the research, made up of 31 mature students and 31 non-mature students. Ten task-based lessons were conducted within the period. The pilot study had

two main groups as participants. These groups were the mature students (the experimental group) and the non-mature students (the control group). The main study constituted two groups of mature students, one experimental and the other control, but the pilot study was done with only one group of mature students. This was mainly because of the number of mature students who availed themselves for the intervention. The tools used for the pilot study were tests and observations, and the findings are presented below.

4.8.2 Analysis of tests

The data set for the pilot study is 62 students, made up of 31 mature students and 31 non-mature students. These students did a pre-test in reading, writing and speaking. The speaking and writing tests were designed by the researcher, while the reading test was adapted from ICELDA's TALL. Both speaking and writing tests were successfully carried out, but only pretest was done for reading using the TALL. The post-test could not be completed. Detailed reasons are given in section 8.4.

4.8.2.1 Descriptive statistics for pre-writing test

Prior to the pilot intervention, there was the need to determine the reading, speaking and writing proficiency of the mature and non-mature students. Table 4.3 gives the descriptive statistics of the pre-test of mature students followed by that of the non-mature students.

Table 4.3: Reading, writing and speaking pre-test of mature students

	Mean	**Standard deviation**	**Standard deviation error**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
TALL reading	30.161	9.987	1.794	9.000	51.000
Writing	21.903	4.019	0.722	13.000	30.000
Speaking	17.774	2.895	0.520	12.000	23.000

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From the table, it can be observed that the mean reading score of the mature students in the reading test was 30.16, with a standard deviation of 9.987. The prewriting mean score was 21.903 with a standard deviation of 4.019, while the speaking mean score was 17.774 with a standard deviation of 2.894. The pre-test score for the various tests for the non-mature students is also presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Reading, writing and speaking pre-test of non-mature students

	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	Minimum	Maximum
TALL reading	34.788	10.123	1.762	18	63
Writing	24.152	4.501	0.783	16	33
Speaking	19.439	2.973	0.518	14	24

From Table 4.4, it can be observed that while the mean score for the reading tests was 34.78 with a standard deviation of 10.12, that of the writing was 24.15 with a standard deviation of 4.5. The speaking pre-test score of the non-mature students was 19.43 with a standard deviation of 2.97. Table 4.5 below displays the difference between the scores of the mature and non-mature students in the various pre-tests.

Table 4.5: Pre-test for both mature and non-mature students

	Mean		Standard deviation		Standard error		Minimum		Maximum	
	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-Mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.
TALL test (Reading)	30.160	35.580	9.990	10.420	1.790	1.870	9.000	21.000	51.000	63.000
Writing	21.903	23.677	4.019	4.339	0.721	0.779	13.000	16.000	13.0000	16.000
Speaking	17.77	19.177	2.890	3.127	0.520	0.562	12.000	14.000	23.000	24.000

From the table, it can be seen that the non-mature students performed better than the mature students in all three pre-tests that were conducted prior to the intervention programme. The

results affirm the fact that the non-mature students' language proficiency was relatively better than the mature students.

4.8.2.2 Inferential statistics for pre-test

The descriptive statistics signify a better performance of the non-mature students over the mature students. There is a need to ascertain whether the differences observed between the mature and non-mature students are significant. Paired statistics tests are carried out to determine the extent of difference between the reading, speaking or writing tests.

Table 4.6: T-test for reading pre-test

	Mean	Stand. dev.	Variance	Observations	Df	T Stat
Mature	30.161	9.990	99.740	31	60	-2.091
Non-mature	35.581	10.420	108.512	31		

The table above represents the reading TALL pre-test for both the mature and non-mature students. From the table, it can be observed that there was a significant difference between the two groups with the P value of 0.02, which is less than 0.05. This result confirms the mean difference of 30.1 and 35.5 for the mature and non-mature students, respectively.

Table 4.7: T-test for writing pre-test

	Mean	Stand. dev.	Variance	Observations	Df	T Stat
Mature	21.903	4.020	16.157	31	60	-1.670
Non-mature	23.678	4.501	18.826	31		

In the table above, just like that of the reading test, the writing pre-test also shows a significant difference with a P value of 0.05. This result also indicates that the differences in mean scores for the mature (21.9) and non-mature (23.6) students were significant.

Table 4.8: T-test for speaking pre-test

	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Variance	Observations	Df	T Stat
Mature	17.77419	2.895	8.380	31	60	-1.833
Non-mature	19.17742	2.973	9.776	31		

Similar to the reading and writing tests, the speaking pre-test also indicates a significant difference with a P value of 0.03. The results also confirm the significant difference between the mean scores of the mature and non-mature students of 17.7 and 19.1, respectively.

From the inferential statistics for the pre-test, there is an indication that prior to the intervention for the mature students, there was a significant difference between the reading, writing and speaking skills of the mature students and non-mature students. The non-mature students performed better, and the difference was significant in all three tests.

4.8.2.3 Post-test for mature and non-mature students

After the intervention for the mature students, there was the need to re-test their language proficiency to determine if there was an improvement over the pre-test. The table below provides the post-test results of both the mature and non-mature students.

Table 4.9: Descriptive statistics for post-tests

	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	Minimum	Maximum
Writing	25.742	5.183	0.931	13	35
Speaking	19.677	2.400	0.431	14	24

From the table above, it can be seen that after the intervention programme, the mature students' test results changed. While the mean score of the writing post-test was 25.74 with a standard deviation of 5.18, that of the speaking post-test was 19.67 with a standard deviation of 2.400. As was indicated earlier, the reading post-test could not be carried out as expected.

Table 4.10: Post-test non-mature

	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard error	Minimum	Maximum
Writing	26.484	3.880	0.697	18	11
Speaking	21.000	3.194	0.574	11	29

The table also gives the post-test result of the non-mature students who did not undergo the intervention programme but were taught through the traditional method. As can be seen, in both writing and speaking, there was an improvement in their scores, with means of 26.4 and 21, respectively.

The table below is generated to help compare the post-test performance of the mature and non-mature students.

Table 4.11: Post-test for both mature and non-mature students

	Mean		Standard deviation		Standard error		Minimum		Maximum	
	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.	Mat.	Non-mat.
Writing	25.742	26.484	5.183	4.339	0.931	0.697	13	18	35	38
Speaking	19.677	21.00	2.400	3.194	0.431	0.574	14	11	24	29

From the table above, it can be seen that in both writing and speaking, the non-mature students performed better, with mean scores of 26.4 and 21, respectively, versus the mature students' scores of 25.7 and 19.6. Although the non-mature students performed better in both tests per the mean as seen, there is the need to investigate further the performance of the mature students, who comprised the experimental group, to determine the significance of their performance with inferential statistics.

4.8.2.4 Inferential statistics for mature students

These statistics further needed to probe whether the difference between the pre-test score and post-test score was significant or not. Table 4.12 below presents the paired samples statistics

of the pre-writing and post-writing tests followed by paired samples correlations and paired

samples tests.

Table 4.12: Writing pre-test and post-test for mature students

A. Paired samples statistics

	Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Writing post-test	25.7419	31	5.18310	.93091
Writing pre-test	21.9032	31	4.01958	.72194

B. Paired samples correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Writing pre-test & writing post-test	31	.610	.000

C. Paired samples test

	Paired differences							
				95% confidence interval of the difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	Lower	Upper	t	Df	
Writing post-test – writing pre-test	3.83871	4.19600	.75362	2.29960	5.37782	5.094	30	.000

From the table above, the mean difference was 3.839 with a standard deviation of 4.196. Due

to the means of the two performances after the intervention, the p-value (0.00) is less than the

significance level (0.05), hence the study concludes that there was a statistically significant

improvement in performance following the intervention from 21.90 ± 4.01 to 25.74 ± 5.18; an

appreciation in writing performance of 3.84 ± 4.20. There was also a positive correlation

between the writing pre-test and post-test, which suggests that as the values of the writing pre-

test increase, the values of the writing post-test also increase and vice versa.

Similar paired tests were done for the speaking test, and the table below represents the paired sample statistics followed by the paired samples correlations and paired samples tests.

Table 4**.**13**: Speaking pre-test and post-test for mature students**

A. Paired samples statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Speaking post-test	19.6774	31	2.39982	.43102
Speaking pre-test	17.7742	31	2.89493	.51995
B. Paired samples correlations				
	N	Correlation	Sig.	
Speaking post-test & speaking pre-test	31	.838	.000	

C. Paired samples test								
	Paired differences							
				95% confidence interval of the difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	
Speaking post-test – speaking pre-test	1.90323	1.57808	.28343	1.32438	2.48207	6.715	30	.000

From the table above, the mean difference was 1.90 with a standard deviation of 1.58. Due to the means of the two performances after the intervention, the p-value (0.00) is less than the significance level (0.05). Hence, the study concludes that there was a statistically significant improvement in performance following the intervention used from 17.77 ± 2.89 to 19.67 ± 2.39, an appreciation in writing performance of 1.90 ± 1.58. There was also a significant positive correlation between the speaking pre-test and post-test, which suggests that as the

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values of the speaking pre-test increase, the values of the speaking post-test also increase and vice versa.

After the inferential analysis on speaking and writing, the two tests were combined to determine the overall performance. The table below illustrates the paired sample statistics, paired samples correlations and paired samples test.

Table 4.14: Pre-test and post-test for combined speaking and writing for mature students

A. Paired samples statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Post	45.4194	31	5.64963	1.01470
Pre	39.6774	31	5.19222	.93255
B. Paired samples correlations				
	N	Correlation	Sig.	
Post & Pre	31	.642	.000	

C. Paired samples test								
	Paired differences							
			Std. error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation		Lower	Upper	t	Df	
Post – Pre	5.74194	4.60411	.82692	4.05313	7.43074	6.944	30	.000

The study combined the writing and speaking tests. The mean difference was 5.74 with a standard deviation of 4.60. Due to the means of the two performances after the interventions, the p-value (0.00) is less than the significance level (0.05). Hence, the study concludes that there was a statistically significant improvement in performance following the training programme used from 39.67 ± 5.19 to 45.42 ± 5.65, an appreciation in writing performance of

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5.74 ± 4.60. There was also a significant positive correlation between the combined writing and speaking pre-test and post-test, which suggests that as the values of the combined writing and speaking pre-test increase, the values of the speaking post-test also increase and vice versa.

4.8.2.5 Comparing mature and non-mature students

The independent samples T-test (or independent T-test, for short) compares the means between two unrelated groups on the same continuous, dependent variable. The table below compares the overall performance of the non-mature and mature students before and after the intervention.

Table 4.15: Compared mature and non-mature students

Group statistics		N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Total before	Non-mature	31	43.3065	4.89673	.87948
	Mature	31	39.6774	5.19222	.93255
Total after	Non-mature	31	47.9677	4.98320	.89501
	Mature	31	45.4194	5.64963	1.01470

Independent samples test		Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total before	Equal variances assumed	0.578	0.450	2.831	60	0.006	3.629	1.282	1.065	6.1931
	Equal variances not assumed			2.831	59.795	0.006	3.629	1.282	1.065	6.1932
Total after	Equal variances assumed	0.795	0.376	1.883	60	0.064	2.548	1.353	-0.158	5.2548
	Equal variances not assumed			1.883	59.079	0.065	2.548	1.353	-0.159	5.2557

Table 4.15 above contains the descriptive statistics for the two groups. Looking at the two samples' mean of 43.31 for the non-mature and mature students before the training programme, Levene's test for equality of variances and the T-test for equality of means, the test statistics for Levene's test for equality of variances is an F-test statistic equalling 0.578 and with a p-value of 0.450. Comparing the p-value to the significance level (0.05), the study finds that there is not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis, that the variances are equal, is not rejected. In this case, the study uses the T-test results for equal

variances assumed. The T-test value obtained was 2.831 with a p-value of 0.006, which is less than the significance level of 0.05, so the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is evidence that before the intervention for the mature group, there was a significant difference between the mature and non-mature groups. However, testing again after the intervention was administered to the mature students, the T-test value was 1.883 with a p-value of 0.064, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05, so the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is evidence that after the intervention programme was given to the mature group, there was not a significant difference between the mature and non-mature groups. This indicates that the mature students significantly improved after the intervention programme compared to the non-mature students who were taught with the traditional method.

4.8.3 Analysis on observation

The table below is from the checklist derived from the ten-day observation done by a colleague, also a language teacher during the pilot study.

Table 4.16: Observation checklist

	OBSERVATION CHECKLIST							
DATE	Preparation:	Language use	Students Participation	Classroom management	Use of technology:	Level of presentation:		
04/10/2019	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Good		
11/10/2019	Good	Good	Good	satisfactory	Good	Good		
18/10/2019	Good	Satisfactory	Good	satisfactory	Good	Good		
25/10/2019	satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	satisfactory	Good	Good		
01/11/2019	satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	satisfactory	satisfactory	Good		
08/11/2019	Good	Satisfactory	Good	satisfactory	satisfactory	Good		
15/11/2019	Good	Good	Good	satisfactory	Good	Good		
22/11/2019	Good	Good	Good	satisfactory	Good	Good		
29/11/2019	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good		
06/12/2019	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good		
Good= highly satisfactory with qualities of high standards								
Satisfactory=acceptable with sufficient expectation although not outstanding or exceptional								
Poor= unacceptable or below expectations. Performance lacks understanding or motivation								

From the table, it can be seen that on preparation, two out of the 10 were satisfactory while eight were good. This means the lecturer prepared adequately for class activities. The students' language use during the intervention was at an average level, as five days were satisfactory and the other five were good. It was observed that students fully participated in all ten meeting days

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and were good. Classroom management was satisfactorily managed, with only two meeting days that were highly satisfactory. This particular observation signifies that classroom management was a challenge. The reason for the need for effective classroom management is that during the task phase, students are engaged in a series of discussions, and as they continue to engage, there is the possibility for them to have conversations outside the task assigned. The lecturer may not be able to control what happens in every group or pair.

On the use of technology, except for two instances where the observer scored it as satisfactory, the remaining eight were highly satisfactory, meaning technology was vital in the teaching and learning process. The level of presentation was scored highly by the observer. All the 10 days of engagements were good, which signifies that the lecturer has a good command of the subject.

4.8.4 Implications of pilot study

The pilot study was successful to a considerable extent. One of the major challenges faced was the internet connectivity and power outages during the TALL exams. The Test for Academic Literacy is organised remotely, which requires an internet connection for students to answer the 100 questions given. Some students had to restart their tests several times because their connections were interrupted during the exams. This challenge was quite frustrating for some students, especially the mature ones. Since the examination took place in the university's computer lab, this challenge was not anticipated because the laboratory assistants were ready to help with whatever challenge was expected, but it was discovered that the connection problem was external rather than internal. Additionally, this challenge did not allow students to participate in the TALL post-test. Several dates were rescheduled, but it was not possible for students to undertake the test. Additionally, some of the mature students were very slow on the computer; hence they were not able to finish their test before the stipulated time lapsed. The analysis could, therefore, not be done on the TALL results.

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Another challenge encountered during the pilot study was students' inability to avail themselves for their tests. The tests were organised on different days because of the various requirements. Students were scheduled to take the oral component on a different day from the written component. Some participants availed themselves for the written test but did not show up for the orals. Again, some students who wrote the TALL exams could not partake in either the written or the oral components. This deficit affected the data collected; hence, their responses had to be removed from the data.

Additionally, classroom management was quite a challenge during the task phase. Owing to the fact that TBLT requires pair and group work, several interactions take place during lessons, especially during the task phase. Students during the pilot study had conversations outside the tasks assigned to them, causing some of them to spend more time than necessary on a given task.

Furthermore, it was discovered during the pilot that the lecture duration for each period was not enough to complete all the phases of the TBLT. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, there are four phases for this intervention: preparatory, pre-task, task, and post-task. Each of these stages is carefully designed to meet the targeted goal for the day. Although time was allocated for each cycle, the post-task phase was deficient, meaning there was not enough time for this important stage. Moreover, students spent more time on the task assigned to them because they needed to do a lot of discussion and deliberation and decide how the report would be given.

4.8.5 Lessons learnt from challenges

Due to the power and internet challenges encountered during the pilot study, students were encouraged to use laptops for the TALL assessment during the main study. This decision was beneficial as most of the participants were able to complete the test. On the internet

connectivity, students were encouraged to connect via Wi-Fi which was more stable than the cable connection. Participants were also encouraged to get additional data bundles on their phones as a backup should there be a disconnection, which was helpful.

Additionally, lessons for the intervention were scheduled within the university's scheduled timetable. It was, as a result, difficult to engage students beyond the stipulated time frame. As a result, the main lesson was designed such that not all task activities took place in class. Activities that required a lot of deliberation and time were given to students as take-home assignments to complete in groups or pairs. They reported at the next meeting before the day's activity began.

Lastly, classroom management was a challenge during the pilot study because of the numerous pair and group discussions accompanying TBLT. Due to this, students were made to help set group and classroom rules from the beginning of the intervention to curtail unnecessary disruptions and conversations outside the tasks assigned. This decision helped to a large extent, although it could not completely eliminate classroom noise.

4.8.6 Challenges faced during data collection

The pilot study was helpful as it helped alleviate some of the challenges that would have been encountered during the main study. That notwithstanding, some challenges were encountered during the data collection.

The major challenge faced during data collection was the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions. The data collection was truncated at a point in time when several restrictions were put in place to curtail the spread of the virus in the country. As a result, schools were closed down, and the students were no longer available for the intervention. Several

months passed before the students could be reconvened amidst online interactions to get the data collected.

Secondly, although students consented to partake in the research, some were not forthcoming with information when requested. Some participants did not complete all the questionnaires as required. Some questions were left unfilled.

Again, some participants did not fully partake in some of the activities as was expected. Although most of the students were excited and participated in the group and pair work, few were not very comfortable opening up in the discussions. It was realised through further interactions with them that difficulties in this area were more attributable to personality traits, as some people find it difficult to engage with others.

Moreover, the conducive classroom environment made it a bit difficult to manage the class at certain times. This challenge was observed during the pilot study. As a result, during the main study, students were made to help formulate class rules from the beginning of the semester, including staying focused during class and avoiding unnecessary talk. Although this rule was helpful to some extent, it appears students were too comfortable with their colleagues. Because of familiarity, there were times when they engaged in other discussions outside the tasks assigned to them. The situations sometimes created noise in the classroom.

Moreover, because most of the participants were mature students with other responsibilities, there were few instances where these students had to attend to other family and/or occupational duties. These responsibilities caused some to miss a few class activities.

Finally, the two-and-a-half hours allotted for the weekly lessons were not adequate. The TBLT approach requires a lot of deliberation and discussion, unlike the regular mode of teaching. Due to that, enough time was needed for all four phases to be effectively met, but because the control

class were using the same duration, it was necessary to maintain the time to avoid biases in time allocation.

4.9 Ethical procedures

Educational research cannot be conducted without permission from the relevant institutions. For this research, since students are involved in the research and are registered within an institution, there was a need to arrange permission for the research to be carried out. Permission was sought from and granted by the Pro-vice Chancellor of the institution (Appendix 5). The students to be used for the research were also given prior notice, and their consent was sought. They were given letters of informed consent (see Appendix 4), which spelt out in detail the nature of the research and what was expected of them. Additionally, they were to endorse their readiness to participate in the research. Participants were again informed of their liberty to withdraw from the research if they wanted to do so and were assured of anonymity and the fact that their responses were for educational purposes only.

A research proposal detailing how the research would be conducted was submitted to the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee for consideration. The proposal included all the research tools to be used for the research, data collection procedures, participants, setting, etc. A conditional approval was given pending additional information on the interview guide, rudiment for marking the tests, etc. Final approval was then given to allow data collection (Appendix 6).

4.10 Summary of chapter

This chapter has discussed the research design adopted for this educational research. The convergent parallel mixed design has been discussed, together with the mixed methods

approach. The participants and the procedures used in data collection and analysis have all been addressed in this chapter. A pilot study conducted before the main study was also reported on, together with the challenges and lessons learnt from it. Table 4.17 summarises the research questions with their corresponding instruments and analysis.

Table 4.17: Research questions, corresponding instruments and data analysis

Question	Instrument	Data	Analysis
RQ 1: What is the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature and non-mature students at Valley View University in Ghana?	Reading: Pre-test Speaking: Pre-test	Quantitative	Descriptive Stats, ANOVA, multiple comparison, independent samples median test, pairwise comparison
	Writing: Pre-test	Quantitative	
RQ 2: How can a TBLT programme be designed and an intervention conducted in relation to the specific context and needs of mature university students in Ghana?	–		–
RQ3a: What will be the effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT?	Reading: pre- and post-test); Speaking: pre- and post-test	Quantitative	Descriptive/T-test/ANOVA/pair wise comparison/multiple comparison/independent samples median test
	Writing: pre- and post-test	Quantitative	
RQ3b: Will mature students, after intervention with a TBLT programme, be at par with their peers who have gone through secondary education?	Reading: pre- and post-test); Speaking: pre- and post-test	Quantitative	Descriptive/T-test/ANOVA/pair wise comparison/multiple comparison/independent samples median test
	Writing: pre- and post-test	Quantitative	
RQ3c: What are the cohort of mature students' opinions on the TBLT intervention programme?	Interviews	Qualitative	Content analysis
	pre-and post-intervention questionnaire	Quantitative	Descriptive statistics/Ranked and test statistics/
RQ3d: How do students respond to the application of TBLT in the classroom, and what insights may be gained from the intervention?	Observation	Qualitative/quantitative	Content analysis/descriptives
	Interviews	Qualitative	Content analysis
	Researcher's log	Qualitative	Content analysis

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4.11 Conclusion of chapter

In this chapter, we have discussed the methodology adopted for this research work and have reported on the preceding pilot study. The next chapter presents the results of the quantitative data.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results as well as the discussion of the quantitative data collected for this research in line with the aims and objectives. The quantitative collected were pre-tests and post-tests, pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, and observation. The data from the observation was collected both quantitatively and qualitatively, but for this chapter, only the quantitative data is presented and analysed. Although there were three participant groups for the study, only the experimental group was observed during lessons and was also the only group that completed the post-questionnaire. For easy identification and clarity, the three groups of participants are defined below:

A. Non-mature group (control) = (NON-MAT)

B. Mature non-intervention group (control) = (MAT NON-INT)

C. Mature group with intervention (experimental) = (MAT INT)

Group A represents non-mature students who were admitted with secondary school certificates, diplomas, or equivalent degrees and were relatively younger, below 25 years of age. This group was instructed through the traditional teaching method and wrote both the pre-tests and post-tests. Group B represents mature students who were admitted into the university through the mature entrance programme and were 25 years of age or older. This group of students represents the control group for the mature students. This group was also taught through the traditional approach, just like Group A, and they were in class together. Group B also wrote the pre-tests and post-tests. Group C is the experimental group that underwent the extra support of the intervention. This group (C) comprised students who are 25 years or older and, like group

B, were also admitted through the mature entrance admission process. Group C, the experimental group, also did the pre-tests and post-tests and completed the pre-intervention questionnaire like groups A and B. However, in addition, this experimental group (C), unlike groups A and B, completed the post-intervention questionnaire and was also observed during the intervention lessons. The data of the tests (reading, writing, and speaking) are first provided, followed by the results of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and, finally, the quantitative data from the observation.

5.2 Presentation of test data

First, the pre-intervention test results on reading, writing, and speaking are presented before the post-intervention test results. For both the pre and post-tests, the descriptive statistics are first presented before the inferential statistics.

5.2.1 Presentation and analysis of pre-tests

The pre-test was conducted on reading, writing, and speaking before the intervention, as there was a need to determine the language proficiency levels of the participants. The test was essential because the participants could not be randomly selected, as this was a quasi-experimental study. Due to the non-random nature of the participants, it was important to establish the homogeneity of the groups, that the experimental and control groups were similar before the intervention. Secondly, the pre-test was needed so that the intervention would then become the sole variable to explain the post-test results. Sixty-five (65) participants from the three groups (A, B, and C) took part in the pre-test for reading, writing and speaking. The breakdown is as follows:

  A. Non-mature group (control) 21

  B. Mature non-intervention group (control) 20

C. Mature group with intervention (experimental)   24

5.2.1.1 Descriptive statistics of pre-tests

The reading test was a standardised test known as the test of academic literacy levels (TALL), developed by the Institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA). It consists of six sections which are scrambled sentences, vocabulary knowledge, verbal reasoning, comprehension, grammar/test relation and interpreting graph/visual information. This test was chosen because of its proven reliability and validity (Le et al., 2012). Several universities in South Africa and around the world use the test to assess first-year university students' academic literacy levels (Le et al., 2012). The results help determine what intervention programme, if any, is necessary for first-year students. Since the participants of this study were first-year students, a standardised test was important. The writing test was developed by the researcher and comprised essay-writing, answering short comprehension questions, and compiling a summary. The speaking test was also designed by the researcher with insights from the Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic and Perdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). The test comprises a self-introduction, description of image, answers to short questions and reading aloud.

The results of the three groups on the reading, writing and speaking tests prior to the intervention are statistically analysed with means and standard deviations. The means give a sum of all the values divided by the total number of values, while the standard deviation gives the amount of dispersion in the data set in relation to the mean Bhandari (2020). Table 5.1 presents the results of the pre-test. From the tests, the non-mature group performed better than the mature groups in all three tests. There was not much difference in the scores of the two mature groups.

Table 5.1: The descriptive pre-test performance of participants

	Participants	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Reading test/100	A. NON-MAT	35.76	13.038	11	69
	B. MAT NON-INT	26.75	11.438	4	53
	C. MAT INT	25.96	11.468	6	49
Writing test/42	A. NON-MAT	25.10	7.790	15	40
	B. MAT NON-INT	17.70	4.578	10	31
	C. MAT INT	17.71	4.496	8	27
Speaking test/24	A. NON-MAT	20.214	2.294	16	24
	B. MAT NON-INT	19.400	1.667	16	22
	C. MAT INT	19.833	2.239	14	23

Source: Researcher's fieldwork 2021

From Table 5.1 above, it can be observed that before the intervention, all the groups scored differently on each of the three (3) tests provided. On the reading test, the non-mature group had a mean score of 35.76. The mature experimental group had a mean score of 25.96, and the mature control group had a mean of 26.75. From the mean scores of the reading test above, it can be observed that all the groups had low scores. However, the non-mature group had a better mean score than the mature groups (the experimental group and the control group), which had similar mean scores. This result shows that before introducing the intervention, all three groups had low scores, but the mature groups had much lower scores than the non-mature group. This serves to demonstrate that the two mature groups started at a similar level.

On the writing pre-test, the non-mature group had a mean average score of 25.10 out of 42. The mature experimental group had a mean low score of 17.71, and the mature control group also had a mean score of 17.70. From the mean scores of the three groups, it can be observed that the non-mature group performed better on the writing pre-test compared to the mature groups (mature experimental and mature control). The mean scores of both mature groups do not show much variation, meaning participants in each group had the same level of competencies as far as the academic writing test was concerned.

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Finally, on the academic speaking test, the three groups performed on almost similar levels, although the non-mature group had the best performance. The non-mature group had a mean score of 20.21. The mature experimental group also had a mean score of 19.83 on this same test, while the mature control group had 19.40. From the scores of the various groups, it can be observed that there was not much variation between the mean score of the non-mature group and the mean scores of either the mature experimental group or the mature control group. This result means that on the speaking pre-test, all the selected participants of the study had scores that were nearly on par with each other.

5.2.1.2 Inferential statistics on pre-test results (reading, writing, speaking)

The pre-test analysis shows that there were slight differences in the means of the various groups. To determine the statistical significance of these differences, statistical tests were performed. The results show that whereas the two mature students' groups were not statistically different, each mature group was statistically different from the non-mature group. The results are presented in the subsequent sections below.

5.2.1.2.1 Inferential statistics for reading pre-test

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) testing was used to determine whether the differences recorded between the groups were significant or not. From the results, there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups, as presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Inferential statistical pre-reading test

 ANOVA

Reading TALL test/100

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	1274.621	2	637.310	4.434	.016
Within groups	8910.518	62	143.718		
Total	1085.138	64			

From Table 5.2, it can be observed that on the pre-test conducted on the reading performances of the participants, the study established a statistically significant difference among all three groups (A, B and C) of the study at [T F (2,62) = .016 < .05]. This outcome clearly shows that the performances of the mature experimental group, mature control group and the non-mature group were not the same on the pre-reading test and that the differences observed were statistically significant.

5.2.1.2.2 Post hoc tests analysis

Based on the significant difference between the groups in the ANOVA, post hoc tests were conducted to compare the groups to determine where the differences were. From the test, there was a statistically significant difference between the non-mature group and the mature groups, but no statistically significant difference was observed between the two mature groups.

Table 5.3: Bonferroni multiple comparisons

Dependent variable: Reading TALL test/100

(I) Participant	(J) Participant	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval Lower bound	Upper bound
B. MAT NON-INT	C. MAT INT	.792	3.630	1.000	-8.14	9.72
	A. NON-MAT	-9.012	3.746	**.057**	-18.23	.20
C. MAT INT	B. MAT NON-INT	-.792	3.630	1.000	-9.72	8.14
	A. NON-MAT	-9.804[*]	3.582	**.024**	-18.62	-.99

Table 5.3 shows that with a 95% confidence interval, there was a statistical difference between the mature intervention and non-mature group with a significant value of .057. Similarly, there was a significant difference between the mature intervention group and the non-mature group, with a value of 0.024. There was, however, no statistically significant difference between the two mature groups. This data affirms the descriptive data that the non-mature students were better than the mature students in reading before the intervention.

5.2.1.2.3 Inferential results for pre-writing test

The independent samples median test was used to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the groups. This test was used instead of the ANOVA because the data set obtained for the writing test was seen not to be normally distributed. As a result, a non-parametric test (independent-samples median test) was used. The test is used to determine whether the independent populations differ in their central tendency, which is the mean (Ica & Um, 2013). The results show a statistically significant difference in the pre-test on writing for the groups.

Table 5.4: Independent-samples median test summary

Total N	65
Median	19.000
Test statistic	9.075
Degree of freedom	2
Asymptotic sig. (2-sided test)	**.011**

From the table, there was a significant difference between the groups based on the pre-writing test with a significant value of .011. The pairwise statistics helped to determine the groups that were statistically different from each other.

5.2.1.2.4 Pairwise comparisons of participants

Pairwise statistics with chi-square are used to analyse multiple population means in pairs. This analysis helps determine whether variables are significantly different from one another. From the test, there was no significant difference between the mature groups, but there was a statistical difference between the non-mature group and both mature groups using the adjusted significant values. The results are illustrated in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Pairwise comparisons results of the pre-intervention writing test

Sample 1–Sample 2	Test statistic	Sig.	Adj. sig.ᵃ
B. MAT NON-INT/C. MAT INT	.151	.697	1.000
B. MAT NON-INT/A. NON-MAT	9.471	.002	.006
C. MAT INT/A. NON-MAT	6.253	.012	.037

From Table 5.5, it can be seen that there were no statistically significant differences between the mature experimental group and the mature control group on the pre-writing test using the adjusted significant value [T (.151) = 1.000 > .05]. The significance level of this data (1.000), being greater than the confidence level of this study, which is .05, shows that the two groups

were not statistically different in their writing ability, as shown in the pre-intervention writing test results.

Regarding the differences between the mature control group and the non-mature group on the pre-intervention writing test, the data established statistically significant results [T (9.47) = .006 < .05]. The non-mature group scored higher and thus performed better than the mature control group on the pre-writing test. Similarly, the difference between the pre-writing test results of the mature experimental group and the non-mature group was statistically significant at [T (6.25) = .037 < .05]. Based on the scores in Table 5.5, it can be observed that the non-mature group performed better than the mature experimental group on the pre-writing test.

The results show that the non-mature group was better than the mature groups in writing prior to the intervention. No significant difference was found between the two mature groups, which means they both started at the same level in terms of their writing ability.

5.2.1.2.5 Inferential statistics for pre-speaking test

Similar to the pre-reading test, the ANOVA test was used to determine if there were significant differences between the groups in their pre-test on speaking. The results from the test show that there was no statistically significant difference among the three groups.

Table 5.6: ANOVA test of pre-intervention speaking test

Speaking test/24

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	6.796	2	3.398	.771	.467
Within groups	273.419	62	4.410		
Total	280.215	64			

From Table 5.6, it can be observed that on the pre-test conducted on the speaking performances of the participants, the study established no statistically significant difference between all three groups (A, B, and C) with a significant value of .467, which is greater than 0.05. The results show that before the intervention, the three groups were almost at the same level in terms of speaking, though at a low level.

5.2.1.3 Descriptive statistics for combined pre-test (reading, writing and speaking)

The pre-test scores of reading, writing and speaking were combined to get a total pre-test score. The combination was done to know the overall scores of the participants before the intervention.

From Table 5.7 below, it can be observed that the non-mature group performed better when the three tests were combined. The mature intervention group performed slightly better than the mature non-intervention class, although the difference was not vast.

Table 5.7: Descriptive statistics of combined pre-test score

					95% confidence interval for mean	
Participants	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. deviation**	**Std. error**	**Lower bound**	**Upper bound**
A. NON-MAT	20	81.7250	19.53639	4.36847	72.5817	90.8683
B. MAT NON-INT	18	62.7778	11.98801	2.82560	56.8163	68.7393
C. MAT INT	22	65.5000	14.35187	3.05983	59.1367	71.8633
Total	60	70.0917	17.54111	2.26455	65.5603	74.6230

With a 95% confidence interval for the means, Table 5.7 shows that the non-mature students performed better than the mature students (both experimental and control groups). The total mean score of the non-mature group was 81.73, with a standard deviation of 19.54. However, the mean score of the mature intervention (experimental) group was 65.5 with a standard deviation of 14.35, and that of the mature non-intervention (control) was 62.77 with a standard

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deviation of 11.99. The post hoc test was further used to determine these variations' statistical differences.

5.2.1.4 Inferential statistics of combined pre-test score

The independent samples median test was conducted to determine if the differences observed in the total pre-test were significant or not. From the test, the differences observed were statistically significant.

Table 5.8: Independent-samples median test summary

Total N	65
Median	68.000
Test statistic	8.221
Degree of freedom	2
Asymptotic sig. (2-sided test)	**.016**

From the sample median test, it can be observed that the differences observed between the groups were statistically significant, with a value of .016. The multiple comparisons were further used to determine where significant differences could be seen.

Table 5.9 gives a further analysis of the scores of the three groups when all their pre-test scores are put together. No significant difference exists between the mature intervention group and the mature non-intervention group, but there is a difference between the two mature groups and the non-mature group.

Table 5.9**: Post hoc tests (Bonferroni multiple comparisons)**

Dependent variable: Pre-total

(I) Participant	(J) Participant	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval Lower bound
A. NON-MAT	B. MAT NON-INT	18.94722*	5.09545	.001	6.3783
	C. MAT INT	16.22500*	4.84552	**.004**	4.2726
B. MAT NON-INT	C. MAT INT	-2.72222	4.98453	1.000	-15.0175
	A. NON-MAT	-18.94722*	5.09545	**.001**	-31.5161
C. MAT INT	B. MAT NON-INT	2.72222	4.98453	1.000	-9.5731
	A. NON-MAT	-16.22500*	4.84552	**.004**	-28.1774

From Table 5.9, there is no significant difference between the control and experimental group in the overall total from the analysis. On the contrary, there was a significant difference between the non-mature group and the non-intervention (control) group, with a value of .001. Similarly, there was a significant difference between the non-mature group and the mature intervention (experimental) group, with a value of .004. This result affirms the descriptive data that there was no significant difference between the mature groups before the intervention. However, there was a difference between the non-mature group and the two mature groups (both control and experimental).

5.2.1.5 Summary of pre-test results

From the data, the reading pre-test reveals a better score for non-mature students than mature students. The difference between the non-mature students and mature students was statistically significant. However, there was no statistical difference between the two mature groups (experimental and control).

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The writing pre-test also reveals no difference between the two mature groups. Thus, between the mature intervention and mature non-intervention groups, there was no statistically significant difference. There was, however, a significant difference between the non-mature group and the mature groups (both control and experimental). This writing pre-test results show that the non-mature students performed better than the mature students in academic writing as well.

On the speaking test, the data shows that although the non-mature students performed better than the mature students (both experimental and control), there was no statistically significant difference between the groups. This outcome shows that in terms of speaking proficiency, the three groups were at the same level before the intervention.

Considering the results of the three language tests, the non-mature students performed better in reading and writing than the mature students, although the two mature student groups were at the same level.

5.2.2 Presentation and analysis of post-test results

This section is used to analyse the post-test results. These are the results from the reading, writing and speaking tests that were conducted after the intervention programme. Following the earlier methodology, a post-test in reading, writing and speaking was administered to all three groups. The sections below present and analyse the post-test results of each test. The descriptive statistics are first presented, followed by the inferential. The three tests are then put together to determine the total post-test results.

5.2.2.1 Descriptive statistics of post-tests in reading, writing and speaking

Table 5.8 presents the descriptive statistics of the post-test results on reading, writing and speaking. As has already been indicated in the pre-tests, only the mature experimental group underwent the intervention, but all three groups took part in the pre-test and post-tests. The table presents the descriptive statistics of the post-test with particular reference to the mean and standard deviations. The table shows an improvement in the scores of all three groups. However, the mature intervention group performed better than both the mature non-intervention and non-mature groups in reading (TALL). They also performed better than the mature non-intervention group in writing and slightly better in speaking.

Table 5.10: Descriptive statistics showing results of participants after intervention

	Participant	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Reading post-test	A. NON-MAT	38.20	14.226	13	70
	B. MAT NON-INT	28.58	14.845	12	64
	C. MAT INT	43.40	15.154	18	77
Writing post-test	A. NON-MAT	33.19	6.911	24	43
	B. MAT NON-INT	23.95	4.594	17	33
	C. MAT INT	31.05	6.176	21	42
Speaking post-test	A. NON-MAT	20.95	2.012	17	24
	B. MAT NON-INT	20.10	1.714	17	23
	C. MAT INT	20.91	2.068	16	24

From Table 5.10, it can be observed that after the intervention, in the reading post-test, whereas the non-mature group had a mean score of 38.20, the mature control group had a mean score of 28.56 and the mature experimental group had a mean score of 43.50. The mean score of the mature experimental group far exceeds that of any of the two remaining groups, which clearly shows that the mature experimental group recorded a lot of improvements in their reading test after the intervention, considering that the non-mature group started off better than the mature groups. The increase in the mean score of the pre-test of the mature experimental group of

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25.96 to a mean score of the post-test of 43.50 shows the introduction of the TBLT approach seems to have had a lot of impact on the reading performance.

On the Writing test, it was again observed that the mature control group had a mean score of 23.95. The mature experimental group had a mean score of 31.05, and the non-mature group had a mean score of 33.19. The mature experimental group and the non-mature group were at similar levels, whereas the mature non-intervention group had the lowest mean score. The improvement of the mature experimental group was higher than the mature control group. The mean score of the pre-test of the mature experimental group improved from 17.71 to a mean score of 31.05 in the post-test. The mature control group, however, improved from a pre-test mean score of 17.70 to 23.95. The higher improvement of the experimental group could be attributed to the TBLT.

Regarding the speaking test, the three groups were at similar levels. The mature control group had a mean score of 20.10. The mature experimental group also had a mean score of 20.91, and similarly, the non-mature group had a mean score of 20.95. Although there was an increase in the mean score of the mature experimental group, it was not as large as it was for reading and writing. However, their improvement was better than the other two groups (from 19.83 to 20.91), and their mean score was slightly higher than the mature control group. The results show that the intervention also had a positive impact on their speaking proficiency. Based on the means scores, it can be concluded that the intervention programme effectively improved the reading and writing and speaking proficiency of the mature students in the experimental group.

From the descriptive data, it is evident that the mature experimental group improved in their language proficiency. In the reading tests, the data points out that the mature experimental

group performed better than the mature control group. They also performed better than the non-mature group, which had performed better in the pre-test. In terms of writing, although the non-mature group performed better than the mature groups, the mature experimental group's performance was better than the control group. In speaking, although there was not much improvement from the experimental group, the mean score was better than the mature control group. Based on these findings, inferential statistics were needed to determine how significant the improvement was and whether the experimental group was at par with their non-mature counterparts who performed better in the pre-tests.

5.2.2.2 Inferential analysis of post-test results

This section analyses the statistical differences and otherwise of the data based on the post-test scores in reading, writing and speaking. As already identified in the analysis above, there were differences recorded between the scores of the three (3) identified groups of the study. These further analyses are needed to determine whether the improvements observed in the descriptive data are statistically significant or not.

A t-test was used to compare the pre- and post-test results, followed by the paired samples test and effect sizes, which were used to determine if the differences in reading and speaking were statistically significant. The paired samples test shows a significant variation in both reading and speaking tests for the mature intervention group. The mature non-intervention and non-mature groups show variations in only the speaking test and not the reading.

5.2.3 Comparing pre- and post-tests (T-test)

From the T-test results, all three groups improved in the reading and speaking tests, but comparatively, the improvement in the reading test of the mature intervention group was more substantial than that of the other groups. The improvement in the speaking test was marginal

for all three groups; however, the improvement of the experimental group was better than the other two groups.

Table 5.11: T-test paired samples statistics

Participant			Mean	N	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	Diff. in means
A. NON-MAT	Pair 1	Post-TALL test/100	38.20	20	14.226	3.181	
		Pre-TALL test/100	36.15	20	13.252	2.963	**2.05**
	Pair 2	Post-speaking test/24	20.95	21	2.012	.439	
		Pre-speaking test/24	20.214	21	2.294	.5007	**0.736**
B. MAT NON-INT	Pair 1	Post-TALL test/100	28.56	18	14.845	3.499	
		Pre-TALL test/100	25.39	18	10.176	2.398	**3.17**
	Pair 2	Post-speaking test/24	20.10	20	1.714	.383	
		Pre-speaking test/24	19.400	20	1.6670	.3728	**0.7**
C. MAT INT	Pair 1	Post-TALL test/100	43.50	22	13.154	2.804	
		Pre-TALL test/100	27.14	22	11.184	2.384	**16.36**
	Pair 2	Post-speaking test/24	20.91	22	2.068	.441	
		Pre-speaking test/24	19.83	22	2.2142	.4721	**1.077**

From the T-Test, it is evident that all three groups improved on their pre-test mean scores. Whilst the mean pre-test score for the control group in the reading (TALL) exams was 25.39, that of the post-test was 28.50. The speaking test for the same group increased from 19.4 to 20.10. For the experimental group, the mean of the TALL test significantly increased from 27.14 to 43.50, and that of the speaking test slightly increased from 20.04 to 20.91. The non-mature group's reading (TALL) test increased from 36.15 to 38.20, and speaking increased from 20.2 to 20.95. Considering the difference between the pre- and post-intervention mean scores, it can be seen that while the difference for Group A is 2.05 (reading) and 0.736 (speaking), that of Group B is 3.17 (reading) and 0.7 (speaking). It is important to note that the difference in Group C, the intervention group, is as high as 16.36 (reading) and 1.077

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(speaking), which signifies that the improvement of the intervention group was greater than the two groups.

5.2.3.1 Paired samples test and effect sizes for reading and speaking

The T-test showed variations in the three groups between the pre- and post-test results. The paired samples test was further used to determine if the differences observed between the pre- and post-test means were significant within the groups or not. The table shows a significant variation in both reading and speaking tests for the mature intervention group. Variation is seen in speaking and not reading for the non-mature and mature non-intervention groups.

The Hedges' correction was also used to determine the effect sizes of the variations observed with the *p-values* of variables under consideration. The Hedges' correction was selected over the Cohen's D because of the study's sample size (N). According to Malhotra and Dash (2011), Cohen's D is usually used for studies with large sample sizes (50 and above). The reason is that with small samples, the population formula will underestimate the variances since it will not consider the fact that the mean was estimated from the same dataset. In that regard, when those estimates are subsequently used to determine the standardised mean difference, it will overestimate the effect size due to the small sample size. Given the small sample size of this study which is less than 50 (between 18 and 22), the Hedges' correction provides better and superior estimates of the standardised mean differences compared to the Cohen's D (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). The results showed that the effect size for the improvement of the mature intervention group was high for the reading test but average for the speaking test. The mature intervention group and the non-mature group showed high effect sizes for speaking.

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Table 5.12: Paired samples test and effect sizes

Participant			D	Sid. 2-tailed (P values)	Effect sizes Hedges C.
A. NON-MAT	Pair 1 Pair 2	Post reading-pre reading/100 Post speaking-pre speaking/24	19 20	0.41 0.00	.185 1.034
B. MAT NON-INT	Pair 1 Pair 2	Post reading-pre reading/100 Post speaking-pre speaking/24	17 19	0.37 0.00	.212 1.044
C. MAT INT	Pair 1 Pair 2	Post reading-pre reading/100 Post speaking-pre speaking/24	21 21	0.00 0.00	1.144 .727

From the table, the non-mature group depicted a variation in only speaking with an effect size of 1.034. The mature non-intervention group also showed a variation in only speaking with a p-value of 0.000 and an effect size of 1.044. The mature intervention group, which underwent the experiment, depicted a statistically significant variation in both reading and speaking, with a p-value of 0.00 in both instances. The effect size for reading was 1.144, and that for speaking was .727. The results prove that the intervention had a positive result on both the reading and speaking proficiency of the intervention group as both tests showed significant variations, unlike the other groups, which had significant variations only in the speaking tests. It is important to note that although the effect size for the speaking test for the intervention group was average compared to the other two groups, their improvement was statistically significant. What accounted for the average effect size was the fact that they started off better than their mature non-intervention counterpart. As a result, although their speaking post-test result and level of improvement were better than the control group, the effect size was average. The mature non-intervention group, however, started off at a lower level compared to the intervention group. Due to that, their effect size was larger when they improved in their speaking post-test, even though their performance was lower than the intervention group. In effect, the mature experimental group improved significantly in both reading and speaking after the intervention.

5.2.3.2 One-way ANOVA for reading and speaking test

The one-way ANOVA test was also used to determine whether the recorded differences between the groups in their means scores were statistically significant as far as the conduct of the study was concerned. The results presented in the section below indicate that the differences recorded in the reading test between the groups are significant, but those in the speaking test are not significant.

Table 5.13: ANOVA showing the significance of mean scores of groups

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Post-reading test/100	Between groups	2 238.106	2	1 119.053	5.682	.006
	Within groups	11 225.144	57	196.932		
	Total	13 463.250	59			
Post-speaking test/24	Between groups	9.429	2	4.715	1.249	.294
	Within groups	226.571	60	3.776		
	Total	236.000	62			

From the ANOVA, it is evident that there was a significant difference between the groups in their reading post-test with a p-value of 0.006. There was, however, no statistically significant difference between the groups in their speaking post-test because the value was .294, higher than 0.05.

5.2.3.3 Bonferroni multiple comparisons

Based on the ANOVA, it was evident that there was a significant difference between the groups in reading but not in speaking. The Bonferroni multiple comparisons are used to confirm the results obtained in the ANOVA. From the comparisons, there was a significant difference between the two mature groups in their reading post-test, but there was no difference between the mature intervention and the non-mature group.

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Table 5.14: Bonferroni multiple comparisons

| Dependent variable | (I) Participant | (J) Participant | Mean | 95% confidence interval | Difference (I-J) | Std. error | Sig. |
						Upper bound	Lower bound
Post-TALL test/100	B. MAT NON-INT	C. MAT INT	-14.944*	4.460	**.004**	-25.95	-3.94
		A. NON-MAT	-9.644	4.559	**.116**	-20.89	1.60
	C. MAT INT	B. MAT NON-INT	14.944*	4.460	**.004**	3.94	25.95
		A. NON-MAT	5.300	4.336	**.680**	-5.39	15.99
	A. NON-MAT	B. MAT NON-INT	9.644	4.559	**.116**	-1.60	20.89
		C. MAT INT	-5.300	4.336	**.680**	-15.99	5.39
Post-speaking test/24	B. MAT NON-INT	C. MAT INT	-.809	.600	**.549**	-2.29	.67
		A. NON-MAT	-.852	.607	**.496**	-2.35	.64
	MAT INT	MAT NON-INT	.809	.600	**.549**	-.67	2.29
		NON-MAT	-.043	.593	**1.000**	-1.50	1.42
	NON-MAT	MAT NON-INT	.852	.607	**.496**	-.64	2.35
		C. MAT INT	.043	.592	**1.000**	-1.42	1.50

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As demonstrated in the above table, there was a significant difference between the mature intervention and the other mature (control) group, with a significant value of 0.004. There was, however, no difference between the mature experimental group and the non-mature group. This result signifies that the intervention has helped the experimental group to be at par with the non-mature group and better than their peers.

5.2.3.4 Independent-samples median test summary for writing test

Table 5.15 gives the inferential statistics of the writing test. It must be noted that the data for the writing test, as was indicated in the pre-test, was seen not to be normally distributed, unlike that of the reading and speaking; hence, a non-parametric test is used to analyse the difference

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in writing. The first part of the table signifies a statistical difference in the writing post-test of all the groups. A further post hoc analysis using pairwise comparisons shows that the scores between the mature intervention group and the non-mature group was equal. The significant difference was between the mature intervention and mature non-intervention. There was also a statistical difference between the scores of the non-mature and mature non-intervention.

Table 5.15: Significance of post-writing test

Independent samples median test summary	
Total N	63
Median	29.000
Test statistic	12.438
Degree of freedom	2
Asymptotic sig. (2-sided test)	.002

Post hoc analysis

Pairwise Comparisons of Participant

Sample 1–Sample 2	Test statistic	Sig.	Adj. sig.[a]
B. MAT NON-INT/A. NON-MAT	7.842	.005	.015
B. MAT NON-INT/C. MAT INT	16.287	.000	.000
A. NON-MAT/=C. MAT INT	.024	.876	1.000

From Table 5.15, it was observed that there was a statistical difference in the post-Writing test performance of all the selected participants of the study [F (2, 62, p = .002 < .05]. This finding led the researcher to conduct a post hoc analysis of the individual groups' performances as far as the post-writing test was concerned.

Table 5.12 shows that during the post-writing test stage, the performance of the non-mature group on the post-writing test was statistically significant compared to that of the mature control group [T (7.84) = .005 < .05]. The analysis and interpretation of this data show that the non-mature group performed better than the mature control group during the post-writing test stage.

More so, from Table 5.13, it can be observed that after the intervention, the scores of the mature experimental group on the post-writing test showed a statistically significant difference from that of the mature control group [T (16.29) = .000 < .05]. This result shows a remarkable performance of the mature experimental group on the post-writing test after the intervention was introduced.

Finally, the data showed that the performances of the mature experimental group and the non-mature group showed no statistical difference on the post-writing test [T (.024) = .88 > .05]. The result indicates that the mature experimental group was at par with the non-mature group after the intervention. It is worth noting that the non-mature students' pre-writing performance was better than the mature experimental group. This result indicates that the experimental group significantly improved after the intervention to be at par with the non-mature group.

5.2.4 Combined language proficiency (reading, writing, speaking) post-test results

The analysis above explains the differences between the three groups in reading, writing and speaking. As was done in the pre-test, the three tests' total scores were put together and analysed before the intervention. After the intervention, the same is done here. The descriptive data below presents the total post-test scores for the three groups.

5.2.4.1 Descriptive statistics of combined post-test results

When all three tests were put together after the intervention, the mature experimental group performed better than the mature non-intervention and non-mature groups.

Table 5.16: Descriptive data of combined post-tests

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error	95% confidence interval for mean	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
A. NON-MAT	20	92.7000	19.52893	4.36680	83.5602	101.8398
B. MAT NON-INT	18	72.6667	17.19781	4.05356	64.1144	81.2189
C. MAT INT	22	95.4545	17.39383	3.70838	87.7426	103.1665
Total	60	87.7000	20.38552	2.63176	82.4339	92.9661

From the descriptive data, it can be seen that the mature intervention group (the experimental group) outperformed both the control and non-mature groups after the intervention. While the experimental group scored 95.45 with a standard deviation of 17.39, the control group scored 72.66 with a standard deviation of 17.19. The non-mature group scored 92. 7 with a standard deviation of 19.53. These results indicate an improvement in all the groups, particularly the experimental group. Furthermore, inferential analysis is used to show how significant the differences are.

5.2.4.2 ANOVA test for post-test total

The ANOVA test was used to determine if the differences observed between the groups were statistically significant. The results showed statistically significant differences among the groups.

Table 5.17: Post-total ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	5890.945	2	2945.473	9.013	.000
Within groups	18627.655	57	326.801		
Total	24518.600	59			

From the ANOVA test, there was a statistically significant difference among the three groups in their total post-test results with a p-value of .000, which shows that after the intervention, the three groups were not the same in their overall score. A multiple comparison was therefore done to ascertain where the differences could be found.

5.2.4.3 Multiple comparisons of combined post-test results

The multiple comparison shows no significant difference between the mature intervention group and the non-mature group. There was, however, a significant difference between the mature intervention group and the mature non-intervention group.

Table 5.18: Multiple comparisons of post-test total

(I) Participant	(J) Participant	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	**Sig.**	95% confidence interval Lower bound
B. MAT NON-INT	C. MAT INT	-22.78788*	5.74545	**.001**	-36.9601
	A. NON-MAT	-20.03333*	5.87330	**.004**	-34.5209
C. MAT INT	B. MAT NON-INT	22.78788*	5.74545	**.001**	8.6157
	A. NON-MAT	2.75455	5.58522	**1.000**	-11.0224
A. NON-MAT	B. MAT NON-INT	20.03333*	5.87330	**.004**	5.5457
	C. MAT INT	-2.75455	5.58522	**1.000**	-16.5315

From the above table, with a 95% confidence interval, it is evident that the experimental group significantly improved after the intervention. There was a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, with a value of .001. However, there was no significant difference between the experimental and non-mature groups. There was also a significant difference between the non-mature and control groups, with a p-value of 0.04. What this means is that after the intervention, the experimental group was at par with the non-mature group, but the control group, which did not undergo the TBLT instruction, although improved, did not

match that of the experimental group. These results further corroborate the effect of the TBLT approach.

5.2.5 Summary of post-test results

With the analysis of the descriptive and paired sample statistics with effect sizes, paired-samples test, pairwise comparison, and multiple comparison, there is enough evidence that there was an improvement in all three aspects of language with regard to the experimental group. The results show that there was a significant improvement in the reading, writing and speaking proficiency of the mature experimental group students after the intervention. Comparatively, they performed significantly better than their peers who did not undergo the intervention and were at par with the non-mature students.

5.3 Presentation of questionnaire data

The questionnaire was answered by only the mature intervention group to determine their views on their language proficiency before and after the intervention. As such, the analysis of the data pertains only to that group. Twenty questionnaires were completed by the group, whose demographics are given below. Most of the questions in the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were the same. A few questions were different, however. The pre-intervention questionnaire results are presented, followed by the post-intervention questionnaire results.

5.3.1 Demographic characteristics

On the gender of the participants, it was found that 15 (75%) of them were male, whilst 5 (25%) of them were female. The intervention group, therefore, had more male participants than females.

Regarding the ages of the selected participants, it was found that 7 (35%) of the selected participants were between the ages of 25-29 years, 3 (15%) were between the ages of 30-34 years, 5 (25%) were between the ages of 35-39 years and 5 (25%) were above 40 years. This data shows that most of the selected participants (35%) were between the ages of 25–29 years.

With regards to the pre-qualification of the participants for their admission to the institution, although all were admitted through the mature entrance admission process, 1 (5%) had a diploma certification, 18 (90%) presented no certification (they may have had some type of certificate which they may not have presented during admission), whilst another 1 (5%) had a secondary education certificate. This shows that most of the selected participants of the group (90%) did not present secondary education certifications for university admission.

Regarding their main programmes of study, 4 (20%) stated that they were pursuing Accounting at the institution. Another 4 (20%) stated that they were pursuing Human Resource Management, 9 (45%) were pursuing Management Studies, and 3 (15%) of the selected participants stated that they were pursuing Marketing. The analysis of this data showed that most of the participants (45%) in this group were pursuing marketing as their course of study at the institution.

On the number of years that they were out of school before enrolling at the institution, 6 (30%) said they were out of school between 1-5 years, 2 (10%) said they were out of school between 6-10 years, 4 (20%) said they out of school between 11 and 15 years and 8 (40%) said they were out of school for over 16 years. This response shows that all selected participants were out of school for some years before enrolling at the university.

Table 5.19: Demographic information of participants

Demographic information	Frequency	Percentage
1. Gender		
a. Male	15	75%
b. Female	5	15
2. Ages		
a. 25–29 yrs	7	35%
b. 30–34 yrs	3	15
c. 35–39 yrs	5	25
d. 40 yrs and above	5	25
3. Pre-admission qualifications		
a. Diploma	1	5%
b. Mature entrance	18	90
c. Secondary	1	5
4. Programme of study		
a. Accounting	4	20%
b. Human Resource	4	20
c. Management	9	45
d. Marketing	3	15
5. Years out of school		
a. 1–5 yrs	6	30%
b. 6–10 yrs	2	10
c. 11–15 yrs	4	20
d. 16 yrs and above	8	40

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2021

5.3.2 Analysis of pre-intervention questionnaire

Below is the analysis of the pre-intervention questionnaire, which was developed and administered to only the experimental group. The reason for selecting only the experimental group was that there was a need to ascertain their views about the intervention programme they underwent. The questions were presented on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented Strongly Agree, 2 for Agree, 3 for Uncertain, 4 for Disagree and 5 represented Strongly Disagree. A mean score of less than 3 signifies a positive response, while above 3 signifies a

negative response. Twenty questionnaires were completed by the group, and below are the details generated.

5.3.2.1 Descriptive statistics of pre-intervention questionnaire

Based on the responses received prior to the intervention, the percentages, means and standard deviations were computed and are presented in Table 5.20. From their responses, the majority of them had not heard about the TBLT approach or the student-based language teaching (SBLT) method before, but 70% agreed that mature students should be instructed differently from non-mature students. The majority also indicated that they had experienced language challenges because they had been out of school for a while. Between 60% and 70% were of the view that they could read, write, and speak English fluently. The question on whether respondents had heard about student-based language teaching method(s) had the most negative response, as the mean score was 3.60 with a standard deviation of 0.940. Questions regarding students' ability to speak English fluently and whether they had heard about the TBLT approach had the most positive mean score of 2.00 (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3, uncertain, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree). The standard deviations for the two questions were 0.973 and 0.649, respectively.

Table 5.20: Pre-intervention questionnaire responses of mature experimental group

Questions	SA %	A%	UN%	D %	S D %	Mean	Std. D.
1. I am able to fluently speak the English Language	40	25.0	30.0	5.0	0	2.00	0.973
2. I am able to speak English with confidence	10	50.0	35.0	5.0	0	2.35	0.745
3. I am able to write well in English	10	55.0	30.0	5.0	0	2.30	0.733
4. I am able to read in English fluently.	15	70.0	10.0	5.0	0	2.05	0.686
5. I am able to communicate in English fluently in class without difficulty	5	65.0	25.0	5.0	0	2.35	0.813
6. I am able to communicate with my friends fluently in English.	10	50.0	35.0	5.0	0	2.35	0.745
7. I have challenges in using the English language because I have been out of school for a long time	15	75.0	5.0	5.0	0	2.15	1.137
8. I have heard about the task-based language teaching approach before	15	25.0	45.0	5.0	0	2.00	0.649
9. I have heard about the student-based language teaching method	30	25.0	35.0	10.0	0	3.60	0.940
10. Pre-mature students should be taught separately from regular students	35	35.0	10.0	20.0	0	3.25	1.020

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2021

When asked whether they could speak the English language fluently, 40% of them strongly agreed with the questionnaire statement, while 25% agreed. Thirty per cent (30%) were uncertain about their responses, and 5% disagreed. Although 40% strongly agreed with the question, the fact that a significant number (30%) were uncertain shows that a significant number of the mature experimental group were not sure of their ability to speak the English language fluently. The mean of 2.00, however, shows that the respondents were more positive about their ability to speak the English language fluently.

On whether they had confidence when speaking English, 10% of the respondents strongly agreed, 50% agreed, 35% were uncertain about their responses, and another 5% disagreed. The significant number of respondents (35%) who were uncertain shows that a considerable number of the respondents were not sure about their confidence in speaking English. The mean score of 2.35 affirms the fact that a significant number of the students were not sure about their level of confidence in speaking the English language.

Asked whether they were able to write well in English, 10% strongly agreed, 55% agreed, 30% were uncertain, and another 5% disagreed. Although more than half of the respondents (55%) agreed with the question, the number of respondents (30%) who were uncertain shows that a significant number of the respondents were not sure of their ability to write well in English. The mean score of 2.30 demonstrates that a sizable number of respondents were not certain whether or not they could write well in English.

On whether they were able to read fluently in English, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed, 70% agreed, 10% were uncertain, and 5% disagreed. A large number of respondents (70%) agreed with the question, which shows that most of the mature experimental group were of the view that they could read fluently in English. This question recorded a mean score of 2.05, which signifies that a majority of the students were of the opinion that they could speak the English language fluently.

Five per cent (5%) of respondents strongly agreed they could communicate in English fluently in class without difficulty. Sixty-five (65%) also agreed with the assertion, while 25% were uncertain. From the responses, it is evident that a considerable number were uncertain as to whether they could fluently speak the English language in class. The mean score of 2.35 equally indicates that a sizable number of students were not sure whether they could fluently communicate in English in class without difficulty.

Asked if they were able to communicate fluently with friends in English, 10% of the cohort of students strongly agreed, 50% agreed, 35% were uncertain, and 5% disagreed. From the analysis of this data, it is evident that although a reasonable number of the respondents (50%) agreed, a considerable number of them (35%) were uncertain, showing that a significant number of them reported that they were not able to communicate fluently with their friends in

English. Similar to the preceding question, the mean score of 2.35 demonstrates that a sizable number of students were uncertain whether they could communicate fluently with their friends in English.

On whether they had a language challenge because they had been out of school for a long time, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed, 75% of them agreed, 5% were uncertain, and 5% disagreed. A large number of respondents (75%) agreed, which shows that a majority of the respondents were of the view that their language challenges were a result of being out of school for a long time. The mean score of 2.15 also affirms this assertion. The standard deviation, however, suggests that the opinions of the students were diverse regarding this particular question.

Asked whether they had heard about the task-based language teaching approach before, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed, 25% of them agreed, 45% were uncertain, and 15% disagreed. The majority of the respondents (45%) who were uncertain shows that most of the mature experimental group individuals may not have heard about the task-based language teaching approach beforehand. The fact that the mean score of 2.00 was one of the highest affirms that a majority of the students (50%) had not heard of the TBLT approach before. The standard deviation of 0.649, being the lowest in the pre-questionnaire, shows that the majority of respondents shared similar opinions.

On whether they had heard about the SBLT method, 30% of the respondents strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 35% were uncertain, and 10% disagreed. A large number of respondents (35%) who were uncertain indicates that a number of the respondents in the mature experimental group had not heard about SBLT methods. The mean score of 3.6, however, reveals that a majority of students disagree with the question being asked, which means that they had heard

about the SBLT approach. The standard deviation of 0.940 shows relatively dispersed responses, which means that the students' opinions were diverse.

Finally, when asked if mature students should be taught separately from regular students, 35% of the respondents strongly agreed, another 35% agreed, 10% were uncertain, and 20% disagreed. With the majority of the respondents (70%) having agreed with this question, it showed that the respondents were of the view that mature students should be taught separately from regular students at the institution. The mean score of 3.25, however, portrays that quite a number of students were uncertain in their responses. The standard deviation of 1.020 also indicates that their responses were dispersed.

The details above establish what the views of the mature students on their language proficiency and language-related issues were before the intervention. Although the questionnaire elicited students' opinions, it was insightful to compare their views with their actual performance.

It is worth noting that before the intervention, the mean scores of the responses were between 2.00 and 3.40, which means quite a number of responses were uncertain. The standard deviations also ranged between 0.649 and 1.137, which made the responses quite diverse.

The responses to the post-intervention questionnaire were compared to the pre-intervention questionnaire to determine if there were changes in the responses after the intervention. Additionally, the significant differences of the changes were established.

5.3.2.2 Summary of pre-intervention questionnaire

The pre-intervention questionnaire provided responses from the experimental group, which gave their own assessment of their language proficiency and other information before the intervention. The responses indicated that students scored themselves above average in their language proficiency, although 90% agreed that they had language challenges. Eighty-five per

cent (85%) of responses indicated that they could read fluently in English. Forty per cent (40%) of respondents indicated that they had heard about the TBLT approach, while 55% also mentioned that they had heard about student-based language teaching before. The mean scores of the responses ranged between 2.0 and 3.60, which indicated that while students were positive with some of the responses, a considerable number of responses were uncertain about the questions being asked.

5.3.3 Analysis of post-intervention questionnaire responses

The 20 mature students who went through the intervention answered the post-intervention questionnaire. This questionnaire was to elicit participants' own assessment after the intervention and their opinions regarding the intervention. The questionnaire was needed to answer research question 3c, which asked: "What are the cohort of mature students' opinions on the TBLT intervention programme?" The results from the post-intervention questionnaire are presented in Table 5.21.

From the responses, all the respondents (100%) stated that they could confidently speak in English, as well as write well and read fluently in the language of instruction after the intervention. They also indicated that the intervention using the TBLT approach highly motivated them, that they enjoyed working in pairs, and that they were impressed with their overall English proficiency improvement after the intervention. Ninety per cent (90%) of the students in this group were of the view that mature students should be instructed separately, with only 5% disagreeing and another 5% stating that they were unsure. The mean scores of the post-intervention questionnaire responses (below 2) were more positive than the pre-intervention questionnaire responses. The standard deviations were also clustered around the mean (less than 1), signifying that the majority of the responses were similar, closer to the central tendency.

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Table 5.21: Post-intervention performance of participants

Questions	SA	A	UN	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. I am able to fluently speak the English Language	30.0	60.0	10.0	0	0	1.80	0.616
2. I am able to speak English with confidence	25.0	75.0	0	0	0	1.75	0.444
3. I am able to write well in English	30.0	70.0	0	0	0	1.70	0.470
4. I am able to read in English fluently.	55.0	45.0	0	0	0	1.45	0.510
5. I am able to communicate in English fluently in class without difficulty	20.0	75.0	5.0	0	0	1.85	0.489
6. I am able to communicate with my friends in English fluently	30.0	65.0	5.0	0	0	1.75	0.550
7. My overall English language proficiency has improved after the intervention programme	30.0	70.0	0	0	0	1.75	0.786
8. The intervention programme motivated me	55.0	45.0	0	0	0	1.70	0.470
9. I like working in pairs or in groups	40.0	60.0	0	0	0	1.45	0.510
10. Mature students should be taught separately from regular students	40.0	50.0	5.0	5.0	0	1.60	0.503

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2021

From Table 5.21, it can be observed that when the participants were asked if they were able to fluently speak the English language, 30% of the participants stated that they strongly agreed, 60% of them agreed, and 10% were uncertain. This result is an improvement on the pre-test results, where only 40% strongly agreed that they were able to fluently speak the English language, and 30% were uncertain. The mean of 1.80 is also an improvement which demonstrates that according to a majority of the respondents, they can fluently speak the English language.

On whether they had confidence when speaking English, 25% of the participants strongly agreed with the question, and 75% of them agreed with the same question. This result is a remarkable improvement from 10% of respondents who strongly agreed with the question during the pre-test stage. The mean of 1.75 also signified an increase in the responses of a majority of the students that they were able to speak English with confidence. The standard

deviation of 0.44 was the closest of the post-intervention responses signifying that a majority of the students shared similar views.

Asked whether they were able to write well in English, 30% of the participants strongly agreed with the question, while 70% of them agreed. An improvement was also seen from the 10% of participants who strongly agreed with the question during the pre-test stage. The mean of 1.70 with a standard deviation of 0.470 is also an increase compared to the pre-test response mean of 2.3 with a standard deviation of .733.

On whether they were able to read fluently in English, 55% of the participants strongly agreed, and 45% of them also agreed with the question. This result was also an improvement from 15% who strongly agreed with the question in the pre-intervention questionnaire. The mean of 1.45, with a standard deviation of 0.510, represented an increase in the response of those who agree that they are able to read fluently in English.

On the question of their ability to communicate in English fluently in class without difficulty, 20% strongly agreed, 75% agreed, and only 5% were uncertain. This result showed an improvement from the 10% who strongly agreed with the question before the intervention. The mean of 1.85 and standard deviation of 0.489 signified that a majority of the respondents were of the view that they could communicate fluently in English in class without difficulty.

Similar to the previous question, their opinion on their ability to communicate with their friends in English fluently rendered the following responses: 30% of the participants strongly agreed, 65% agreed, and 5% were uncertain of their views. The significant number of participants (30%) who strongly agreed indicated a remarkable improvement from the 10% of the participants who strongly agreed during the pre-test stage. There was also an improvement in

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the mean score from 2.35 to 1.75, and the standard deviation was also closer from 0.745 to 0.550.

When the students were asked whether their overall English language proficiency had improved after the intervention programme, all of them agreed, with 30% of the participants strongly agreeing and 70% of them agreeing. Having all the participants agreeing to the question shows that the students were of the unanimous opinion that the intervention had improved their overall English proficiency. The mean score of 1.75 also affirms the positive responses and shows that the students believed that their overall language efficiency had improved. The standard deviation of 0.78 also signified the unity in their responses.

Asked whether the intervention programme has motivated them, 55% of the study participants strongly agreed, and 45% agreed. The fact that a large number of participants (55%) strongly agreed signifies that the students were of the view that the intervention programme had motivated them. The standard deviation of 0.470 suggests responses were close to the mean of 1.70, which indicates that most of the students believed that the intervention motivated them.

When the participants were asked whether they liked working in pairs and in groups, 40% strongly agreed, and 60% agreed with the same question. The considerable number of participants (40%) who strongly agreed with the question shows that students were positive about working in pairs and in groups and may imply that this approach enhanced the English proficiency of the participants. One of the best mean scores of 1.45 with a standard deviation of 0.470 signified a highly positive response from the students. The responses indicate that the students enjoyed the cooperative learning activities they performed with their peers during the intervention.

Finally, on whether mature students are to be taught separately from regular students, 90% agreed, with 40% of the 90% strongly agreeing and 50% agreeing. Only 5% were uncertain, and another 5% disagreed. With a majority of the study participants having agreed with the question on a mean score of 1.60 and a standard deviation of 0.503, it can be concluded that the majority of the study participants were of the view that mature students should be taught separately from regular students.

5.3.3.1 Summary of post-intervention questionnaire results

The responses of the participants after the intervention were very positive. For example, between 90% and 100% of participants were of the view that they could read, write, and speak fluently in English after the intervention. In addition, all the participants indicated that they were motivated by the intervention and appreciated the pair and group work. Ninety per cent (90%) were of the opinion that mature students should be instructed separately. It is important to also note that all the means in the post-questionnaire were less than 2, which signifies that the responses after the intervention were more in agreement with the questions than the pre-intervention questionnaire responses. Additionally, the standard deviations of the post-intervention responses were all less than 1, which means that the responses the students gave were clustered to the mean and not dispersed.

To further analyse the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to compare the pre- and post-intervention responses to determine significant differences between them.

5.3.4 Comparing pre- and post-intervention questionnaire responses

The mean ranks of the pre-intervention questionnaire were compared to that of the post-intervention questionnaire and analysed. The positive ranks are responses that represent

strongly agree and *agree.* The negative ranks are for *strongly disagree* and *disagree.* The ties represent *responses that did not change.* From the data, all the responses were positively ranked except for one question ("*I am able to communicate with my friends in English fluently"*), which had a greater tie score.

Further analysis was done after the ranked tests to ascertain how statistically significant the students' personal appraisals were in terms of the pre- and post-questionnaires. Table 5.22 summarises the responses. From the analysis, participants' responses to questions regarding their confidence when they spoke English, their ability to write in English, their ability to read fluently in English, and their ability to communicate fluently in class and with friends were all statistically significant. The results indicate that the positive responses to these questions after the intervention were statistically significant.

Table 5.22: Ranked and test statistics of post-intervention questionnaire responses

		N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
I am able to fluently speak the English Language (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	6 8 6 20	6.67 8.13	40.00 65.00	-.821	.412
I have confidence when I speak in English (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	1 11 8 20	5.50 6.59	5.50 72.50	-2.814	.005
I am able to write well in English – Pre | I am able to write well in English (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	1 10 9 20	5.00 6.10	5.00 61.00	-2.652	.008
I am able to read fluently in English. – Pre | I am able to read in English fluently (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	2 13 5 20	7.50 8.08	15.00 105.00	-2.828	.005
I am able to communicate in English fluently in class without difficulty (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	2 10 8 20	6.00 6.60	12.00 66.00	-2.324	.020
I am able to communicate with my friends in English fluently. – Pre | I am able to communicate with my friends in English fluently (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	1 9 10 20	4.00 5.67	4.00 51.00	-2.489	.013
Post | Mature students should be taught separately from regular students. – Pre | Mature students should be taught separately from regular students. (post-pre)	Negative ranks Positive ranks Ties Total	6 11 3 20	8.33 9.36	50.00 103.00	-1.287	.198

Based on the responses of the mature students after the intervention, it is evident that their post-test self-appraisal of their proficiency in the English language was far better than their pre-test appraisal of their proficiency in the English language. From Table 5.22, it can be observed that apart from only one instance (*"I am able to communicate with my friends in English fluently"*), where the tie score was more, all the responses show a higher positive rank. Based on this

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response, it can be concluded that the participants were of the view that the introduction of the intervention enhanced their English language proficiency.

From the table, it can be observed that one question that showed a significant positive rank was students' confidence when speaking the English language, with a significant value of 0.005. Additionally, the question on students' ability to write well in English yielded a significant result of 0.008. Furthermore, there was a significant positive rank of students' ability to communicate with friends and in class. Finally, students' ability to read in English fluently also yielded a significant positive ranked result with a value of 0.005. It is worth noting that although the question on whether mature students should be instructed separately did not show a significant positive rank, the difference between the post- and pre-intervention responses was immense. Ninety per cent (90%) of students were in agreement with the post-intervention question, while 5% were not sure, with the remaining 5% disagreeing. In the pre-intervention response, however, 70% were in agreement, 10% were unsure, and the remaining 20% disagreed. Considering these figures, it is evident that although the difference was not statistically significant, the majority of the students, after the intervention, were of the view that mature students should be taught separately from regular students.

5.3.4.1 Presentation of compared responses in bar chart

Compared responses from the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires indicated an increase in positive feedback from respondents. Table 5.23 presents the reversed means of the pre- and post-intervention responses, followed by the representation on the bar chart in Figure 5.1. The chart shows that there was an increase in the means of all the responses after the intervention. It is important to note that per the questionnaire that was designed and used for this research, the Likert scale was organised such that 1 represented "strongly agree" while 5 was for "strongly disagree". For this graph representation, the scale was *reversed* for 5 to represent

"strongly agree" while 1 was for "strongly disagree". The reversal was done so that the positives would show a higher graphic representation than the negatives.

Table 5.23: Reversed means for pre- and post-intervention questionnaire responses

	Reversed pre-mean	Reversed post-mean
	Pre	Post
I am able to fluently speak the English Language	3.000	3.200
I have confidence when I speak in English.	2.650	3.250
I am able to write well in English	2.700	3.300
I am able to read in English fluently.	2.950	3.550
I am able to communicate in English fluently in class without difficulty.	2.650	3.150
I am able to communicate with my friends in English fluently.	2.650	3.250
Mature students should be taught separately from regular students.	2.850	3.250
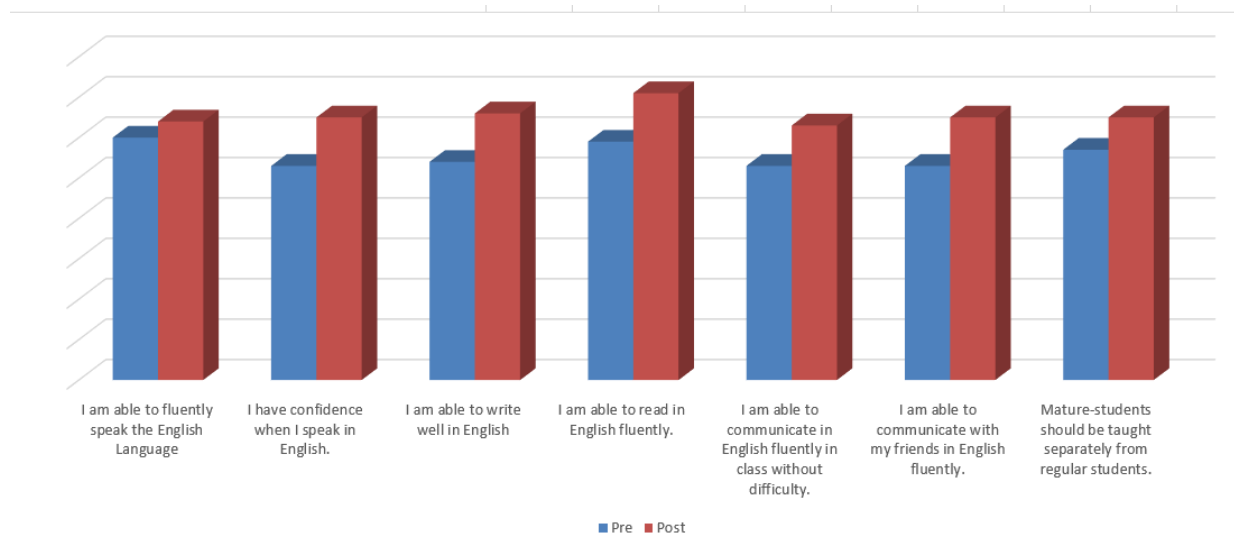
Figure 5.1: Means of pre- and post-intervention questionnaire responses

The blue bars represent mean responses prior to the intervention, while the red bars represent the post-intervention means. As depicted in the graph, after the intervention, there was an

increase in all the mean scores of the post-intervention questions over the pre-intervention questions, signifying better self-appraisal in the post-intervention questions. As represented in the bar charts, responses to subjects' ability to read in English fluently had the highest positive increase. This result was also evident in the post-tests, where the intervention class significantly improved in their post-test scores. Thus, when the pre- and post-intervention responses were ranked, participants ranked themselves higher in the post-intervention responses, and the differences were statistically significant.

5.4 Presentation and analysis of observation data

During the twelve-week intervention, a colleague observed the lessons and used a checklist provided by the researcher to record observations under the different categories. The list required both quantitative and qualitative data, as exhibited in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24: Observation checklist

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST   **Date…………………..**

Lesson : ……………………

ELEMENT	RESPONSE			COMMENT
	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	
Preparation: To show whether the teacher creates an enabling environment to get the class ready and that all needed teaching and learning materials are ready for the lesson.				
Language use: To indicate whether various aspects of language are used and emphasised in the lesson.				
Student participation (confidence level): To indicate how students get involved in class and their enthusiasm to participate.				
Classroom management and atmosphere: To show how the teacher ensures that the lessons are run smoothly and orderly without behaviours that distract from teaching and learning.				
Use of technology: To indicate the use of technology, such as projectors, smartphones, computers, etc., to aid teaching and learning.				
Level of presentation: To show how conversant the teacher is with the lesson and how confidently the lesson is delivered.				

Good = highly satisfactory with qualities of high standards.
Satisfactory = acceptable with sufficient expectation, although neither outstanding nor exceptional.
Poor = unacceptable or below expectations. Performance lacks understanding or motivation.

The qualitative data, which was compiled from the comments section, are presented in Chapter

6. The quantitative data are presented and discussed below.

5.4.1 Presentation of observation

Six pre-set categories were used for the observation, as the table displays. The observer ranked

the categories as *good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory based on what he observed in each*

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lesson. The comments section was left for additional noteworthy information to be recorded during the observation. The first category looked at whether the teacher created an enabling classroom environment and whether all needed materials were accumulated before classes began. The second category looked at how the various aspects of language were used and emphasised during lessons. The third category was used to scrutinise students' participation during lessons; it recorded how students were involved in class and the degree of their enthusiasm to participate. While the fourth category concentrated on how the classroom was managed, the fifth focused on the effective use of technology. The final category looked at how the presentation was done by the lecturer. The data and figures below are summaries of the results.

5.4.1.1 Preparation

The observer ranked 11 out of the 12 days as good and one day as satisfactory.
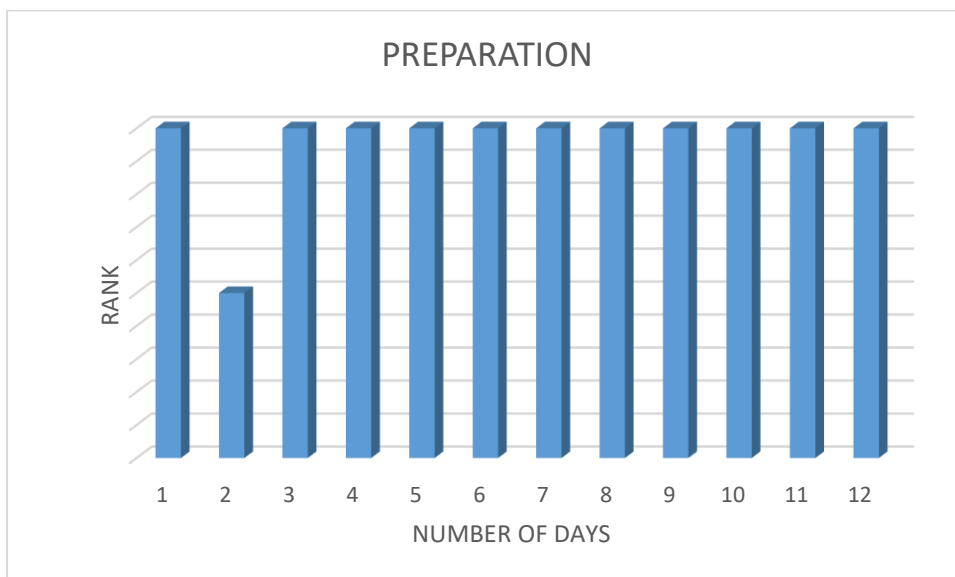
Figure 5.2: Preparations during the intervention

From the data, except on one occasion where preparation was satisfactory, all the days were scored "good"; this signifies that the lecturer prepared adequately for the class and also created an enabling environment.

5.4.1.2 Language use

On the use of language, which indicated whether the various aspects of language were used during the lesson by students, it was observed that there were nine days of fair usage of the language and three days of good language usage. Figure 5.3 shows the number of days of both good and satisfactory language use.
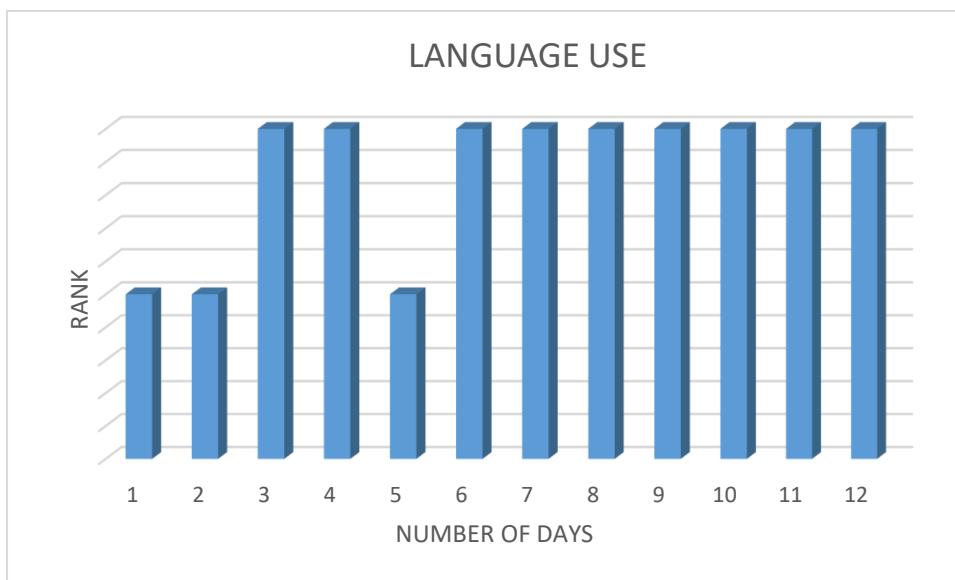
Figure 5.3: Language use during the intervention

To determine whether various aspects of language were used and emphasised, it was observed that there was a fair usage of the language by students on three observation dates. The remaining nine lesson days were good, which indicates that the various aspects of the language were used during the intervention. This observation is encouraging as the aim of the intervention was to improve the proficiency of the mature students in reading, writing and

speaking. Frequent use of language is helpful in improving language proficiency (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007).

5.4.1.3 Participation

The observation checklist showed high participation (confidence level) on a majority of the days. The specific number of days for high and average participation are shown in Figure 5.4.
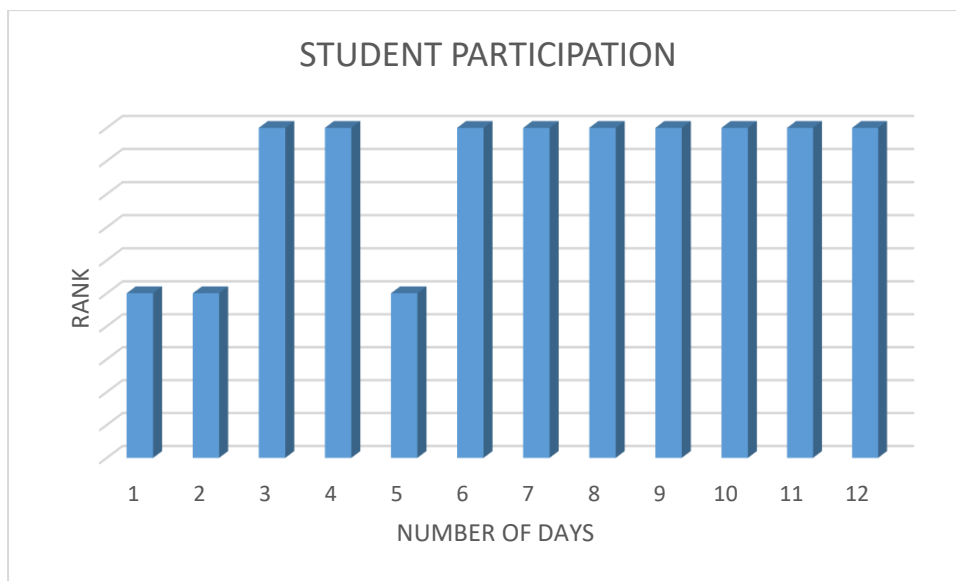
Figure 5.4: Students' participation during the intervention

Nine out of the 12 days of observation indicate students' confidence in class was high and that they participated in classroom activities. Only three days show average confidence. There was no record of poor or low confidence on any of the days. The data suggests that students were, on average, confident in classroom participation.

5.4.1.4 Classroom management

The records indicated that satisfactory classroom management was higher than good classroom management. Figure 5.5 illustrates it.
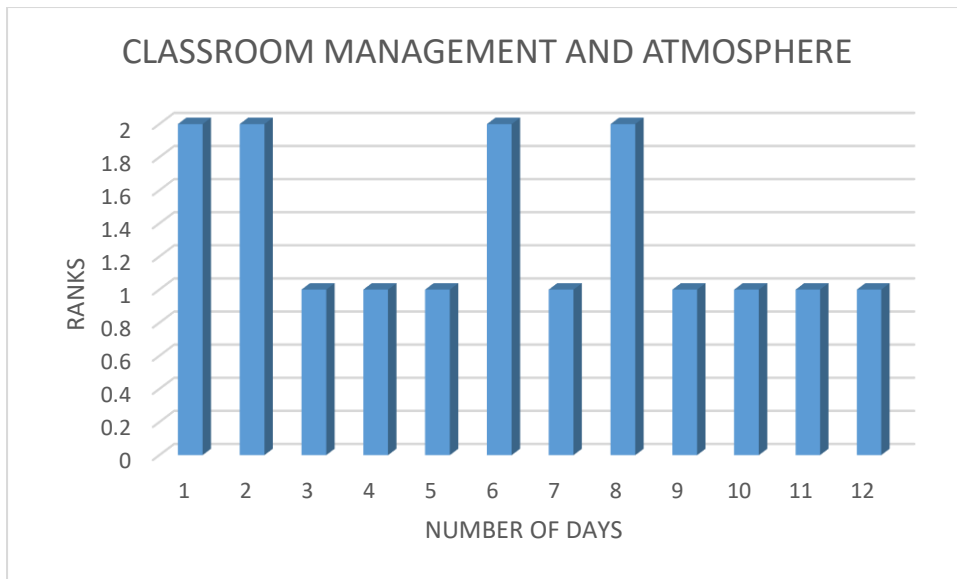
Figure 5.5: Classroom management during the intervention

Eight out of the 12 meeting days recorded satisfactory classroom management and atmosphere, while four indicated good management and atmosphere. From this data, it can be inferred that although there was no record of explicitly bad classroom management, the lecturer had a challenge to manage the classroom effectively. This challenge was observed in the pilot study, but the situation was slightly improved.

5.4.1.5 Use of technology

From the observation data, technology was highly used as almost all the days recorded good usage of technology, as illustrated in Figure 5.6.
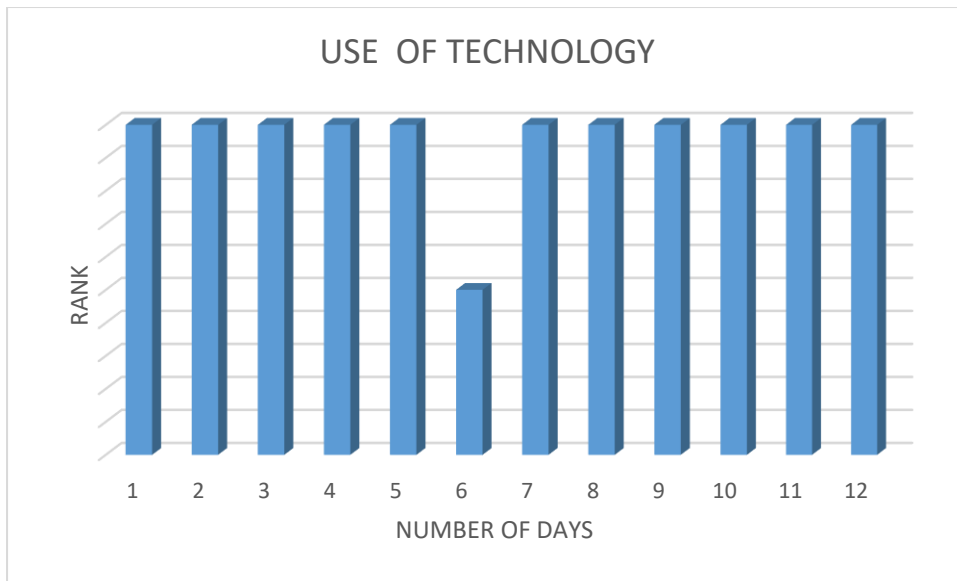
Figure 5.6: Use of technology during the intervention

There was good usage of technology during the intervention, with only one instance of satisfactory usage. This observation is quite interesting because mature students were expected to have some challenges regarding technology. This experimental group did not, however, appear to have such challenges.

5.4.1.6 Level of presentation

From the observation records, the lecturer was conversant with the lessons and delivered presentations with confidence.
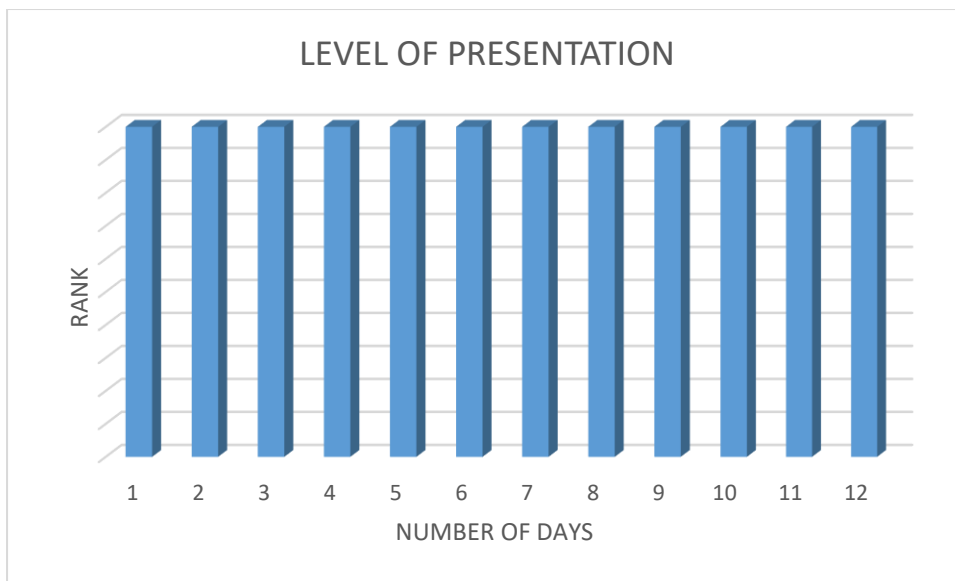
Figure 5.7: Level of presentation during the intervention

When it comes to the level of presentation, it was observed that the teacher was very conversant with the lessons and confidently delivered them throughout the intervention. All the 12 days observed were recorded as highly satisfactory with qualities of high standards.

5.4.2 Summary of observation data

From the observations made from the 12 lesson days, it is evident that the TBLT approach that was used was carefully planned and executed by the researcher as evaluated by the appointed observer. This assertion can be deduced from the highly satisfactory score on the level of presentation recorded. The observation also records that various aspects of language were used. As the intervention sought to improve mature students' reading, writing, and speaking proficiency, there was a need for effective usage of these aspects of the language to increase proficiency.

Contrary to views on mature students' confidence in language use (Baharudin et al., 2013; Chapman, 2017), the observation expressed students' high level of participation. Except for the initial weeks of lessons where students scored satisfactorily, the remaining days indicate

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highly good performance among students. The phenomenon is understandable because when students are not familiar with one other, it is likely to take a while to create rapport for easy communication. Another explanation can be derived from the fact that this experimental group were solely mature students and were comfortable with their peers. Ryu (2020) explains that mature students who are enrolled in a class with non-mature students are usually not comfortable interacting freely because of a lack of confidence and fear of ridicule from their younger colleagues. This fear was not present in the experimental class, as students could easily express themselves without fear of committing errors. In response to research question 3d, which seeks to know how students respond to the application of TBLT and the insight gained, the observation has demonstrated students' high degree of enthusiasm for classroom participation.

5.5 Discussion of quantitative data sets (pre- and post-tests, pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and observation checklist)

This study was aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of a TBLT approach to improve the language skills of mature students in a Ghanaian university. Three aspects of language were under consideration: reading, writing and speaking. Both quantitative and qualitative tools were used to achieve the study goal. The discussions that follow are based only on the quantitative data. The next chapter will be used to present and discuss the qualitative data, which will then be merged with the quantitative data presented in this chapter. The discussion of the quantitative data is presented in this section.

The pre-test results show differences in the mean scores of the three groups in reading, writing and speaking. To ascertain whether the differences observed were significant or not, further tests were run. An ANOVA test was run on the pre-reading test, and the results showed

significant differences between the three groups with a p-value of 0.16. Based on this, further comparisons were made, and the results proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the non-mature group and the two mature groups. The difference between the non-mature group and the mature non-intervention group was 0.57, while that of the intervention group was 0.24. The two mature groups did not show a statistically significant difference. These results show that before the intervention, the reading skills of the non-mature group were better than the mature groups. In addition, a non-parametric test was conducted on writing because the data set was not normally distributed. Therefore, the sample median test was used, which showed a significant difference among the groups with a p-value of .011. Based on the result, a pairwise comparison was conducted, which showed a significant difference between the non-mature group and the mature non-intervention with a p-value of 0.02. There was also a difference between the non-mature group and the mature intervention group, with a value of 0.012. Similar to the reading test, the writing test did not show any statistically significant difference between the two mature groups, which indicates that the two mature groups started off at the same level. Furthermore, ANOVA was conducted on the speaking test, and there was no significant difference among the three groups. This shows that the three groups were starting off at almost the same speaking level.

When the results of all three tests were combined, the independent samples median test showed a significant difference between the groups, with a value of .016. Further multiple comparisons proved that the difference was between the non-mature group (A) and the mature groups (B and C). The value between A and B was .001, while the value between A and C was .004. These results further affirm that group A was better than B and C before the intervention, while groups B and C were the same.

After the intervention, the mean score obtained showed improvements in all three groups. A T-test was conducted to compare the pre- and post-tests, and there was evidence that all three groups improved on their pre-test scores, but there was a huge improvement in the scores of the intervention group. Paired samples tests were further conducted on the reading and speaking tests with effect sizes, and the results proved that the improvement in the reading and speaking tests for the intervention group was significant, with a value of 0.00 for both. Groups A and B showed significance in only speaking and not reading. These results showed that within the groups, the improvement in group C (the intervention group) was significant for both reading and speaking tests, while the other two groups significantly improved in only speaking.

An ANOVA test was also conducted to determine the differences between the groups. The results showed a significant difference in the reading test between the groups with a value of 0.006, but that of the speaking test showed no significant difference. Based on the ANOVA, further multiple comparisons were conducted, and the results affirmed the ANOVA that the difference observed was between groups B and C. These results proved that the intervention group performed better than the non-intervention group in reading. Although the ANOVA on speaking also did not show any significant difference among the three groups similar to their pre-test scores, there was a significant improvement in the post-test score of the experimental group with a significant p-value of 0.00. This finding is supported by Albino (2017), who confirmed how EFL learners improved their English-speaking fluency in a TBLT approach. From his findings, eight weeks of instruction with TBLT helped learners to improve their speaking fluency in grammatical accuracy, interactive language use, and speed of speech production. Similarly, Gonzalez and Pinzon (2019) reported that TBLT engages students and allows them to develop their creativity and autonomy, which affords them the opportunity to

explore within the language and increase their speaking proficiency. Skehan (2002) further pointed out that through interaction in TBLT, students are afforded the opportunity to negotiate meaning, which consequentially helps them in their language learning. Long (2016), Bryfonski and McKay (2019), Baihaqi (2016), and Willis and Willis (2011) all point out how TBLT is able to increase the speaking proficiency of students at various educational levels.

The results of the reading post-test substantiate the findings of Halimi (2019), who indicates that TBLT is effective and beneficial in enhancing the reading abilities of English learners. Similarly, Shabani and Ghasemi (2014) indicated a significant increase in the reading skills of level 1 students when the TBLT approach was used. The findings of Mesbah (2016) and Prasetyaningrum (2018) further support improvement in the reading efficiency of students using the TBLT approach.

The findings of this study are also congruent with Mesbah's (2016) findings that students who received TBI improved their reading comprehension skills and performed better than their counterparts who were instructed with the GTM. The study results also correspond with those of Rahimi and Azhegh (2011), that TBLT increases students' reading comprehension ability. The results from the post-tests also are in line with Mao (2012), Prasetyaningrum (2018), Malmir et al. (20011), Al Muhaimeed (2013) and others who advocate that TBLT is more effective in improving the reading proficiency of mature students.

Regarding writing, the independent-samples median test summary indicated a significant difference value of 0.002 between the groups. Further pairwise comparisons showed that there was a significant difference between the mature experimental group and their control peers. There was, however, no significant difference between the experimental group and the non-mature group.

The increased performance of the experimental group's writing skills can be attributed to the several writing tasks that characterised the intervention. Students were given several writing tasks to perform in pairs and groups. Feedback was subsequently given, and corrections were made based on the lecturer's feedback.

Purna (2013) contends that using various learning strategies such as adequate written and oral feedback, collaborative writing, and authentic teaching materials (all of which characterise TBLT) effectively improves writing skills. Kafipour et al. (2018) further assert that employing task-based writing improves the writing competence of learners. Such competence includes mechanics, language use, vocabulary, content and organisation. Additionally, Ahmed et al. (2016) claimed an improvement in fluency and accuracy when TBLT was used in promoting the writing skills of first-year university students. Moreover, Milarisa (2019), Shabani (2016), Somawati et al. (2018), and Karim et al. (2014) all attest to improved writing skills as an outcome of a TBLT approach.

When all three post-tests were put together, the ANOVA test showed a significant difference between the groups with a value of 0.00. The multiple comparisons with a 95% confidence interval proved that the intervention group was now at par with the non-mature group. However, there was a significant difference between them and their non-intervention counterparts, with a value of 0.001. The post-test result has proved that after the intervention, group C significantly improved and was better than their control (group B) but was at par with the non-mature group. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) indicate that when language learners are engaged in tasks, they have the opportunity to interact with their peers, which eases their language acquisition as they try to understand each other and also present their meaning. Such engagements during the intervention offered the experimental group the opportunity to improve their language proficiency. Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) further contend that

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TBLT provides learners with a natural context wherein they can effectively use the language and that it improves their ability to communicate and motivates their learning. Similarly, McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) agree with this assertion that language is learnt by using the language, and TBLT offers learners the opportunity to use the language in completing their tasks. This usage increases proficiency, as was seen with the experimental group.

It is also worth noting that TBLT is efficient in improving all aspects of language (Córdoba Zúñiga, 2016), which explains why the mature experimental students whose language skills were more deficient (compared to the non-mature students) performed better when they received instruction through the TBLT approach. Topham (2015), when observing older adult students in their first year at university, acknowledged that while they began their university education as fragile and vulnerable learners, they exhibited persistence and resilience that enabled them to ultimately "sail through" their studies. Besides, they are often more serious learners than younger students. It is therefore not surprising that these mature students have the potential to outperform their peers and be at par with the non-mature students, given the right learning environment and appropriate language teaching approach such as TBLT.

The pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and classroom observations were utilised to give the opinions of the mature intervention class and to gain insight into the intervention programme. From the results, there was an increase in the positive responses of the students compared to their pre-intervention responses. All the mean scores showed improved responses to less than 2.0. The standard deviations also moved closer to the mean with scores less than 1.0. All the mature students indicated that they were positively motivated by the intervention. From the data, 55% strongly agreed with this assertion, while 45% agreed. The mean score was 1.70, with a standard deviation of 0.470. The group also expressed their opinion on the pair and group work. They all indicated that they liked the group and pair work which characterised

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the intervention programme. While 40% strongly agreed, 60% agreed that they enjoyed working with their peers. The mean for this response was 1.45, one of the highest, with a standard deviation of 0.510. These observations are intriguing and serve to confirm the observational data, indicating that students were enthusiastic about participating in their tasks. As was demonstrated earlier, their enthusiasm could be attributed to the enabling classroom environment and the group being made up solely of mature students. Ninety per cent (90%) of the respondents favoured a separate class for mature students rather than a merged class consisting of mature and non-mature students. Of the 90%, 40% strongly agreed, while 50% agreed. Five per cent (5%) were uncertain, and another 5% disagreed. From the intervention, the insight gained from these responses appears to indicate that mature students desire to be separated from non-mature students and would like to work collaboratively. This arrangement would likely motivate them to improve their language skills. Masashi (2016) points out that because TBLT works on motivation, which is very important to adult learners, it is beneficial to apply the approach in teaching them, as was done with this study. Additionally, Brown (2012) indicates that when students work with their peers who have similar challenges, they appreciate and understand that they are not alone, which reduces their anxiety. In an educational system where it becomes challenging to readjust class composition, it is evident that creating a mature-only class for all courses will be difficult.

The observation additionally affirms the fact that students had confidence in class. Nine out of the twelve days reported a good score, while the remaining three showed average. This observation means that students responded positively to the intervention programme. The positive response affected classroom management. There was a slight challenge based on the observational data from the observation. Although there was no indication of bad classroom management, eight out of the twelve days recorded a satisfactory score, with the remaining

four indicating good management. The reason for this is the interactive nature of the TBLT approach. Students are encouraged to use the language to the best of their ability, which allows a lot of interaction. The group and pair work assigned to students creates a classroom environment where many discussions occur simultaneously. Carless (2003) argues that such engagements may cause teachers to struggle to differentiate task noise from classroom disorder. This opinion is equally shared by Littlewood (2007). Continued and conscious efforts are needed for effective classroom management; otherwise, the result would be uncontrolled classroom environments. The researcher developed a routine of raising a hand during the intervention at any time when the class was noisy. With this technique, any student who saw the raised hand was instructed to stop whatever activity they were doing and to also raise a hand. This activity helped the management to a large extent.

5.6 Summary of chapter

This chapter has presented the quantitative data for this work. Before the intervention programme, pre-intervention questionnaires and pre-tests were used to determine students' language (reading, writing and speaking) skills. Observations were also conducted during the intervention. The test results reveal that the experimental group performed better than the control group after implementation of the intervention and that they were at par with the non-mature students. The post-intervention questionnaire indicated that students tended to have a favourable opinion of the intervention, with a significant positive response showing increased confidence, better communication, and improved reading and writing. The observational data demonstrates good lecture delivery, average classroom management, good use of technology, efficient use of all aspects of language, and high confidence levels. In summation, the

intervention appeared to significantly and positively impact the language proficiency of the mature intervention group.

5.7 Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has presented the quantitative data and has proven a significant impact of the TBLT approach on the mature experimental group's reading, writing, and speaking skills. The pre- and post-intervention questionnaire further confirmed that the experimental group had a better appraisal of their language proficiency after the intervention. Classroom observation has given insight into the fact that participants actively engaged spontaneously during the intervention. The following chapter analyses and discusses the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

6.1 Introduction

The quantitative data of the study were presented and discussed in the previous chapter. The data were made up of pre-tests and post-tests, pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, and the quantitative component of the observation. In this chapter, the qualitative component of the observation is presented, followed by the researcher's log. The final section presents and discusses the interview conducted with 15 students in the experimental group. The qualitative data presented in this chapter and the subsequent discussions are used to firm up the previous chapter's quantitative data to give a better insight into the intervention programme and the effectiveness of the task-based language learning approach. Since this research was conducted with a mixed-methods design, the quantitative and qualitative data are provided for complementation and to give an in-depth understanding of the issues being discussed (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). First, the observation data is presented, followed by the researcher's log and finally, the interview data.

6.2 Presentation and analysis of observation

Twelve observational visits were made during the intervention period. The observation, as indicated earlier, was done by a male colleague, a teacher with more than a decade's worth of professional experience, specifically in English Language teaching. The observational data was collected with six pre-set categories (preparation, language use, student participation, classroom management and atmosphere, use of technology and level of presentation), which had been adapted and modified from Al Muhaimeed (2015). These categories were used because TBLT consists of various elements, and these categories are common trends that can

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be observed in the classroom. A list of these categories was provided to the observer (male colleague), who ranked the categories as *good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory* based on what he observed in each lesson. The quantitative data from the ranking was presented and analysed in Chapter 5. The comments section was left for additional information worthy of note during the observation. This chapter presents the qualitative component, thus the additional information provided by the observer. The qualitative data presentation in this chapter is therefore based on the six categories that were used for the observation.

6.2.1 The categories of observation

The first category (*preparation*) assessed whether the teacher created an enabling classroom environment and organised all the necessary study materials before classes began. The second category (*language use*) looked at how the various aspects of language were used and emphasised during lessons. The third category (*participation*) was used to monitor students' participation during lessons; it indicated how students were involved in class and their enthusiasm regarding participation in classroom activities. The fourth category (*classroom management*) concentrated on how the classroom was managed by the lecturer, and the fifth category (*technology*) focused on the effective use of technology. The sixth and final category (*presentation*) looked at how the presentation was done by the lecturer. Table 6.1 presents the summary of the qualitative observational data based on the six categories. Each category is presented in a sub-section.

Table 6.1: Summary of classroom observation comments made by observer (qualitative)

Category/ observational days	Preparation	Language use	Student participation (confidence level)	Classroom management and atmosphere	Use of technology	Level of presentation
Week1	All materials needed for lessons were ready. Lecturer encouraged students that they should not be apprehensive and that they "would be able to make it".	More writing was done.	Quite enthusiastic but not very interactive.	Quiet atmosphere with fewer engagements.	Smartphones, tablets, projectors and computer were used for lessons and these were helpful for students' downloads.	No comment from the observer
Week 2	Change of venue affected start of lectures. The power source in the lecture room was not functioning so students were asked to relocate to a different room.	Reading, writing and speaking were targeted. Listening also took place minimally. Language use was better in the previous class.	Quite enthusiastic but change of venue affected them. When students relocated, it took a while for them to settle down and they did not appear excited about their new room.	Students were getting used to each other but teacher managed class well. Students were not shy of their peers anymore. They understood they were all mature students and may have similar challenges. They began to have conversations on other topics outside class, but lecturer reminded them to be focused.	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used for the day's lesson.	Teacher was confident and delivered class smoothly. She was able to answer questions without difficulty.
Week 3	Chairs were originally arranged facing the lecturer so students were reminded to rearrange and sit in groups of four.	Students spoke and wrote. They also read in class.	Very enthusiastic and confident students. They were excited about their task and took part in all discussions. Interactions were encouraging.	Teacher periodically reminded students of the need for maximum participation and concentration.	Smartphones, computers, projector were used which were very helpful for downloading lesson materials.	No comment from the observer
Week 4 (online)	Lecturer asked students to feel comfortable for the lesson. She inquired about their well-being and encouraged them to get in touch if there were any challenges they were facing.	Reading and speaking took place with some listening, but speaking was limited. Only few spoke, probably because of the online class.	Students were not very confident, which I think was because it was their first online class.	Class not properly controlled. Students were calling lecturer indiscriminately.	Smartphones, computers, and tablets were used. Students had to join classes online on Moodle. Few network challenges were experienced but did not affect class. There were microphone infractions.	Lessons well delivered. Lecturer took time to repeat instructions. She asked appropriate questions and allowed students time to think through and come out with new ideas.
Week 5 (online)	Lecturer was available on time to set up study materials	Students read and listened. Speaking also took place minimally.	Although students were enthusiastic, interaction was not very active. Some had microphone challenges.	Not much of a challenge. Students comported themselves better than previous week. Lecturer was able to manage class effectively.	Technology was key. Students had to join class remotely (Moodle) from their homes. Not much	Delivery was very good. Could not differentiate online and face to face. Simple language was used.

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					difficulty with learning management system.	
Week 6 (online)	Lecturer was prepared for class. Teaching and learning materials were ready. Lecturer was online before scheduled time.	Students were very interactive and used the language more than the previous lesson. Speaking, reading and listening took place	Students were very enthusiastic and openly shared views. They were vocal with this online class than the previous ones.	Little infractions on microphone rules. Students could handle microphones better.	There were a few network challenges so some students dropped out of the class occasionally but everything else was satisfactory.	Lecturer was confident in delivery. Previous tasks were reviewed. Appropriate questions were asked and she gave immediate feedback.
Week 7	Classroom was set. Students were asked to arrange chairs in groups of four.	Language use was high. A lot of Speaking, reading and writing took place.	Very enthused and confident. Students participated effectively. Each student spoke during task and contributed to their task write-up.	Students talked a lot because they had resumed from online classes. Room was noisy.	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used.	Lecturer was conversant with topic. Used clear and simple language. Allowed students to use prior knowledge.
Week 8	Lecturer was well prepared for class. All materials were ready. She passed a funny comment for students to laugh and feel at ease.	Students used the language efficiently. Reading, speaking and writing were done.	Students were enthusiastic and interacted with each other especially because of the task assigned them.	Lecturer was able to manage class effectively. Unnecessary noise was avoided.	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used.	Lecturer was on point. She allowed students to use their own experiences to answer questions and work on task.
Week 9	Lecturer had all materials ready for class. She encouraged students that they were doing well and that the semester would end very soon.	Students were very interactive. All four aspects of language were involved	Very enthusiastic and interactive. They actively took part in the discussions.	Students comported themselves well but few instances of distracting behaviour.	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used.	On point. Provided opportunities for students to bring new ideas.
Week 10	Lecturer engaged students and enquired of their well-being.	Students were very interactive. Interaction level had increased for all aspects of language to be used.	Very enthusiastic. Students did not have any challenges in interacting with their peers.	Students were so excited about their day's activity so were extremely interactive.	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used.	Delivery was smooth. Teacher took time to explain difficult concepts. Kept students busy throughout the period.
Week 11	Teacher took time to find out from students how studies were going so far. Some students complained of the workload, that it was getting too much for them but they were encouraged to do the best they could.	Students were very interactive and seemed to enjoy the class. All language aspects used including listening.	Very enthusiastic. Students were very confident in their discussions.	Students were excited about their task activities for the day.	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used. Students were excited about their activities.	Delivery was on point. Lecturer provided all relevant information that was needed for the task and gave clarity on the task.
Week 12	The teacher was excited that students had been able to endure till the end of the semester. They were	Students were very interactive especially because it was their last day in class.	Every student was made to talk that day as it was the last day in class.	Students were so happy about their last day's activity so getting	Smartphones, projectors, computer were used.	Delivery was very smooth and teacher was very confident.

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	encouraged to continue reading outside classes.	Writing, speaking and reading took place to a high degree.		too interactive. Teacher had a little difficulty managing them.		

6.2.1.1 Preparation

This category was used by the observer to indicate whether enough preparation went into creating an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning and whether materials were ready for the lesson. The observer recorded that materials were ready for classes to commence. There were also records of students being asked to sit in their groups of four for lessons. More importantly, records indicate that students were engaged before lessons began. For instance, in the first week, students were encouraged to feel at ease in class. The observer commented that:

> **Week one:** *"All materials needed for lessons were ready (reading materials, laptop, projector, markers etc.). Lecturer encouraged students that they should not be apprehensive and that they "would be able to make it"."*

There are other engagements recorded in the subsequent weeks when students were asked about their well-being and academic work. The observer recorded that the classroom was prepared for lessons to commence and that the lecturer was prepared for classes.

> **Week four:** *"Lecturer asked students to feel comfortable with the lessons. She inquired about their well-being and encouraged them to get in touch if there were any challenges."*
>
> **Week 11**: *"Teacher had time to find out from students how their studies were going. Some students complained the workload was getting too much on them, but they were encouraged to do the best they could."*

This intervention with the task-based language teaching approach had four phases instead of the three phases proposed by Ellis (1993) and Willis (1996; 1998). The proposed fourth phase is the preparation phase, where students are informally engaged before lectures commence. This preparation phase is evident in the observational data. The teacher interacted with the students before classes began. This phase signifies a stage where the classroom was set up for the lesson from the data. The data suggest that the lecture room was used by other students who

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may not have been utilising cooperative learning. Hence, at the commencement of each lecture, the room needed to be prepared for classes to begin. Tables and chairs were to be arranged for effective TBLT lessons. The preparation stage was, therefore, necessary and served as an icebreaker and the foundation on which to start the class.

6.2.1.2 Language usage

This category was used to observe how the various aspects of language were used and emphasised during lessons. Three aspects of language (reading, speaking, and writing) were emphasised during the intervention. Listening also took place but was not emphasised as it was not focused on in the research. The observer recorded that the language was used through students' interaction and that all four aspects of language (speaking, reading, writing and listening) were used, although the emphasis was on speaking, reading and writing, which were the focus of the study.

> **Week two**: *"Reading, writing and speaking were targeted. Listening also took place. Language use was better than previous class."*
>
> **Week three:** *"Students spoke and wrote. They also read in class."*

The students had several engagements with their peers during lessons because of the group and pair work. Students were to interact with their peers to plan and produce their task report during the task phase. Students also interacted with the reading materials provided to them. During the pre-task phase, students had to be conversant with the topic for the day. They were given materials to read and, occasionally, video clips to watch. These activities got students engaged throughout the lesson, which enabled them to use all the aspects of language. It is worth noting that students' interaction was initially seen as minimal when lectures were held online (weeks four to six). Students were apprehensive on the first day of online class, so language use was minimal, as the observer indicated.

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Week four: *"Reading and speaking took place with some listening but speaking was limited. Only few spoke, I think because of the online class."*

It is expected that if more online lectures had taken place, these sessions would have been very interactive. The reason is that the observer recorded active language usage in class on the third online lesson during week six:

> **Observer**: *"Students were very interactive and used the language more than the previous lesson. Speaking, reading and listening took place."*

It is evident from the observation data that more writing characterised the intervention programme. The observer recorded writing activities on almost all of the lesson days. Even though students were working in groups and in pairs, they had to do writing individually before joining to work in groups or pairs. With online classes, students had to meet their partners or group members outside class hours to complete their tasks. Each student came with their written work, and then, as a group, they incorporated all the information into one document.

6.2.1.3 Students' participation

The data on how students were involved in class and their enthusiasm to participate indicate that students' participation and enthusiasm were high and increased progressively. Students were confident in their interactions. The word *enthusiastic* was seen in almost all the 12 observations made. The homogeneity of the group of mature students seems to have made the students more comfortable with each other, so they interacted freely. Again, this group of mature students (mature intervention group) did not seem to have much problem with speaking, as their pre-test results indicated. They were, therefore, confident in their interactions in class.

> **Week three**: *"Very enthusiastic and confident students. They were excited about their task and took part in all discussions."*

The only instance where there was a challenge with students' enthusiasm and participation was with the first online session, which was recorded in *week 4* because of microphone control resulting in low participation. Subsequent observations recorded enthusiastic participation, especially in week 12, when every student was made to talk.

> **Week four***: "Students were not very enthused and confident because it was their first online class."*
>
> **Week twelve:** *"Every student was made to talk that day as it was the last day in class."*

6.2.1.4 Classroom management and atmosphere

The fourth category for observation was classroom management and atmosphere. This category showed how the lecturer ensured that the lessons ran smoothly and orderly without distracting behaviours. From the data, it is evident that classroom management was a little challenging. Except for the first lesson, where students were still getting to know each other and thus not having much interaction, the subsequent weeks changed. During weeks two and three, for instance, it was recorded that the lecturer had to remind students to concentrate on the task given.

> **Week two**: *"Students were getting used to each other but teacher managed class well. Students were not shy of their peers. They understood they were all mature students and may have similar challenges. They began to have conversations on other topics outside class but lecturer reminded them to be focused."*
>
> **Week three**: *"Teacher periodically reminded students of the need for maximum participation and concentration."*

As is observed with TBLT, the predominance of group and pair work enables students to have ample time for deliberation. If not well-managed, these discussions can generate a noisy classroom environment (Koç, 2018). Even with online lessons, the moment students are conversant with the learning management platform, such situations can occur until properly

controlled. The lecturer frequently reminded students to concentrate on the task at hand and managed to control the noise, as recorded in week five.

> **Week five**: *"Not much of a challenge. Students comported themselves better than previous week. Lecturer was able to manage class."*

Nevertheless, the observation records indicate students' excitement over the task given as a result of the discussions and classroom debates. Weeks 10 to 12, for instance, show instances where students were excited because of the task given, which instigated many discussions.

> **Week eleven**: *"Students are excited about their task activities."*

This excitement created an atmosphere that was engaging and interactive. Although student participation is helpful for language development, it may also create a noisy environment. A strategy that was developed was for all students to raise their hands whenever the teacher raised her hand. This caused the students to become quiet and to wait for the next instruction. This strategy mostly helped in controlling and managing the class. Another strategy that helped to bring order in the class was assigning the role of coordinator to one of the group members, who ensured that the group was on track and not engaged in conversations outside the assigned task. This arrangement also helped to maintain order and to keep the students focused on the assigned tasks. Although classroom management is a challenge in TBLT classrooms, and this was the case in some weeks, the lecturer used strategies to maintain order and focus.

6.2.1.5 Use of technology

On the use of technology, the observation indicates that smartphones, projectors, and computers were commonly used. Most of the students owned smartphones and were able to use them during lessons. Because pairs and groups had to work on the same task, it was easy for them to share electronic devices within the groups. A few students came to class with tablets

and laptop computers, but most used their smartphones. Students who did not have laptops and tablets shared their screens with their peers. Short videos and lesson materials were shared on the learning management system Moodle and the class WhatsApp group, so students had to download and watch/read within the group. Students also had to look for information online when necessary, and these electronic devices (predominantly smartphones) were needed.

> **Week one**: *"Smartphones, tablets, projectors and computer were used for lessons and they were helpful for students' downloads."*
>
> **Week two:** *"Smartphones, computers, projector were used which were very helpful for downloading lesson materials."*

Students did not have a significant challenge with online sessions because they were familiar with and knew how to navigate their smart devices. A few microphone and network challenges could not be avoided. The observer recorded the following on online lessons:

> **Week four**: *"Smartphones, computers, and tablets were used. Students had to join classes online. Few network challenges were experienced. There were microphone infractions."*
>
> **Week five**: *"Technology was key. Students had to join class remotely (Moodle) from their houses. Not much difficulty with learning management system."*
>
> **Week six:** *"There were a few network challenges so some students dropped out of the class occasionally but everything else was satisfactory."*

6.2.1.6 Level of presentation

For the sixth category, the level of presentation, which looked at how the presentation was done by the lecturer, the observer indicated that the lecturer had total control over the subject area and delivered presentations without any challenge. Phrases like "on point", "smoothly delivered", and "well delivered" were used. The records indicated that the lecturer took time to explain concepts to the students and also allowed them to present their own views. Relevant information that they needed for their tasks was also provided. Some examples of the observer are presented below:

> **Week two**: *"Teacher was confident and delivered class smoothly. She was able to answer questions without difficulty."*
>
> **Week four**: *"Lessons well delivered. Lecturer took time to repeat instructions. She asked appropriate questions and allowed students to think through and come out with new ideas."*
>
> **Week five**: *"Delivery was very good. I could not differentiate between online and face to face. Simple language was used."*
>
> **Week eleven**: *"Delivery was on point. The lecturer provided all relevant information that was needed for the task and gave clarity on the task."*

Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) postulate that teachers in a TBLT classroom are both instructors and guides; they have a responsibility to provide the necessary materials and guidance for students to complete their tasks. Teachers are therefore required to provide the needed clarity and feedback with the right learning activities to enhance an effective TBLT environment (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). With this TBLT, as evident in the observation, clear instructions and relevant feedback were given to guide students.

6.2.2 Discussion of observation data

The data from the outsider's observation demonstrates that the lecturer prepared adequately for classroom lessons and also created an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning. The preparatory phase, which is the additional phase introduced in this study, allowed for the lecturer and students to have informal interactions before classes began. The lecturer inquired about the welfare of the students and enabled them to be at ease. Students were encouraged and motivated at this stage for the tasks ahead. The measures of effective teaching outlined by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010) purport that students should be made to feel cared for in order to promote effective teaching and learning. The observation data suggests that students were made to feel that way. Additionally, Sogunro (2015) contends that one of the motivating factors of adult learning is a conducive learning environment and effective academic advisory practice, which was evident in the observation data. It was recorded that the

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lecturer inquired about the progress of the students and offered to be of help should they need it. Although the physical environment was not recorded in the data, there was a record of the lecturer passing witty comments aimed at getting students relaxed for the day's task. She also advised them to confer with her whenever they had any challenges. The classroom arrangements, for instance, is one example of how adult learners could be motivated for studies. The TBLT requires learners to sit in groups rather than all of them facing the teacher. Kim and Merriam (2004) report that traditional classroom arrangements can demotivate many adult learners because they may remind most of them of their childhood learning environments, which may not have been comfortable for them. This TBLT class did not sit in the traditional classroom setting. The data also suggests that the lecturer was on time for the preparatory phase and had all the needed teaching and learning materials ready for lessons.

The observation data also suggests that various aspects of language were used during the intervention. The TBLT approach requires a lot of deliberation and discussion during the task phase. This is because students discuss the task, plan how to go about it, work on the task, then plan how to report back. These deliberations require a lot of speaking, reading, writing and listening. In a regular classroom where there is a mixture of mature and non-mature students, as in the case of the control group, mature students are not seen to be confident in their interaction (Topham, 2015), but this was not the case with the intervention class. The observation data indicates that the students were actively involved in their pair and group work. These mature students were enthusiastic and actively participated in their class discussions with confidence. Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) explain how the task-based approach presents students with the opportunity to master the language through learning activities. These activities, as proposed by Córdoba Zúñiga (2016), encourage students to improve their language proficiency.

The observation report also suggests that the interactive nature of the TBLT lesson can create challenges in classroom management, as reported by Carless (2003). There were reports of the lecturer constantly reminding students to focus on the task ahead. Sogunro (2015), however, indicates that when there is interactive and effective management practice, adult learners are motivated to learn. This TBLT intervention allowed students to interact, but students were also reminded to stay focused on the task at hand. The observer recorded that students were excited about the tasks, which resulted in more interaction, but the lecturer was able to control the class when the students were prompted.

The observation also indicated that technology was key in the TBLT approach. Lai and Li (2011) assert that technology plays a vital role and enhances the effective implementation of a TBLT approach. Baralt and Gómez (2017) further contend that online tasks that are well-designed and collaborative are useful and motivating for students. For this reason, the few online lessons that were conducted did not have many challenges as recorded by the observer (except for a few network connectivity challenges and "microphone infractions"). Students were comfortable with the Moodle Learning Management System and could easily navigate their way through it. Students decided on the online platform that was suitable for their group/pair work. Some used Zoom meetings, others used Google Meet, and a few also used WhatsApp. The researcher and observer randomly attended meetings of these group discussions for observation and necessary guidance. Electronic devices that were used were students' day-to-day personal electronic equipment such as tablets, smartphones and laptop computers. As such, there were no major difficulties in employing these tools in teaching and learning.

Finally, on the level of presentation, the observer recorded that the lecturer reviewed previous tasks, allowed students to come up with new ideas, and used simple and clear language. The

measures of effective teaching (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010), one of the sets of principles that characterised this TBLT intervention, requires the teacher to, among other things, explain difficult concepts clearly by using several ways of explanation. The teacher is also expected to give students ample opportunity to share their ideas and express their thoughts while showing respect to their peers and to the teacher (Van den Branden, 2016).

Van den Branden (2016) further asserts that teachers remain crucial interactional partners in task-based language classrooms because of their numerous roles. As a result, their confidence level and ability to present lessons in an acceptable manner are vital for the effective implementation of TBLT. The observation data suggests that the intervention appeared to have achieved a satisfactory level of presentation.

6.3 Presentation and analysis of researcher's log

The researcher's log was a reflective journal that the researcher documented after each lesson. The information in the journal was based on what the researcher remembered from the day's lesson. This data was compiled as additional information to the observational data. The log was compiled as short notes of the day's events. Out of the six pre-set categories used for the observation made by the observer colleague, two of them prominently emerged in the researcher's log. These were *classroom management* and *atmosphere* (which included students' participation). Two other categories emerged from the researcher's log: *teacher-to-student interaction* and *common language errors*. The presentation is therefore based on these four major categories.

6.3.1 Classroom management and atmosphere

This category, similar to the observation data, concerned log records pertinent to the classroom setting and whether there was an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning. The

lessons were carried out in classrooms similar to other traditional classes. However, the arrangement of the tables and chairs was different. In alignment with furniture arrangement in a typical TBLT classroom, students were made to arrange their desks in groups of four in such a way that they could also see the lecturer and the screen. This sitting arrangement was necessary because of cooperative teaching and learning (Jacobs, 2016). However, the challenge with this arrangement, as noted by the researcher, was that because other lessons took place in the same classroom, the students had to rearrange the chairs before and after each TBLT class, which was time-consuming. Nevertheless, the lecturer managed to work around this. It would have been easier if the arrangement could have been kept for the duration of the intervention.

Despite this disadvantage, the reflections of the researcher indicated a friendly classroom environment. Students felt comfortable and were not tense. The researcher noted that the students interacted freely with one another and with the lecturer without any inhibitions. The environment was an enabling one that allowed the students to express themselves. For instance, students were quite vocal when they were asked to share some personal experiences. They could also critique their peers' work without much difficulty. However, they were guided to be cautious and respectful of other people's feelings. The enabling environment also made classroom management somewhat challenging, as noted in the observation data. An example is recorded of students engaging in political arguments in one of the lessons. Students were tasked to develop practical steps they could take as parents to protect themselves against the COVID-19 pandemic. As excited as students were, it got to a point in time where some students felt the government could do better with schools' infrastructure to help protect students. Other students held different opinions, which generated heated debates. As was indicated by the observer's records, the lecturer had to remind students several times to stay focused on the task

and to avoid discussions that did not relate directly to the task ahead. The researcher's log recorded that the strategies adopted to curtail these problems helped to a large extent.

> **Week Nine***: "Classroom management was a bit challenging today. Today's task (what parents could do to ensure that their wards were protected against the spread of the coronavirus) generated a lot of political debate. I recall one student arguing with another that the resumption of schools was not appropriate and the other saying it was appropriate. I realised they were getting too political, so I had to come in to avoid distraction. I reminded all students to stop talking and raise their hands up when they saw mine up. This strategy helped immensely."*

6.3.2 Students' participation and response

The researcher's log also showed how students interacted and responded during the TBLT classes. The researcher noted that students easily engaged and interacted with their peers. Although there were few interactions in the first two lessons, subsequent lessons were more interactive, and student participation was high as they became progressively more used to one another and felt more comfortable. The tasks were in pairs and groups, so they had to work with one another to complete tasks. Students learned how to work with other people in order to achieve a mutual target. Another record is that the class was made up of only mature students; therefore, they were comfortable. Familiarisation and the topic under consideration played a significant role in how students participated in the task. Sogunro (2015) reports that adult learners want to learn concepts that they can immediately apply. As a result, they prefer activities that are hands-on and problem-oriented. Similarly, Wlodkowski (2003) indicates that when adult learners feel interested in their tasks, they are motivated, increasing their ability to learn more. It is therefore not surprising that the students participated in their tasks because topics that were considered were not abstract but rather real-life situations such as requesting permission to re-sit missed examination, identifying a community-based challenge, identifying other COVID-19 protection guidelines, and planning a farewell party for a colleague.

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The log records how, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, students were so excited to tackle their task concerning innovative ways to curb the spread of the pandemic. Because of the pandemic and the uncertainties of the times, students could easily relate to the topic and participate fully.

> **Week Eight:** *"Today's lesson was fascinating. Students were to come up with at least four practical ways that could be used to curb the spread of the coronavirus aside the usual washing of hands, using nose mask and social distancing. Students really participated in the task and lesson for the day because of the COVID pandemic is at its peak. Although schools had resumed, students were sceptic as to whether the institutions were ready to curtail the spread of the virus. As a result, students participated and even forgot it was an academic exercise. Several views were shared for a successful class."*

The log indicated that students' response to lessons was positive throughout the intervention. Students were present for lessons and were on time. Students who could not make it to class informed the lecturer before time. There were instances where students felt there were too many tasks and the intervention was taking too much of their time, even outside lecture hours. These complaints were recorded in the log. The reason for the agitation was that not all tasks could be carried out during lessons because of time constraints, a challenge with TBLT.

> **Week Six:** *"The lesson today was also held online using the Moodle LMS. This was the third online lesson for the class…. Because it was an online class, students were made to schedule a meeting day outside class hours for their group task. Some students complained because they felt there were too many tasks but I explained to them the importance of engaging in these tasks to enhance their language proficiencies. Meeting days were scheduled accordingly."*

Participants' complaints were noticed when the semester was mid-way through. It was understandable because their academic work was at its peak. Students usually begin to feel anxious when not guided properly at this stage, so it was not surprising that the mature students were also complaining.

6.3.3 Teacher-to-student interaction

The log observed that the researcher was available before lessons started in order to have interactions with students before main classes began, which was also recorded in the observation. Although these informal discussions are not considered part of the learning process, they were considered an integral part of the additional preparatory phase of the TBLT approach. The log demonstrates the teacher asking students about their registration status in early lessons. Because the students in the intervention class were first-year students, some of them still had challenges with the process which they needed to complete in order to secure their registration for the semester. The interactions allowed students to share their challenges for the required assistance.

> **Week 1:** *"I entered class before main lessons began. Few students were already seated. I asked students how they were doing and whether they had completed their registration process. Few students had finished their registration. Some of the students had still not completed because they had challenges with the online registration process. They were encouraged to pay their fees."*

The subsequent logs indicate that the lecturer's engagement with students went beyond academic work. Students were asked how their families were doing and how they balanced work with family issues. Some students were comfortable sharing their social problems with the lecturer, while others were not.

These student-lecturer interactions were also recorded by the observer. It was recorded that there were several engagements between the lecturer and the students during the preparation phase.

The online lessons were slightly different from the face-to-face classes regarding the lecturer's interaction with students. At the onset, students were apprehensive as they were unsure of what to expect. The class already had an existing WhatsApp platform that was used to exchange

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> **Week 4:** *"This class was the first online class. Students were a bit anxious, so I spent time to engage them before classes began, I inquired about how their families were doing and how they were managing schooling and other family responsibilities. Some shared with the class how they were coping, but a few could not open up. I also encouraged them not to be anxious about the online lessons. I encouraged those who were very conversant with the system to help one another, and I also guided a few of them."*

These interactions and engagements before the main lessons affirmed the importance of the preparatory phase, which is an additional phase to the TBLT proposed in this research. These interactions, based on the preparatory phase, were helpful because the lecturer was able to collect feedback from students on previous lessons and was able to improve on subsequent lessons. The lecturer was able to improve lesson delivery based on the feedback. Students' unique needs were also identified at this stage for guidance. For instance, it was recorded that some students were concerned with the speed with which delivery was made by the lecturer and the need to slow down at one such interaction. The lecturer became cautious about this and reduced the pace of delivery in subsequent lessons. Conscious efforts were made to assess the needs of the students and motivate them when necessary. For this intervention, the preparatory phase was planned out, which makes it an integral part of the lesson.

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6.3.4 Common errors recorded

Finally, the log recorded common errors that were observed in the day's lesson. This record was vital to the researcher as it guided preparation for subsequent classes. Because grammar is not explicitly taught, the language challenges observed during the task and post-task phases are carefully noted to correct students. Aside from what was recorded in class, the researcher kept records of these errors in the reflective log. All errors identified were addressed during subsequent lessons. Some topics were already outlined in the curriculum, while others were dealt with because they emerged from the lessons. The recorded errors in the log predominantly concerned punctuation, wordy sentences, contracted forms, improper citations, incorrect usage of tenses, and incomplete sentence fragments.

6.3.4.1 Punctuation and wordy sentences

The most common error recorded from the log was wordy sentences. Students constructed several sentences that were too long and needed to be split up. Some examples are given below:

> *"Again, after settling part of the fees with the help of a friend, due to the fact that COVID-19 pandemic happened and we were asked to attend classes and do our assignments online, looking at the poor nature of network in some part of our country, accessing some of the learning materials and attending classes online were a major challenge for me because I stay in a remote area where assess to the internet is a major challenge for me."*

> *"As I have indicated earlier in my submission, all those obstacles that prevented me from writing the end of semester examination has been resolved now being it owing of fees and poor network challenges of assessing online lectures and learning materials."*

As shown in the examples above, students wrote very long sentences without breaks. Secondly, punctuation errors occurred frequently, especially at the initial stages. The inability to use correct punctuation resulted in wordy sentences. The above examples show that students tended to use commas instead of full stops. Students were fusing several sentences because

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punctuation elements were not appropriately marked, making it difficult to read them. Once the lesson on punctuation in the curriculum was covered, there was a high reduction in these errors and students attested to this fact in their interview sessions.

6.3.4.2 Contracted forms

Another common error recorded was the use of contracted or short forms in formal writing. The writing reports of the students included forms such as *isn't, can't, and don't*. Although these short forms are acceptable in speaking, they are not allowed in formal writing. The students, however, used them in their formal writing. Some examples from their write-ups are provided below:

Examples

1. *"Another option will require you to create your student account which <u>you'll</u> have to click on register."*
2. *"Most of the men in my community <u>don't</u> show respect to the women."*
3. *"A party <u>can't</u> be fixed without a date."*

The problem of inappropriate contraction was addressed when students were taken through the stages of the writing process. The lesson on the stages of writing was part of the set curriculum, but there was no explicit topic on the erroneous use of contractions. However, the issue of contractions used in formal writing was addressed because it was recorded by the researcher to be a common problem for the students. The students were asked to correct all contracted forms during the proofreading stage, as their tasks needed to employ formal academic writing.

6.3.4.3 Improper citations

One main challenge documented in the researcher's log was students' usage of information without proper citation. There was a recorded instance where students just downloaded a take-home assignment and presented it without acknowledging the author. It was apparent the work was not from the students because it deviated from their writing style. Secondly, some

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expressions used in the sentences were foreign; for instance, "church basement", "crepe paper", "punch", "sodas" and "potluck" are not common expressions in the Ghanaian context considering the task that was given (planning a farewell party).

Example

- *"Choose tablecloths and napkins in the same colour scheme as the banner. Twist some crepe paper around doorways and windows. Decorations do not have to be complicated to be festive at a farewell party."*

- *"Host the party at your home, church basement, community hall or other large location. Consider having a potluck party or having simple buffet party foods available for everyone to enjoy, along with some punch, sodas and other drinks."*

Students apologised when the issue was raised, and they were asked to redo the task. They appreciated the feedback and resubmitted the tasks. The lecturer took the opportunity to teach students about plagiarism, the importance of citations, and documentation. They needed this information in their introductory courses to guide them in their subsequent writing.

It was noticed in the log that students had to do several reading activities in and out of class. In class, some of the students were not comfortable reading aloud. It took some effort to encourage them to do so. They learned to read aloud in their smaller groups and then later in the larger group. During reading, it was noticed that some students did not pay attention to the punctuation elements that were used. This challenge affected the meaning that was derived from the text. Students were encouraged to extensively continue reading on their own, especially to not only improve their reading skills but to increase their range of vocabulary.

6.3.4.4 Wrong usage of tenses

Another common error recorded in the log was the wrong usage of tenses. Students' speaking and writing were often characterised by incorrect tense usage.

Example:

> *"During the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic early this year, my employers were <u>compel</u> to slash our salary because productivity dropped due to the limited number of customers that could buy from us."*

> *"...so I took all that responsibility, <u>do</u> everything on behalf of my father so the time I came back, the exam <u>is</u> due."*

There were mixed tenses, especially with the past and present perfect tease. It was challenging to reteach tenses, but efforts were made to correct students' errors in this regard whenever they occurred. The students' common excuse was that they had been out of school for a while and had forgotten some of these basic grammatical concepts.

6.3.4.5 Sentence fragments

On fragments, it was noticed that some constructions that looked like sentences but were not complete sentences were presented in students' write-ups. Common among these were subordinate clauses such as *because she is a new student*.

Examples

1. *"Any time the registration process is over"*

2. *"The part that department heads play in the process of registration and the steps to follow in the registration process"*

3. *"The responsibility of an admitted student at VVU in the process of registration"*

4. *"<u>Duplicable food infrastructure</u> designed to produce food that is grown on-site"*

The students were confused with these constructions as they looked similar to grammatical sentences. It was, therefore, difficult to explain why they were not acceptable. A lot of effort went into correcting these errors and explaining the basis of the errors to them. However, some of these errors were still present in their post-intervention writing task.

6.3.5 Discussion of researcher's log

The log's record shows that although students had several tasks to complete, which seemed to be a lot of work for some of them, they participated willingly and enthusiastically in the intervention because they could relate to the topics. They were eager to take part in the class activities and the take-home assignments. The group and pair work allowed students to work with their peers and to learn from one another. The log has given further insight into the application of the TBLT approach. More time is needed for this language teaching approach because the classroom has to be set up for effective teaching and learning. An ideal situation would be a designated room exclusively for lessons, but not all universities can afford it due to infrastructure challenges. As a result, students are expected to be in class on time to help set up the classroom. The period of arranging chairs to meet the cooperative learning environment could be factored into the preparatory phase.

Additionally, the log has given insight that frequent feedback is helpful in language teaching. The records indicate that errors were reduced as feedback was given. For instance, at the beginning of the semester, students made lots of mistakes in punctuation, but by the end of the period, there was much improvement, with minimal errors recorded. Similar observations were made with most of the records identified at the beginning of the lessons, such as contracted forms, wordy sentences, and transitional devices. These records affirm the works of Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011), Chen and Wang (2019), Karim et al. (2014) and Bidin (2016), who all attest to how frequent feedback is able to help improve the language proficiency of students instructed in TBLT.

6.4 Presentation and analysis of interviews

The interviews were conducted with fifteen participants from the intervention (experimental) class. All 15 participants took part in the pre- and post-tests. The 15 respondents for the interview were selected based on their overall performance in the post-test. Five students were selected from the group with high marks of 75% and above, five were selected from those who obtained average marks, and another five were selected from those who obtained low marks. This selection across three performance levels was to get a balanced view from the participants. Table 6.2 below gives a short description of the participants who were interviewed. Of the 15 students, six were male, and nine were female. Each participant is described by their pseudonym, their gender, and their performance level. For instance, Addai ML represents the student in the mature intervention class who is known as Addai (a pseudonym, not his real name), male, and in the low-performing group. Table 6.2 presents a detailed description of each participant.

Table 6.2: Description of interviewees

Ser. no.	Pseudonym	Gender	Level of performance	Interview label
1	Owusuaa	Female	Average	Owusuaa FA
2	Ebo	Male	High	Ebo MH
3	Akorfa	Female	High	Akorfa FH
4	Addai	Male	Low	Addai ML
5	Yeboah	Male	Low	Yeboah ML
6	Nakki	Female	High	Nakki FH
7	Pokuaa	Female	Low	Pokuaa FL
8	Yao	Male	Low	Yao ML
9	Kokuvi	Male	High	Kokuvi MH
10	Ofosu	Male	Average	Ofosu MA
11	Alhassan	Male	Average	Alhassan MA
12	Elorm	Male	Average	Elorm MA
13	Allotey	Male	Low	Allotey ML
14	Boateng	Male	High	Boateng MH
15	Esi	Female	Average	Esi FA

The interviews were conducted via phone but were recorded for onward transcription. Notes were also taken during the interviews. Each interview section was transcribed to text for easy analysis and discussion. The students gave their consent to be part of the intervention and to participate in the interviews should they be selected. The selected students were contacted after their post-test results, and a day and time that was suitable for them were scheduled. All the selected students were interviewed once, except for one respondent, Esi 30 FA, who called back after the interview session to share a personal experience. The interview was semi-structured. Participants were asked specific questions, but they were also allowed to add extra information. When responses were not clear, the researcher probed further for clarity. The summary of the interviews is presented here in relation to the questions asked for easy analysis and discussion. Table 6.3 gives some brief statistics of the responses. The reason for its inclusion in this qualitative chapter is to make it easier to evaluate the responses given to each question by the three groups of respondents. It must be noted that not all respondents answered questions, and some of them gave more than one response to a question. The predominant responses have been summarised in Table 6.3.

The data from the interviews showed that none of the students had heard of the TBLT approach. However, they reported that they found the TBLT teaching approach helpful and also mentioned both the advantages and disadvantages of the TBLT as a new teaching approach. All the participants gave positive feedback on how the teacher handled the classes. Whereas some respondents complained about their peers not participating fully, others were more positive about their peers' participation. Verbatim explanations and examples from the respondents are provided for each question in section 6.5.1 after Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Summary of interview responses

Questions and responses	High performers	Average performers	Low performers	Total
Before the intervention, did you know of the TBLT approach?				
• Not at all	2			2
• No	2	5	1	8
• Never heard	1		4	5
What do you think are the advantages of the approach?				
• It was good	3	2	1	6
• Helped me improve in language	2	1	1	4
• Learnt from my colleagues		2	2	4
• Learnt a lot			2	2
• Can think critically			2	2
What are the disadvantages you observed with the teaching approach?				
• time constraint	2	2	2	6
• Network		1	1	2
• Difficult combining work and school	1			1
• Difficult combining with other courses			1	1
• Other members not participating			1	1
• Task was difficult			1	1
What is your overall impression of the method of teaching?				
• It was good/great/impressed/helpful for our language development because we used the language a lot in class	2	1	4	7
• Increased confidence			1	1
• I love assignment/more task needed	1	1	2	4
• The group and pair work was beneficial.	2	1	2	5
What is your impression of the role of the teacher who taught you with the TBLT approach?				
• Amazing/impressed/did well	3	2	3	8
• Helped us a lot	1			1

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• Frequent feedback/encourage/pressure		2	2	4
• Good human relation			1	1
In your view, how did students apply themselves and participate within the TBLT approach?				
• Some did not partake/were busy	2		1	3
• Most participated/did well	2	4	1	7
• Learnt from them			1	1
Do you have any further comments on the use of the TBLT approach?				
• More task/assignment	3		4	7
• More time needed		2		2
• Appreciates efforts			1	1
• Group and individual work to continue			1	1

6.4.1 Before the intervention programme, did you know of the task-based language teaching approach?

The question was asked to ascertain whether the students were already familiar with the approach or had been instructed with the TBLT approach before. All the respondents indicated that they had never heard of the task-based language teaching approach prior to the intervention. The fact that the students did not have prior knowledge of the approach meant that their responses were based solely on the TBLT approach that was used for the intervention. Some examples of their responses are provided below:

> Akorfa FH: *"Not at all. I had not heard about the TBLT approach before."*
>
> Ofosu MA: *"No, I only heard about the TBLT approach for the first time when you (the researcher) mentioned it."*
>
> Allotey ML: *"I had never heard about the approach before."*

6.4.2 Now that you have been instructed using the approach, what do you think are the advantages of the approach?

On what the interviewees regarded as advantages of the approach, all participants responded, irrespective of their post-test performance. From the responses, three high performers, two average performers, and one low performer mentioned that the intervention had positively influenced their language proficiency. Two high, one average, and one low performer indicated the intervention had helped them to learn from their colleagues. Two average performers indicated they had learned a lot about punctuation, essay writing, and grammatical sentences, while two low performers indicated they could now think critically after the intervention. One of the high performers shared how the intervention had helped him in his research work (how to paraphrase and cite appropriately) and has helped him in his ability to express himself well in the English language. The students gave different responses on how useful the approach was. Some examples of the positive responses are given below:

> *"The TBLT has helped me to express myself and also helped me to do more research. It has helped me to know how to answer questions effectively."* (Boateng MH)

> *"It [the TBLT approach] gave me a whole lot...I was able to express myself and get other people's views. You get the views from others and you compare them with yours to get improvement."* (Alhassan 19 MA)

> *"The weekly assignments were helpful. They made me think critically."* (Kokuvi MH)

Alhassan MA, an average performer, reported that the targeted TBLT for mature students was helpful as he could think critically and get diverse perspectives from his other colleagues during the intervention.

For the low performers, their emphasis on the positive aspects of the TBLT approach was more on literacy and language forms. They shared how the specific teaching approach had improved

their writing, construction of grammatical sentences, reading comprehension, and ability to use punctuation effectively. Two such respondents, Pokuaa FL and Yao ML, shared the following:

> *"I learnt so many things during the intervention. My writing has improved than before. My easy writing and use of punctuation have also improved."* (Pokuaa FL)

> *"The teaching approach has helped me in constructing grammatical sentences. I have also learnt* how to write essays and use punctuations *effectively."* (Yao ML)

It is important to note that although traditional grammar and language classrooms teach these writing forms, the TBLT provides a context in which these forms are learned with real-world tasks, and it is believed that such learning activities yield more meaningful results than would have been achieved in a traditional classroom (Yildiz & Senel, 2017). Dragobuzhda (2020) points out that learners learn language by relating it to real-world activities and tend to develop adequate structures faster.

6.4.3 What are the disadvantages you observed with the teaching approach?

The participants from the three groups provided various responses regarding the disadvantages they observed with the TBLT approach. One main challenge that was evident in all the responses to this question was the issue of time constraints.

A student in the high-performing group (Akorfa FH) shared that she had to combine schoolwork with her professional work and that this was challenging at times as she could not set aside enough time to attend all of the lectures. Additionally, she wished that she owned a laptop and a smartphone to aid her in her work. This revelation was intriguing coming from a high performer because she achieved better marks than most of her peers, despite her challenges. This is what she shared:

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> *"My work schedule o, so time constraints because sometimes, it is difficult to get time to help me participate in the tasks actively. I also used the phone and not a laptop for the online lessons and tests which was not very helpful to me."* (Akorfa FH)

One of the students from the average-performing group complained of the timing for the take-home group assignments. She reported that it was difficult to find a suitable time for everyone in her group, and therefore, there were instances where the agreed time had to go deep into the night.

> *"...we needed a favourable time so that all of us within the group could participate in the discussions. Sometimes. It was difficult to agree on a specific time. We ended up choosing a time that goes late into the night, which was not helpful. Some of us had to go to work the following day..."* (Owusuaa FA)

Other time constraints comments were:

> *"It was difficult to complete the tasks because we had to go to work and also combine them with the weekly tasks as well."* (Allotey ML)

> *"There were other courses we were also taking so it was difficult to combine the tasks and the other courses."* (Yao ML)

Another challenging issue for a number of respondents was the data network. One of the average performers shared how network challenges affected the online classes and tests that were held.

> *"Sometimes, the network gets interrupted in the middle of the class or exams, and it becomes very difficult to get back online. It can be very frustrating when you keep going on and off. It did not help at all but well, we had to manage like that."* (Ofosu MA)

The students in the low-performing group reported more challenges than those in the high and average performers. Two of those in the low-performing group complained that the tasks were difficult and that it was sometimes difficult to get their fellow students to participate in the group work.

"The weekly tasks were tough." (Pokuaa FL)

"Not all members were participating in the tasks that were assigned for us."
(Yao ML)

6.4.4 What is your overall impression of the method of teaching?

When asked to share their overall impression of the intervention, respondents from all three performance levels reported positive impressions about the approach and expressed hopes that it would continue to be used for subsequent classes. Two students from the high-performing group, together with one student from the average group and two from the low-performing group, shared how the teaching method had benefited them in their language development. According to them, they had several opportunities to use the language, and this exposure enhanced their ability to use the language proficiently. One student from the low-performing group mentioned how the lecturer used simple language during lessons for easy comprehension. Finally, five students (two L, one A, and two H) indicated how the group work and pair work had been beneficial to their language development. Some of their responses are shared below:

> *"The numerous tasks and assignment given were beneficial because the more I did the tasks, the more exposure I had with the language."* (Owusuaa FA)

> *"There was more pressure on us to perform and because you saw us as beginners, you were able to handle us that way. You used simple language for easy understanding."* (Addai ML) Low performer

> *"It was good. My confidence has increased because I had several opportunities to use the language during task activities."* (Yeboah ML)

> *"I really enjoyed the group and pair work. There was always somebody to have a discussion with so it made learning easy."* (Ebo MH)

"I was a bit nervous when I registered for the English course but working with my fellow students made it easy for me. All classes should be like that."
(Elorm MA)

6.4.5 What is your impression of the role of the teacher who taught you with the TBLT approach?

Students were asked to share their impressions of the teacher's role during the intervention. All fifteen students reported that they were impressed with the teacher's role during the intervention. Some shared how frequent encouragement was helpful to them. Others also recounted the excellent human relation and the teacher taking time to explain concepts to students. A section of the students expressed their appreciation for the manner in which the teacher engaged them and sought to understand their challenges, both academic and non-academic (at the preparatory phase), before classes began, which also motivated them to work. Finally, a section also commended the teacher for responding to questions professionally. It is interesting to note that Alhassan MA, an average performer, shared how he enjoyed the pressure from the teacher. He had this to say:

"You were giving us pressure for results, and l loved it. Your encouragements and deadlines also kept us on our toes which was good." (Alhassan MA)

Other examples are shared below:

"I was impressed with how you took your time to answer questions. Thank you." (Akorfa FH)

"It was exciting to come to class early because we knew we would have time to talk to you informally before classes began. The interactions we had and the feedback you gave motivated us to work. Your human relation was very perfect and I like it." (Allotey ML)

"You really had time for us. You know how we adult learners can ask a lot of questions, but you managed to cope with us." (Nakki FH)

6.4.6 In your view, how did students apply themselves and participate within the TBLT approach?

On how students applied themselves and participated, there were diverse opinions across the three groups. Two students from the high-performing group complained of some of their colleagues not participating in some of the tasks. On the other hand, five students (two H, four A and one L) believed that their colleagues did their best and took part in the discussions and tasks. One student from the low-marks group shared how he was able to learn from his colleagues.

> *"Not all my mates were willing to participate at all times especially with the take-home assignments. Sometimes, you had to call them severally before they respond."* (Ebo MH)

> *"My colleagues did well. Most of them were very active for discussion."* (Addai ML)

> *"I was able to get ideas from my colleagues during the discussions so there was no stress. I also learnt a lot of vocabularies from my friends."* (Kokuvi MH)

6.4.7 Do you have any further comments on the use of the TBLT approach?

Finally, students were allowed to share whatever opinions they had about the TBLT lessons. The low performers shared more responses than the average and high performers, but they all stated that they were looking forward to subsequent instructions through TBLT. Four low performers mentioned that they would have liked to have more assignments and tasks, one encouraged group and pair work continuation, and the other appreciated the efforts put into the intervention. Two average performers reiterated that more time was needed for their tasks but added that their writing had improved significantly. Three high performers were also looking forward to more assignments and tasks, and their comment was that they could now confidently communicate with their friends. The general opinions of the students are presented below:

"More assignment is needed for subsequent lessons. We also need more handouts." (Boateng MH)

"The TBLT approach was good. The tasks helped me to think critically because I needed to come up with ideas and solutions to the task given. I am looking forward to meet again." (Alhassan MA)

"The group work must continue. You should always give a different task to different groups. Occasionally, individual assignments should also be given." (Elorm MA)

"I am able to communicate with my friends with confident without any fear of committing errors." (Ebo MH)

6.5 Discussion of interviews

All the students interviewed across the performance levels stated that they had never heard about the TBLT approach prior to the intervention. They reported that they were thus quite anxious, not knowing what to expect during the classes. After implementation of the approach, they shared various experiences they had during the interview. All three groups of students responded that the approach was helpful and had helped to increase their language proficiency. The benefits of the approach were presented in various forms by the different groups. The high performers focused on their ability to express themselves freely, the average performers mentioned how it propelled them to think critically, and the low performers put emphasis on how their writing had improved through the task-based teaching approach. In spite of the different emphases by the different groups on how the approach had been helpful, it was evident that students from all three performance groups (high, average and low) had benefited from the use of the TBLT approach.

In answering research question three, subsection (c), which seeks to know the cohort of mature students' opinions on the TBLT intervention programme, the responses already shared indicate that they were satisfied with the intervention. However, the disadvantages that they stated

indicate the challenges that they had with the approach. While the high performers did not report any significant challenges, the average and low performers had several opinions on this. Both the average- and low-performing groups complained of time allocation, which was experienced to be insufficient for the tasks. They also complained that some of their colleagues did not participate, and the low performers also complained of the difficulties in combining other courses with their tasks. The predominance of tasks is a hallmark of TBLT, and students frequently have to complete tasks within a limited time. As students engaged in these tasks, which reflected real-life situations, they were exposed to the language, which effectively improved their proficiency. It seems that as efficient as these tasks were, they put a lot of demands on students.

All three groups of students were impressed with the lecturer's role during the intervention. Both the average and low performers indicated that the teacher pressured them to accomplish their tasks but that this was helpful as it kept them on their toes. Both groups were also highly impressed with how the teacher devoted time to answering questions and giving prompt feedback. Timely feedback, as reported by Sogunro (2015), furthers adult learning and this targeted TBLT for mature students was designed with feedback as an integral component of the post-task phase. The low performers also commented on how the lecturer cared about their well-being and academic progress. The preparatory phase, which was introduced in this targeted TBLT approach, created the atmosphere for such interactions between the teacher and students. The essence of such engagements was the lecturer's efforts to identify students' needs and tendencies so that the students could be guided for better results. The engagements also helped reduce anxiety associated with mature students, as reported by Baharudin et al. (2013).

The participants' opinions about their colleagues also indicate that while the high performers complained about some of their colleagues not participating in the tasks, the average and low

performers did not have such complaints. They indicated that most of their classmates participated and that they learned a lot from one another.

Despite the different opinions shared by the three groups of participants, the overall impression shared by the interviewees was positive, and students were looking forward to more classes using the same approach.

6.6 Summary of chapter

This chapter discussed the qualitative data used for this research, which consisted of observations, a researcher's log and interviews. All three data sets were from only the experimental or intervention group. The observation was carried out across twelve lessons based on five categories (preparation, language use, student participation, classroom management and atmosphere, use of technology, and level of presentation). The data from the observation indicated that enough preparation was done before class, which manifested in the presentation and delivery level. Secondly, all four aspects of the language were used during classes, especially speaking, reading, and writing.

Additionally, both the researcher's log and the observation showed that students' confidence levels were high and that they participated in classroom discussions with confidence. A progressive increase in overall confidence levels was demonstrated among students in the intervention group. The observation recorded efficient classroom management, with few challenges both from the lecturer and student fronts. Technology is a vital component of education in the 21st century, and the TBLT approach also requires its frequent use for language development. The observation recorded the usage of smartphones, projectors and computers for teaching and learning. The researcher's log gave further insight into how students positively responded to the intervention. Students actively interacted with their colleagues and with the

lecturer during the intervention. Frequent feedback from the lecturer helped reduce common errors recorded earlier in the semester. Finally, the enabling classroom environment fostered collaborative teaching and learning. From the qualitative data, it is evident that the intervention addressed the three language skills (reading, writing, speaking) and was beneficial to this group of mature students.

6.7 Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has presented the qualitative data with findings from an independent observer, a researcher's log, and interviews conducted with the experimental group. The researcher's log confirmed some of the observations made and gave further insight into the intervention lessons, how they were managed and delivered, and how they were received and perceived. The interview data, which shared students' verbatim opinions on the intervention and also provided further insights into the use of the TBLT approach in teaching mature students. The next chapter will integrate the quantitative data presented in Chapter 5 and the qualitative data presented here for a comprehensive discussion to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 7: INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

7.1 Introduction

This chapter integrates the findings of chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 presented and discussed the quantitative data, whereas Chapter 6 presented and discussed the qualitative data. The quantitative data comprised three data sets: pre- and post-tests in reading, writing and speaking; pre- and post-intervention questionnaires; and the quantitative component of the observation. The qualitative data were also made up of three data sets: observations, a researcher's log and interviews. In line with Creswell's (2013) convergent parallel mixed method design discussed in Chapter 4, this chapter integrates the quantitative and the qualitative data for an overall interpretation.

7.2 Summary of quantitative data

The test results (reading, writing and speaking) showed significant differences among the three groups of participants (the mature experimental, the mature control, and the non-mature groups) prior to the intervention. The main difference was that the non-mature group performed better than the two mature groups, which were on a similar level in the pre-tests. After the tailored TBLT intervention, the T-test results indicated a significant improvement in the mature intervention group in all three tests. Their improvement was better than the mature control group. Further results (ANOVA, pairwise and multiple comparisons, independent sample median test) showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group was also at par with the non-mature group.

The questionnaires administered to the experimental group before and after the intervention demonstrated significant variations in the post-intervention questionnaire results. The results showed an increase in the students' positive responses compared to their pre-intervention responses. In terms of speaking, their responses were positively ranked with regard to their confidence, ability to communicate in class, and ability to communicate with friends. In terms of reading and writing, students' responses after the intervention were also positively ranked compared to their pre-intervention responses.

The post-intervention questionnaire revealed that all the participants were motivated by the intervention and appreciated the pair and group work. Ninety per cent (90%) of them were of the opinion that mature students should be instructed separately from non-mature students. All the means in the post-questionnaire were also less than 2, which signifies that the responses after the intervention were more in agreement with the questions than the pre-intervention questionnaire responses, which concentrated at 2 and above on the five-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=uncertain, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree). Additionally, the standard deviations of the post-intervention responses were all less than 1, which means that the responses the students gave were clustered to the mean and not dispersed.

The outsider's observation data indicated that students had confidence in class and responded positively to the intervention programme because nine out of the twelve days reported good scores, while the remaining three showed average. The positive reception of the intervention seems to have slightly affected classroom management, which was curtailed with a good classroom management technique, as was reported in the outsider's observation. The observation also indicated that the researcher carefully planned and executed the TBLT approach used for the intervention. This assertion can be deduced from the "highly

satisfactory" score recorded for the presentation category. The observation also recorded that various aspects of the language were used in class.

Overall, the quantitative data (tests, questionnaires, independent observation) showed that the intervention group had improved their language proficiency and motivation. In the language tests, they also improved to be at par with the non-mature group, who had performed better before the intervention. This group of mature students seems to have embraced the TBLT approach and enjoyed the classes/programme, and thus benefited from the intervention. It can be deduced that these positive results may not have been obtained if the students were combined with the regular students in a traditional programme similar to those in the control group.

7.3 Summary of qualitative data

The results of the three qualitative data sets (interviews, independent observation and the researcher's log) are briefly summarised below. The interview data from the experimental group revealed that all three performance groups of students (high-performing, average, and low-performing) benefited from using the TBLT approach, though there were different emphases on how they had benefited from the approach, as shown in their responses. For instance, the high performers focused on their ability to express themselves freely, the average performers mainly mentioned how it propelled them to think critically, and the low performers put emphasis on how their writing had improved through the task-based teaching approach. All three groups of students were equally impressed with the lecturer's role during the intervention. Both the average and low performers indicated that the lecturer pressured them to accomplish their tasks, which was helpful as it kept them on their toes. All three performance groups were

also highly impressed with how the teacher had time to answer questions and gave prompt feedback.

The qualitative data from the observation pointed out that the lecturer prepared adequately for classroom lessons and also created an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning. Additionally, the preparatory phase allowed the lecturer and students to have informal interactions before classes began to get them comfortable and motivated. The observation data also recorded that various aspects of language (e.g., speaking, writing, listening) were used during the intervention. This was necessary because the TBLT approach requires a lot of deliberation and discussion during the task phase. These deliberations require a lot of speaking, reading, writing and listening for task completion. Furthermore, the observation showed that the lecturer reviewed previous tasks, allowed students to present new ideas, and used simple and clear language. Technology was vital for a successful intervention programme and was consistently utilised, as recorded in the observations.

Finally, the researcher's log showed that students participated willingly in the weekly tasks with enthusiasm even though the workload was quite heavy. The students were eager to participate in the class activities and complete the take-home assignments. The group and pair work allowed students to work with their peers and to learn from one another. The log gave further insight into the application of the TBLT approach. More time was needed for this language teaching approach because the classroom had to be set up for effective teaching and learning. Additionally, the log gave insight into the positive responses in that frequent feedback is helpful in language teaching, as supported by Ellis (2017), Koç (2018), Chen and Wang (2019), and Bidin (2016). The records indicated that errors were reduced as frequent feedback was given. Thus, the qualitative data provided evidence of the positive results of the intervention.

7.4 Integration of quantitative and qualitative data

The qualitative data provided more insight into the quantitative data and helped to show how the students improved their language skills in reading, writing and listening, as shown in the quantitative data. In effect, the qualitative data corroborated the quantitative data and vice versa. The subsections below integrate the qualitative and quantitative data under the following categories: frequent feedback, enthusiasm and willingness by students, enabling classroom environment, weekly tasks, collaborative learning and mature-only class, motivation, and lecturer's engagement.

7.4.1 Frequent feedback

The qualitative data from the interview revealed that all 15 respondents (low-performing, average, and high-performing) were impressed with their improvements after the intervention. The students were also impressed with how the teacher had time to answer questions and gave prompt feedback. As reported by Sogunro (2015), timely feedback furthers adult learning and this targeted TBLT approach for mature students was designed with feedback as an integral component of the post-task phase. Richards and Rodgers (2001) further postulate that teachers are required to provide the needed clarity and feedback with the right learning activities to enhance an effective TBLT intervention. Motlagh et al. (2014) are also of the view that feedback given on students' tasks at the post-task phase can help learners who are less confident gain more confidence, which will increase their fluency and accuracy.

It is not surprising that the students' post-intervention responses to the questionnaire were highly positive. Additionally, the researcher's log provided confirmation that frequent feedback is helpful in language teaching. The records indicated that errors were reduced as frequent feedback was given. These insights affirm the works of Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu

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(2011), Chen and Wang (2019), Karim et al. (2014), and Bidin (2016). They all attest to how frequent feedback can help improve the language proficiency of students instructed in TBLT. Similar evidence is seen in the quantitative post-test results, which revealed improved language proficiency.

7.4.2 Students' enthusiasm and willingness

The qualitative observation data indicated the enthusiasm with which students participated in class activities. The data revealed that the word *enthusiastic* was seen in almost all of the 12 observations made. The records state that the students were willing to engage in the tasks assigned to them and were excited about their progress. Again, this group of mature students (mature intervention group) did not seem to have much problem with speaking, as their pre-test results indicated. They were, therefore, confident in their interactions in class. The observation below, for example, was recorded in week three:

> **Week three**: *"Very enthusiastic and confident students. They were excited about their task and took part in all discussions."*

The only instance where there was a challenge with students' enthusiasm and participation was the first online session, as they were anxious and unsure of developments. However, subsequent lectures recorded enthusiastic participation and engagement. The enthusiasm and willingness with which students worked on their tasks are believed to be contributing factors to their improved results obtained in the post-tests. All three aspects of language focused on in the intervention were enhanced (as per observation data), and the quantitative data from the post-tests showed clear evidence of this enhancement. Marks (2000) postulates that critical thinking and gains in general abilities are some of the learning outcomes achieved through student engagement. Other researchers (Abla & Fraumeni, 2019; Olson & Peterson, 2015;

Cinches et al., 2017) have established a direct link between students' engagement and better performance associated with the achievement of higher grades.

7.4.3 Enabling classroom environment

The intervention was carried out in a classroom environment that was enabling and conducive to effective teaching and learning. Students were allowed to interact freely with each other within a mutually respectful setting. The lecturer allowed students to feel at ease and encouraged them to participate freely in discussions making the learning space non-restrictive. The qualitative data revealed how the non-threatening environment in which students' affective and social needs were met improved their confidence and made them work harder to improve their language proficiency and academic performance. The outsider's observation, for instance, recorded that:

> **Week four:** *"Lecturer asked students to feel comfortable with the lessons. She inquired about their well-being and encouraged them to get in touch if there were any challenges."*

The freedom to explore and have discussions increased their enthusiasm and confidence to achieve more. A student, for instance, shared this during the interview:

> *"It was good. My confidence has increased because I had several opportunities to use the language during task activities."* (Yeboah ML)

This assertion confirms Albino's (2017) research that after students were instructed using the TBLT approach, they felt encouraged and were ready and willing to speak in any situation without anxiety. The qualitative results of this current study supported the quantitative findings from the post-intervention questionnaire. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which compared the post- and pre-intervention questionnaire responses, revealed positively ranked post responses on students' ability to write well in English, their ability to read fluently in English, their ability

to communicate in class using English fluently, and their ability to communicate with friends in English fluently. Therefore, the results from both the quantitative and qualitative data support the idea that an enabling learning environment promotes learning, specifically language development (Baharudin et al., 2013; Boakye, 2012; Boston, 2017; Córdoba Zúñiga, 2016; González-Lloret & Nielson, 2015; Mao, 2012).

7.4.4 Weekly tasks

The qualitative data from the observation revealed that the weekly tasks that characterise TBLT were a contributory factor to the positive post-test results. The observation report under *language use* (see section 6.2.1.2) recorded that various aspects of language were used during the intervention. The TBLT approach requires a lot of deliberation and discussion during the task phase. This is because students discuss the task, plan how to perform it, work on the task, and then plan how to report back. These deliberations require a lot of speaking, reading, writing and listening. As students are engaged in these tasks, which require continuous usage of the language, their development is also improved (Ellis, 2017; Mohanraj, 2013; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 2002; Van den Branden, 2016; Wicking, 2010). The interview data further affirms the assertion of the benefits of the weekly tasks. The students shared how the teaching method had benefited them in their language development. According to them, they had several opportunities to use the language, and this exposure enhanced their abilities to use the language proficiently. One of their responses is shared below:

> *"The numerous tasks and assignment given were beneficial because the more I did the tasks, the more exposure I had with the language."* (Owusuaa FA)

These findings from the qualitative data corroborated the quantitative data results of the improved scores of the intervention group. The weekly tasks contributed to increasing their

language use and consequently to improving their language proficiency, which was evident in their high test results.

The quantitative data revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading, writing and speaking proficiency after applying the tailored TBLT approach. The T-test, which compared the pre-tests and post-tests, indicated a significant improvement in the experimental group versus the mature control and the non-mature groups. Further tests proved that the experimental group performed better than the control group and that the difference between them was significant. The improvement could therefore be attributed to the TBLT approach. Thus, the quantitative results showed that frequent tasks improve language proficiency, and the qualitative data explained how this was achieved and corroborated the quantitative results.

7.4.5 Collaborative learning and mature-only class

The questionnaire results in the quantitative data indicated that all students (100%) favoured collaborative work and preferred a mature-only class environment, which was corroborated in the observation and the researcher's log in the qualitative data. Cooperative or collaborative learning is one of the main tenets of the TBLT approach. Although individual accountability is required, positive interdependence is equally vital. Lewin et al. (2019) and Motlagh et al. (2014) explain how, when members in a group work together toward a goal instead of competing with each other, they are able to achieve useful peer-tutoring and scaffolding, which helps weaker students to improve their language proficiency.

The insight gained from the observation is that mature students desire to be separated from non-mature students and would like to work collaboratively. This arrangement motivates them to improve their language skills. Laal and Ghodsi (2012) indicate that when students work with peers who have similar challenges, they appreciate and understand that they are not alone,

reducing their anxiety. The homogeneity of the group of mature students seems to have made these students more comfortable with each other, so they interacted more freely. The observer recorded the following in the second week:

> **Week two**: *"Students were getting used to each other but teacher managed class well. Students were not shy of their peers. They understood they were all mature students and may have similar challenges…"*

Similarly, the interview data (which is also qualitative) revealed that the students were in favour of collaborative work. They shared how they were initially nervous but were able to gain confidence to work with others. They additionally shared how working with others made learning easier for them. A student, for instance, shared this in the interviews:

> *"I was a bit nervous when I registered for the English course but working with my fellow students made it easy for me. All classes should be like that."*
> (Elorm MA)

Concerning students' participation and response, it was recorded in the researcher's log that students easily engaged and interacted with their peers. Although there were few interactions in the first two lessons, subsequent lessons were more engaging. Students' participation was high as they became used to one another and felt more comfortable, especially because the class was made up of only mature students. Additionally, it was recorded that students learned how to work with others to achieve a target. These qualitative results provided insight into how the students perceived the intervention positively and applied themselves to obtain the high proficiency seen in the quantitative data and responses given in the questionnaire.

7.4.6 Motivation

It was also evident from the quantitative data gathered through the post-questionnaire that students were motivated to perform. When they were asked whether the intervention programme had motivated them, all the respondents (100%) responded in the affirmative (that

they were motivated during the intervention programme). The standard deviation of 0.470 suggested that the responses were close to the mean and not dispersed. Masashi (2016) points out that because TBLT works on motivation, which is very important to adult learners, it is beneficial to apply the approach in teaching adult learners, as was done with this study. Le (2014) and other researchers (Fareed et al., 2016; Harris, 2018; Herraiz-Martínez, 2018; Reardon, 2013; Schunk, 2012) further emphasise that more motivated students will learn more by participating in task activities than those who are less motivated. The qualitative data from the researcher's log recorded that at the preparatory stage, the lecturer was present before classes began to facilitate interaction with the students. During those interactions, they were encouraged to participate in their task activities. The lecturer also observed the challenges and needs of the students and addressed them accordingly. These engagements positively motivated the students to work.

Likewise, the tasks that were assigned to the students were also a motivating factor. The tasks used in this intervention were based on familiar topics to which the students could easily relate. As indicated by Wlodkowski (2003), when adult learners feel interested in their tasks, they are motivated, and this increases their ability to learn. The outsider's observation recorded the following in week three:

> **Week three**: *"Very enthusiastic and confident students. They were excited about their task and took part in all discussions."*

The qualitative findings reflect the quantitative data and may have been why students gave such a huge response on motivation in their post-intervention responses.

7.4.7 Preparatory phase and lecturer's engagement

The preparatory phase, which was introduced in this targeted TBLT approach, created an atmosphere for the lecturer to interact with students in order to become more familiar with

students' needs and tendencies so that they could be appropriately guided for improved results. The qualitative data from the interview and observation was corroborated by the quantitative data with the improved results. During the interview sessions, students shared how the lecturer's engagement during the preparatory phase encouraged them to work. They expressed how excited they would be at the prospect of always having such discussions before lessons. One student shared this:

> *"It was exciting to come to class early because we knew we would have time to talk to you informally before classes began. The interactions we had and the feedback you gave motivated us to work. Your human relation was very perfect and I like it."* (Allotey ML)

Similarly, the outsider's observation recorded frequent engagements between the lecturer and students under *preparation*. The students were informally engaged before lectures commenced. The students were asked to share their challenges and encouraged to get in touch with the lecturer for further assistance. The preparation stage was, therefore, necessary and served as an icebreaker and the foundation on which to start the class. The observer recorded the following:

> **Week four:** *"Lecturer asked students to feel comfortable with the lessons. She inquired about their well-being and encouraged them to get in touch if there were any challenges."*

The researcher's log also highlighted the importance of the preparatory phase and the lecturer's engagement. The log recorded that the researcher was available to interact with students before the main classes began. Although these informal discussions were not considered part of the learning process, they were considered an integral part of the additional phase of the TBLT approach. The interactions allowed students to share their challenges and needs, for assistance, and students were motivated to partake in class discussions to improve their language proficiency. Respectful relationships and interaction, as contended by Taylor and Parsons (2011), improves student engagement, resulting in quality learning outcomes. The lecturer's

interactions are an integral component of TBLT and adult learning (Baharudin et al., 2013; Boston, 2017; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), and for this study, it was achieved by utilising informal discussions as well. The positive outcomes of these engagements were evident in the quantitative post-test results.

7.5 Summary of chapter

This chapter has been used to combine quantitative and qualitative data results and to merge all six data sets. Although for the language tests, the non-mature students performed at a higher level than the mature students before the intervention, after the intervention, the mature experimental group significantly improved. Their reading proficiency improved and was better than that of the control group and that of the non-mature group. Their writing proficiency improved considerably and was at par with that of the non-mature group but better than that of the control group. Their speaking proficiency also significantly improved, with an average effect size of .72. The qualitative data showed that the experimental group rated themselves higher after the intervention. The interview data revealed how the students expressed their satisfaction and advancement after the intervention. They shared how they had improved their ability to express themselves and to think critically. They also indicated that their writing had improved and that they were looking forward to more engagements. These claims were also supported by the quantitative data in the post-questionnaire. All the students favoured collaborative learning and a mature-only class and rated themselves better in their reading, writing and speaking development compared to their pre-intervention responses.

The data has shown that students with enthusiasm willingly participated in their tasks because they were sufficiently motivated, which resulted in positive improvement. According to the students, the frequent feedback on their tasks helped reduce errors, and students were looking

forward to a mature-only class with adequate time allocated for task completion. The research data also revealed that an enabling classroom environment coupled with the weekly tasks was vital to students' language development.

7.6 Conclusion of chapter

This chapter has helped integrate the qualitative and quantitative data. Both data sets have confirmed that the language skills of mature university students can be significantly improved with a specialised TBLT method. The final chapter (Chapter 8) will discuss the findings in relation to the objectives, research questions, and procedures followed to achieve the objectives. Conclusions will be drawn, and recommendations will be made. Furthermore, the study's limitations and areas for further studies will be outlined.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a task-based language teaching approach to improve the language skills of mature students at a Ghanaian university. Although there are four aspects of language (reading, writing, speaking and listening), this work concentrated on reading, writing and speaking. The main objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students.

2. Design a TBLT programme and conduct an intervention in relation to the specific context (i.e., mature university students in Ghana).

3. (a) Determine if there will be an effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT.

   (b) Determine if mature students will be at par with non-mature students after the application of TBLT;

   (c) Explore students' opinions of the TBLT intervention programme.

   (d) Explore how students respond to the application of TBLT in the classroom and the insights that may be gained from the intervention.

Based on these objectives, the following research questions were developed:

1. What is the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature and non-mature students at Valley View University in Ghana?

2. How can a TBLT programme be designed and an intervention be conducted in relation to the specific context and needs of mature university students in Ghana?

3. (a) What will be the effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT?

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3. (b) Will mature students, after intervention with a TBLT programme, be at par with their peers who have gone through secondary education?

3. (c) What are the cohort of mature students' opinions on the TBLT intervention programme?

3. (d) How do students respond to the application of TBLT in the classroom, and what insights may be gained from the intervention?

The procedure that was used to answer the research questions and thereby determine the effectiveness of the intervention programme is illustrated in Figure 8.1.
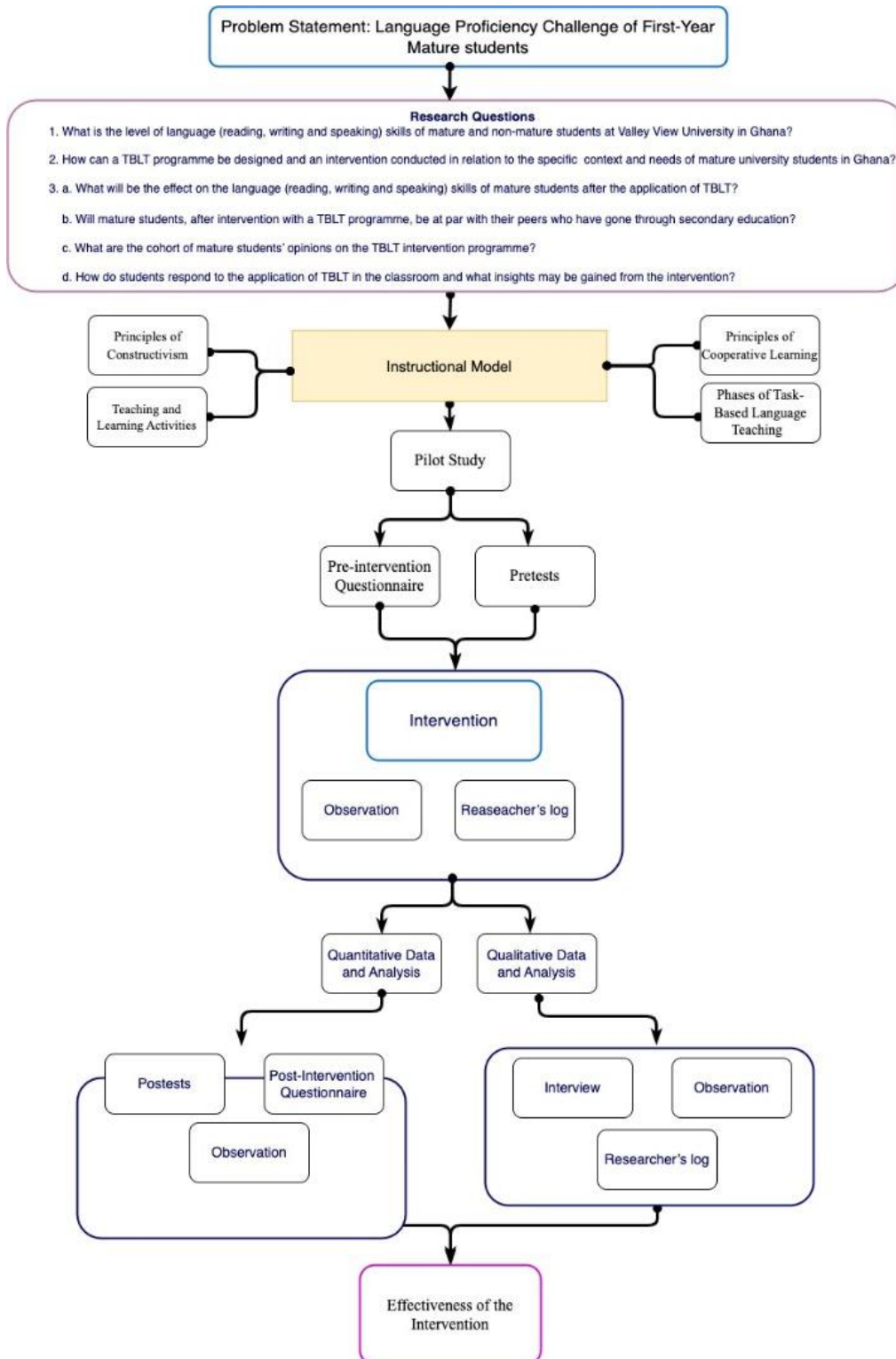
Figure 8.1: Research strategy summary

As explained from the top, the diagram begins with the research problem underpinning the current research, namely the language proficiency challenges faced by mature first-year students at the university. Research questions were designed based on the objectives. To answer the questions, an instructional model was developed based on the theoretical framework, the latter consisting of the constructivist theory and other principles. A pilot study was conducted to test the intervention. Pre-intervention data was also collected, which was followed by the implementation of the intervention. During the intervention, independent observations were made and a researcher's log was kept. The post-intervention quantitative and qualitative data were then collected. The quantitative and qualitative data were then merged to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

This chapter will indicate how the research questions were answered based on the findings so that definitive conclusions can be drawn. The problem will first be stated, followed by the instructional model (comprised of the principles of constructivism, principles of cooperative learning, phases of task-based language teaching, and teaching and learning activities). The connections of the study will be drawn by summarising the answers to the research questions. The chapter ends by looking at the limitations and challenges encountered, the implications of the research findings, and recommendations.

8.2 Research problem, theoretical framework, and instructional model

Considering the number of mature students seeking higher education in Ghana and other parts of the world, mature-age education has gained prominence in educational research. Although universities run programmes in different modes that may be suitable for mature students, they compete with peers who have had secondary education and have had continuous learning without interruption. Unfortunately for the vast majority of these mature students, their breaks

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from formal education and demands from family and work make it difficult for them to cope in the same class with non-mature students. Their language proficiency is often low, and this affects their comprehension and communication abilities. Universities and affiliated institutions have developed programmes in different modes, such as sandwich and weekend modes, to assist these mature students with their tertiary education. Access tutorials and examinations are held for such students, but often, these tutorial sessions are for just a short period and are geared toward entrance examinations. These mature students, when enrolled, study with non-mature students and are instructed through the traditional method of teaching, which is usually teacher-centred. This teaching method and the traditional classroom setting make it difficult for adult learners to cope with academic work (Yeboah, 2014).

This study applied a TBLT method designed in relation to the specific needs of mature students to improve their language skills. The principles of constructivism and the principles of cooperative learning formed the basis of the instructional model. These principles form the foundation on which the teaching activities, learning activities and the phases of TBLT were built. Constructivism is a learner-centred theory which holds the view that learners are not "blank slates" but bring past experiences and cultural factors to the learning situation. Constructivists advocate that "learning is a social advancement that involves language, real-world situations, and interaction and collaboration among others" (Bawa & Zubairu, 2015: 75). Mature learners, as a result, must be seen as learners coming to the classroom environment with varied experiences. Bruner's (1973b) *principles of readiness* (instruction must be concerned with the experiences and contexts that make the student willing and able to learn), *spiral organisation* (instruction must be structured so that it can be easily grasped by the student), and *going beyond the information given* (instruction should be designed to facilitate extrapolation and/or filling in the gaps) guided the model. In collaborative or cooperative

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learning, instructions are also student-centred and not teacher-centred. Students benefit greatly not only from their teachers but also from their colleagues through group or paired activities. Collaboration was ensured through the adherence to principles such as positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate collaborative skills, group processing and heterogeneous groups.

There are three phases of the TBLT approach proposed by Ellis (1993) and Willis (1996; 1998), but the instructional model of this study used a modified version, which adds an additional phase (the preparatory phase) to precede the pre-task phase, the task phase and the post-task phase. Each phase of the language teaching method was guided by strategies and principles such as the *measures of effective teaching* proposed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2010), the hierarchy of needs by Maslow (1943), principles of adult learning proposed by Ellis (2005), non-defensive learning proposed by Curran (1972), Kolb's (1984) experiential learning and Wicking's (2010) strategies. Several teaching and learning activities were employed during the intervention. Some are opinion-sharing activities, think-pair-share activities, task-completion activities, jig-saw, problem-solving activities, and voting.

This instructional model was used after the pre-test had been conducted to determine the language proficiency levels of first-year mature students at Valley View university. The pre-test results confirmed the extant literature and statistics demonstrating that non-mature students tend to be better in language proficiency than mature students (Cullity, 2006). The ANOVA test conducted on reading, speaking, and combined tests before the intervention proved a significant difference between non-mature and mature students. The writing test, using the independent sample test, equally proved a significant difference between the non-mature and mature groups. Further pairwise and multiple comparisons confirmed that the non-mature

students tended to be better than the mature students before the instructional model was introduced. An intervention programme based on the instructional model designed was subsequently conducted for a group of mature students.

8.3 Summary of results

The effectiveness of the intervention on reading and speaking was determined by the T-test, ANOVA, paired samples tests with effect sizes, and Bonferroni multiple comparisons. An independent samples median test, followed by pairwise comparisons, were used to analyse the writing test. The ANOVA and Bonferroni multiple comparisons analysed the total tests. The pre- and post-intervention questionnaires were analysed using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, and the outsider's observations were analysed with frequencies, percentages and content analysis. The qualitative data (interviews, observations and researcher's log) were all analysed through content analysis. The qualitative data further confirmed and supported the quantitative data. When all the tests were put together, the mature experimental group performed better than the mature control group and was at par with the non-mature group.

The first research question, in line with the first objective, was to determine the level of language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students. The quantitative analysis using ANOVA indicated statistical differences among all three groups in reading. The Bonferroni multiple comparisons pointed out that the non-mature group performed better than the mature groups. Regarding writing, the independent-samples median test and pairwise comparisons indicated that the non-mature group performed better than the mature groups. Regarding speaking, the ANOVA test showed no significant difference among the three groups. An ANOVA and multiple comparisons were done when all three tests were put together. The results showed no significant difference between the mature intervention group

and the mature non-intervention group but a significant difference between these (the combined mature study population) and the non-mature group.

In relation to research question two (how can a TBLT programme be designed and an intervention be conducted in relation to the specific context and needs of mature university students in Ghana?), an instructional model was developed underpinned by mature students' needs. Mature students learn differently from non-mature students, primarily because of their experience and years of absence from formal education. Due to their peculiar situation, there was the need to design an intervention tailored to their specific need. Knowles (1984), who developed *andrology,* contends that adult learners are self-directed and can therefore direct their own learning when given the needed guidance. They also have a reservoir of life experiences, are motivated to learn and have a task-centred orientation to learning. Based on these unique features of mature learners, lessons designed for them should be such that they can relate to them in the real world. Keiichi et al. (2017) add that adult learners' time for learning is constrained because there are other social roles to which they need to attend. Conner (2005) asserts that adult learners, compared to their younger counterparts, tend to favour learner-focused (as opposed to teacher-focused) teaching. Therefore, lessons designed for adult learners should be student-centred like that of TBLT and not teacher-centred. All these factors were considered when planning their lessons. Second language learners, such as the students in the Ghanaian context, face some challenges, such as completing writing tasks (Al-Gharabally, 2015), grammar weakness (Fareed et al., 2016), lack of motivation (Nawaz et al., 2015), lack of vocabulary, tense accuracy, punctuation and spelling (Moses & Mohamad, 2019).

Based on the above discussions and the needs of mature students who are also L2 learners, a tailored TBLT intervention programme was designed to meet the needs of mature students in

an ESL context. The model was developed to achieve the overall goal of improving the language skills of mature students.

This instructional model focused on the principles, strategies, activities, skills, and knowledge available for effective teaching of mature students to improve their proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking. The model had four major components, which are the ***principles of constructivism*** from Bruner (1973b), the ***phases of TBLT*** adapted from Ellis (1993), Willis's (1996; 1998) ***principles of cooperative learning*** from Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991), and ***activities to guide the teaching and learning*** from Prabhu (1987). The model was also informed by experiential learning and non-defensive learning. Each component had a particular element that is vital for mature students' effective teaching and learning of L2. The principles of constructivism and the principles of cooperative learning formed the basis of the instructional model. It is based on this two-pronged foundation that the four phases of TBLT, as well as teaching and learning activities, were built.

A twelve-week lesson plan was designed based on the instructional model as an intervention for mature students. Each lesson consisted of the four phases of the TBLT that were expressly designed for this study: the preparatory phase, the pre-task phase, the task phase, and the post-task phase. Each lesson lasted for a maximum of two and a half hours.

Based on the third objective, the third research question was to determine if there would be an effect on the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students after the application of TBLT. The question was addressed with the quantitative data analysed after the post-test. The T-test result showed that although all the groups improved in their reading post-test, the mature intervention group improved substantially in their reading and speaking. Further analysis with the paired samples test result showed that the improvement in both

speaking and reading was significant, with p-values of 0.00 and 0.02, respectively. The mature non-intervention and non-mature groups improved in only speaking, with a p-value of 0.00 for both. From the ANOVA and paired sample test, it was evident that there were significant differences in the reading and speaking post-test within the mature experimental group. The paired sample tests with effect sizes using Hedges' correction showed a medium effect size in speaking and a large effect size in reading. The independent samples median test and pairwise comparisons of participants proved that, in writing, the mature intervention group showed a statistically significant difference from that of the mature control group [T (16.29) = .000 < .05]. There was, however, no statistically significant difference between the intervention group and the non-mature group. The ANOVA and Bonferroni multiple comparisons were used to determine the total post-scores. The analysis showed a significant difference between the mature intervention group and the mature non-intervention group with a p-value of .001.

For research question 3b, which sought to determine whether mature students, after intervention with a TBLT programme, would be at par with their peers who had gone through secondary education, this question was also quantitatively answered with the post-test results. The pairwise comparisons conducted on the reading and speaking post-test showed no significant difference between the experimental group and the non-mature group. Similarly, the post hoc analysis with pairwise comparisons found that the results of the mature experimental group and the non-mature group showed no statistical difference on the writing post-test. Furthermore, the Bonferroni multiple comparisons, which were used to determine the total post-scores, indicated no significant difference between the non-mature group and the mature-intervention group. The mature students were at par with their peers who had gone through secondary education.

Research question three, sub-section c, was to determine the opinions of the cohort of mature students on the TBLT intervention programme. This question was answered with both quantitative and qualitative data. The interview, which was qualitative in nature, showed that the students were impressed with the approach. They were satisfied with the role that the lecturer and their peers played during the intervention. They reported that the pair and group work enabled them to learn from their peers, improved their confidence, and enhanced their active involvement in the discussions with ease. These interactions and the various tasks they performed helped increase their proficiency, as the post-tests confirmed.

Secondly, the quantitative data from the post-intervention questionnaire helped to elucidate the opinions of the mature students as well. Between 90% to 100% responded that they could read, write, and speak fluently in English after the intervention. All participants (100%) also indicated that they were motivated by the intervention and appreciated the pair and group work. Ninety per cent (90%) were of the opinion that mature students should be instructed separately. A comparison of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test pointed to a positive and statistically significant result in reading, writing, and speaking.

The final objective, which relates to research question 3d, was to indicate how students responded to the application of TBLT in the classroom and what insights may be gained from such an intervention. This question was answered with the classroom observations, which were both quantitative and qualitative, and the researcher's log, which was qualitative only. The observation recorded that students had confidence in class and thus responded positively to the intervention programme. The students' involvement enabled them to gain benefit from the intervention by significantly improving their language proficiency. Two major insights gained from the observation are that mature students desire to be separated from non-mature students and would like to work collaboratively. These discussions above indicate the relevance of the

theoretical and instructional framework, which was specifically designed for the mature student to achieve the overall goal of improving language proficiency.

8.4 Limitations and challenges encountered

This research work has constructed new knowledge so far as mature students' language proficiency is concerned. From the literature consulted so far, there has not been an application of a task-based language teaching approach in Ghana. As insightful as this research is, some limitations and challenges were encountered during the implementation of the intervention. These included breaks in lectures due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, time constraints, network challenges for online examinations, lecture hall arrangements, and limiting post-intervention questionnaires, observation and interviews to only the experimental group.

8.4.1 Break in lectures because of the COVID-19 pandemic

Data collection was to take place in 2020 per the research plan, but this could not take place. In March 2020, when the intervention had already started, there was an outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in Ghana, the country of the study. As a means to curb the spread of the pandemic, schools were closed down for the rest of the year except for online studies. This closure truncated the data collection process for a long time. Some online classes had to be done in addition to the face-to-face lessons so that data collection could be completed. This challenge increased the intended duration for data collection and affected the entire duration of the programme.

8.4.2 Time constraints

The four phases of the tailored TBLT intervention required ample time in order to complete all the phases in one class period. However, the university structure allows a maximum of two and a half hours of teaching. Since this study was experimental with a control group, it was impossible to increase the experimental class's contact hours. It was quite a challenge to complete all the work within the approved two and half hours per class period. A strategy that helped manage the time constraint was to allow some activities to be done outside lecture periods. Some group tasks were done after lessons as take-home assignments. In other instances, students had to do their corrections after class. The corrected work was submitted at the next class. This challenge put more pressure on students' academic work, about which they complained during the interview sessions. Some students were also unable to participate in these take-home assignments due to time constraints.

In addition, using one semester for the intervention was not adequate, but not much could be done to ameliorate this situation because students had to prepare to write their end-of-semester examination according to the university's calendar, which could not be avoided. Secondly, students, especially mature ones, needed a longer duration to improve their language proficiency (Benigno et al., 2017; Eaton, 2011; Mollaei, 2012), but that was not possible considering the hindrances that the pandemic presented. The results from the research, however, indicate that an extended period would have produced even better results. Also, an extended period would have allowed time to emphasise the activities and provided more time for practice in order to yield higher statistically significant differences and larger effect sizes.

8.4.3 Network challenge for online exams

The TALL test had to be conducted online since the questions were designed by ICELDA. The power outages observed during the pilot study were curtailed because students used laptops, tablets and phones, which could continue operating on battery power when there were power outages. The major challenge was unstable internet connectivity. Students were expected to complete the test within a specified time, but due to network challenges, some were logged off the system even when they were not done. These students had to restart their exams from the beginning, which affected the anticipated completion time for them.

8.4.4 Post-intervention questionnaire and observation

The pre- and post-intervention questionnaire was given to only the mature-intervention group because they underwent the experiment. During the analysis, it emerged that it would have been more appropriate if the other control groups had also answered a post-questionnaire. This would have provided information on the views of the control groups about their own language proficiency and of the traditional approach to language teaching at the end of the semester. Even though they were not instructed through the TBLT approach, they had undergone a semester of language teaching through the traditional approach. It would have been interesting to investigate their responses in comparison to those of the intervention group. Similarly, the outsider's observation that was carried out for the experimental group could also have been undertaken with the control group. In other words, the control groups should also have been observed to better understand the students' responses in both scenarios. However, this could not take place due to COVID-19 regulations and limited contact. The COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainties of the time, coupled with distortions in academic work, made it impossible to observe the control groups. Despite this challenge, the researcher was able to have an idea of both classroom situations since she taught both the experimental and control groups.

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Therefore, this limitation is not a significant concern that affects the reliability of the data sets but could be taken up in future research.

8.4.5 Lecture hall arrangement

The intervention was such that classroom tables and chairs had to be arranged to suit the teaching and learning activities. Because lecture rooms were shared and several courses were held in the same room, these arrangements had to be done each day. The preparatory phase was usually used for such arrangements, but when students were not in class on time, it took some time off the pre-task phase affecting the entire lesson period, which was already a constraint. Therefore, students were encouraged to come to class on time to help with the arrangements.

8.4.6 Students opting out

Some students who initially agreed to be part of the research and signed the letter of informed consent opted out during the course of the research. The reason given by these students was that they were not ready to partake in the weekly tasks and were more comfortable being in the traditional class. Some of them later wanted to return, but it was late since the semester was almost mid-way through. Despite this challenge, the number of students who remained and participated was adequate for data analysis.

8.4.7 Classroom management

The enabling environment also made classroom management quite challenging, as noted in the observation data. As was indicated, the lecturer had to remind students several times to stay focused on the task and to avoid discussions that did not relate directly to the task ahead. The researcher's log recorded that the strategies that were adopted to curtail this problem helped to a large extent.

8.4.8 Task burden on students

With TBLT, tasks are the hallmark because the more students engage in these tasks, the more they are exposed to using the language to improve their proficiency. TBLT can, therefore, not be effective without these frequent tasks. However, these tasks put high demands on students, as they had to work on a new task each week in addition to their other course requirements. The group and pair work helped the students to manage and reduce their time spent on tasks, as they shared responsibilities among themselves to enable completion.

8.5 Significance of the study

This research study has contributed to the discussion on the effectiveness of TBLT. It has provided more knowledge and insight into the TBLT approach. There have been various studies on the effectiveness of the TBLT approach in several institutions, mainly in EFL classrooms. This thesis has provided insights into the effectiveness of the TBLT approach in a second language environment in the African context. In addition, the findings presented and discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 confirm previous studies' findings on the effectiveness of the TBLT in improving language efficiency (Al Muhaimeed & Arabia, 2015; Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Chen & Wang, 2019; Ellis, 2017; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Mesbah, 2016; Mohanraj, 2013; Murad, 2000; Prabhu, 1987 etc.).

Secondly, this thesis has contributed to studies on mature-age education (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011; Boston, 2017; Dawborn-Gundlach & Margetts, 2018; Huang, 2017; Van den Branden, 2016 etc.). Most studies on mature-age education focus mainly on students' challenges in coping with university education. This study has added a new dimension to mature-age education research and investigated students' language improvement through an intervention. This study, therefore, provides solutions instead of merely discussing challenges.

On the pedagogical level, this research has proved that using a student-centred approach to language teaching (e.g. TBLT) is more efficient and beneficial than the teacher-centred approach (which is used in traditional classroom learning). The reason for this claim is that the mature students, who had low language proficiency before the intervention, improved to be at par with the non-mature students after the intervention. This result proves that all categories of students can be assisted in improving their language proficiency using the appropriate teaching approach.

8.6 Recommendations for institution, classroom environment, pedagogy and curriculum

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this research. The recommendations are made in relation to the institution, classroom environment, pedagogy and curriculum.

8.6.1 Institutional level

The research has proved that having a prescribed time allocation for all subjects may not be beneficial for effective teaching and learning. It is recommended that elementary language courses designed for first-year students be allowed a longer lesson duration than the rest. The reason is that researchers such as Martirosyan (2015), Racca and Lasaten (2016), Ozowuba (2018), and Aina et al. (2013) have proved that higher language proficiency increases higher academic achievement. For this reason, students should be given ample time to improve their language proficiency, which will ultimately increase their academic achievement. From the research, it was evident that tasks performed in class were more efficiently completed than those undertaken outside class. The tasks completed outside of a class environment had various challenges, such as students experiencing difficulty in agreeing on a suitable time for meetings

and, sometimes, not all students participating as expected. This challenge could have been avoided if enough time were allocated for all four phases to be carried out adequately in class under observation.

Secondly, mature-only classes should be created for first-year students. Given that all first-year students in almost all the tertiary institutions in Ghana take a semester or two of a general English language or academic writing course, the mature students could be separated from their non-mature peers. The results from this research and responses received from the mature students themselves indicate that such an arrangement would be beneficial. This special class will allow students to comfortably interact with their peers without the fear of making mistakes. Although it may be difficult to have mature-only classes for all courses, first-year courses could be designed and taught in such a manner. After the first year, these students may have gained enough confidence to allow merging with the non-mature students without much difficulty.

8.6.2 Classroom environment

Cooperative learning, a crucial component of this instructional model, requires students to sit in groups. However, most institutions arrange tables and chairs in rows with students facing the board or lecturer in the traditional classroom style. Lecturers who intend to use cooperative learning would have to rearrange the tables and chairs at each lesson. It would be easier if such an arrangement could be kept intact for the duration of the semester. It is therefore recommended that the classroom setting be made to facilitate cooperative teaching and learning.

In addition, it is recommended that lecturers who teach first-year students, especially adult learners, create an enabling environment for easy interaction. First-year students are often anxious about the university environment and are unsure of what to expect. Lecturers should

assume not only the role of teachers but also that of guides and counsellors. Reaching out to students to touch both their social and affective sides positively impacts their academic life and enhances their life at university. Such engagements will also help lecturers understand the needs of these first-year students such that the necessary assistance can be provided for effective teaching and learning. From our findings, it was evident that the students benefited from the lecturer's engagement and relationship. During the interviews, the students shared how the lecturer's engagement and the non-restricted nature of the classroom environment encouraged them to participate in their tasks with ease. Their enthusiasm and willingness to participate were recorded in both the observation and in the researcher's log, which contributed to their overall language proficiency.

Furthermore, to curtail the challenge of classroom management, the lecturer and the students should agree on classroom rules from the beginning of the semester. Bryfonski and McKay (2019) assert that when students are involved in decision-making, they are made to feel important and are more likely to conform to regulations. In addition, roles within groups should be assigned such that some students would be responsible for maintaining discipline in class. The teacher can also devise strategies such as that which was developed during the intervention in order to help minimise noise. During lessons, whenever the lecturer observed that there was unnecessary noise in the class, she raised her hands, and any student who saw the raised hands also halted activities and raised their hands until the entire class was quiet. Similar or equivalent management skills could be developed during TBLT lessons to manage the class.

Moreover, the importance of motivation in academic achievement has been established by researchers (Fareed et al., 2016; Harris, 2018; Herraiz-Martínez, 2018; Le, 2014; Masashi, 2016; Reardon, 2013). Our findings established that motivation played an important role in the success of the mature students. It is therefore recommended that language teachers, especially

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those who handle adult learners, motivate them to achieve more. Lecturers should identify the needs and challenges of their students and address them accordingly. This goes a long way towards motivating adult learners in their academic work.

Finally, the preparatory phase, which was introduced in this research, has been proven to be vital in teaching. Informal engagements between the lecturer and students took place at this stage to set the tone for the academic work to begin. Students affirmed how such engagements motivated them and positively affected their progress. It is therefore recommended that lecturers include the *preparatory phase* in their lesson plans. Although lecturers engage with students all the time, incorporation of the preparatory phase into the lesson plan will allow proper planning and execution, which will result in a more effective teaching environment.

8.6.3 Pedagogical and curriculum level

At the pedagogical level, it is evident from this research and others already conducted that TBLT is a more effective instructive approach than the traditional L2 learning and teaching methods. Therefore, it is recommended that language teachers adopt this language teaching approach to effectively improve their students' language proficiency.

Secondly, it is recommended that language teachers give prompt and frequent feedback to learners. From our findings, it was recorded that the level of errors committed by students was reduced from the beginning of the semester to an eventual minimal level by its end because of the frequent feedback they received on their work. The students also expressed how prompt and frequent feedback was helpful in their language development.

Thirdly, language teachers should encourage their students concerning the importance of their participation and achieving their goals. Students should be made to understand that the tasks contribute to their language learning and development. From the interview sessions,

students alluded to the weekly task burdens but added that encouragement from their lecturer (especially during the preparatory phase) was beneficial to their success.

Fourthly, ESL teachers are to note that students, especially mature ones, come to the learning environments with life experiences and are not "empty" insofar as their L2 is concerned. Therefore, teachers should develop activities that will stimulate these abilities in their students' language proficiencies. Opinion-sharing activities, information-gap activities and problem-solving activities should be incorporated into lessons. From the study, it emerged that when the mature students were assigned tasks which required these activities, they willingly participated with considerable enthusiasm for their overall achievement.

Fifthly, as a hallmark of TBLT, focus-on-meaning (communication) is given precedence over focus-on-form (explicit grammar). It is, however, essential for language teachers to note that form cannot be ignored in a language class. To help maintain the meaning-centeredness of tasks, as suggested by Wicking (2010), teachers should allow students to complete their activities before these form activities are considered to enable active engagements. As designed for this intervention, during the post-task phase, errors that were committed by students were addressed, and students had the opportunity to learn these grammar forms.

Finally, to mitigate the burden of the numerous tasks on students, lecturers should assign tasks that students can easily relate to or are familiar with. The tasks should also not be too difficult such that it exceeds the level of the student. Task topics that are too difficult and exceed students' levels tend not to be appealing enough to adequately engage them (Siyi, 2021). Findings from this study revealed that when students were able to relate to the topic without difficulty, they fully participated in their tasks with enthusiasm.

8.6.4 Further research

This research concentrated on the effectiveness of the TBLT approach in improving the reading, writing and speaking skills of mature students in a Ghanaian university. This research concentrated on only mature students and not non-mature students. The research was also conducted at only the university level. Three aspects of language were given prominence; listening was not targeted. The effectiveness of the approach on students at the second cycle schools can also be researched. It will also be of interest to conduct a study of the approach's effectiveness on listening. Future research could be conducted with controls for all the data sets; thus, the control group should be observed, and questionnaires should also be administered to them.

8.7 Conclusion

This study has helped confirm findings from earlier research conducted on the application of the task-based language teaching approach. The current study applied the TBLT approach to mature students at a private university. Although previous studies used this approach in an EFL classroom setting for primary and secondary levels, this research has filled the gap in its use at tertiary level in an ESL context. The current study also used the approach to teach mature students without secondary education and not regular non-mature students who have secondary education. The research has therefore been beneficial in providing alternative teaching pedagogy for mature students, especially because their language challenge has been a major concern for the lecturers who teach at Valley View University.

The findings suggest that creating a mature-only class for mature first-year students and instructing them through the TBLT approach is an effective way to improve their language proficiency level, which will eventually increase their academic achievement.

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APPENDIX 1: PRE- AND POST-TESTS

SPEAKING TEST

A. ***Questions for oral interaction***
1. Good morning. May you please provide your name and surname?
2. What is your programme of study?
3. Why are you pursuing this programme?
4. Where are you originally from?
5. Give a brief information about your hometown?
6. What was your previous school before coming to university?
7. Why did you decide to come back to school?
8. In your opinion, should mature students be instructed differently from the regular students? Give reasons for your answer.

B. ***Kindly describe this image for me.***

Source: www.guilinliriver.com

C. ***Kindly read this passage aloud:***

The approach to the methodology of learning and teaching has to be comprehensive, presenting all options in an explicit and transparent way and avoiding advocacy or dogmatism. It has been our fundamental methodological principle that the methods to be employed in language learning, teaching and research are those considered to be most effective in reaching the objectives agreed in the light of the needs of the individual learners in their social context. Effectiveness is contingent on the motivations and characteristics of the learners as well as the nature of the human and material resources which can be brought into play.

Source: PTEA Practice test: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

http://practicepteonline.com/pte-reading-test-5/

RUBRICS FOR SPEAKING TEST A AND B

Accuracy		Fluency	
Little or no language production	1	Little or no communication	1
Poor vocabulary, mistakes in basic Grammar	2	Very hesitant and brief utterances which are sometimes difficult to understand	2
Adequate but limited vocabulary, makes obvious grammatical mistakes	3	Conveys ideas, but hesitantly and Briefly	3
Good range of vocabulary, occasional grammar slips	4	Effective communication in short Turns	4
Extensive vocabulary used appropriately, virtually no grammatical mistakes,	5	Easy and effective communication, uses long turns	5

Source: Murad, T. M. (2000). The effect of task-based language teaching on developing speaking skills among the Palestinian secondary EFL students in Israel and their attitudes towards English. PhD Dissertation.

Total score out of **10** (2x5=10) ……………………………

RUBRICS FOR SPEAKING TEST C

Point Scale	Description of Oral Reading Fluency
4	Reads primarily in large, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
3	Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some smaller groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to the larger context of the sentence or passage.
1	Reads primarily word by word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur, but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Oral Reading Study.

https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/

Grand total for speaking test A (10) + B (10) + C (4) = **24**

WRITING TEST

A. Recognising Shifts in Sentences

Check the following sentences for confusing shifts in tense. If the tense of each underlined verb expresses the time relationship accurately, write S (satisfactory). If a shift in tense is not appropriate, write U (unsatisfactory) and rewrite the sentence again by making the necessary changes. In most cases with an inappropriate shift, there is more than one way to correct the inconsistency.

1. If the club <u>limited</u> its membership, it <u>will have to raise</u> its dues. …………..

   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

2. As Barbara <u>puts</u> in her contact lenses, the telephone <u>rang</u>. …………..
   ……………………………………………………………………………………….
   ……………………………………………………………………………………….

3. Thousands of people <u>will see</u> the art exhibit by the time it <u>closes</u>. ………….
   ……………………………………………………………………………………….
   ……………………………………………………………………………………….

4. By the time negotiations <u>began</u>, many pessimists <u>have expressed</u> doubt about them.
   ………….
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

5. After Capt. James Cook <u>visited</u> Alaska on his third voyage, he <u>is killed</u> by Hawaiian islanders in 1779. …………..
   ……………………………………………………………………………………….
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

   Source: Perdue Online Writing Lab
   https://owl.purdue.edu/owl_exercises/…/tense…/tense_consistency_exercise_1.html

   Total score out of 10 ……………

B. *Choose the correct form of the verb that agrees with the subject by underlining:*

1. Annie and her brothers (is, are) at school.
2. Either my mother or my father (is, are) coming to the meeting.
3. The dog or the cats (is, are) outside.
4. Either my shoes or your coat (is, are) always on the floor.
5. George and Tamara (doesn't, don't) want to see that movie.
6. Benito (doesn't, don't) know the answer.
7. One of my sisters (is, are) going on a trip to France.
8. The man with all the birds (live, lives) on my street.
9. The movie, including all the previews, (take, takes) about two hours to watch.
10. 10. The players, as well as the captain, (want, wants) to win.

Total score out of 10 ……………

C. Read the passage below carefully and summarise it in two sentences

For millions of years, Mediterranean Sea turtles have been coming to the shore of southern Lebanon to lay their eggs. Every summer, their babies hatch and literally run for their lives on the strip of sand that separates their nests from the sea. An endangered species, they had been largely ignored in this part of Lebanon until two women set out to protect them.

Mona Khalil was inspired by a walk on the beach during a visit to her homeland, when she first saw the turtles. Upon learning that they were close to disappearing from her country, Khalil decided to "come back and do something about them."

The next year, 2000, she returned and teamed up with Habiba Fayed, who shares her passion for the environment. They opened a bed-and-breakfast in the Khalil family home to finance their efforts. Guests could simply vacation or, in the spirit of ecotourism, they could help the owners protect the turtles' nests and keep the beach clean.

Female turtles travel to the exact spot where they were born to dig their nests in the sand, laying an average of 70 to 100 eggs. The spaces on the grid are large enough to allow the baby turtles to emerge after a month and find their way to the sea… and to a chance at life.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………….

D. Write on one of the following:
1. Social media and education today
2. The increase number of private universities
3. Mature students' education at the universities

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RUBRICS FOR WRITING TEST

A. **Answers**

U 1. If the club **limited** its membership, it *will* have to raise its dues. (**change *will* to *would***)
U 2. As Barbara *puts* in her contact lenses, the telephone **rang**. (**change *puts* to *put***) OR As Barbara *puts* in her contact lenses, the telephone **rings**. (**change *rang* to *rings* to illustrate ongoing action**)
S 3. Thousands of people **will see** the art exhibit by the time it **closes**.
U 4. By the time negotiations **began**, many pessimists *have* expressed doubt about them. (**change *have* to *had***)
U 5. After Capt. James Cook **visited** Alaska on his third voyage, he *is* killed by Hawaiian islanders in 1779. (**change *is* to *was***)   2x5=10

B. A**nswers**
1. Annie and her brothers **are** at school.
2. Either my mother or my father **is** coming to the meeting.
3. The dog or the cats **are** outside.
4. Either my shoes or your coat **is** always on the floor.
5. George and Tamara **don't** want to see that movie.
6. Benito **doesn't** know the answer.
7. One of my sisters **is** going on a trip to France.
8. The man with all the birds **lives** on my street.
9. The movie, including all the previews, **takes** about two hours to watch.
10. The players, as well as the captain, **want** to win.   1x10=10

C. Rubrics for Summary

	2	1	0
Content	Provides a good summary of the text. All relevant aspects mentioned	Provides a fair summary of the text but misses one or two aspects	Omits or misrepresents the main aspects of the text
Grammar	Has correct grammatical structure	Contains grammatical errors but with no hindrance to communication	Has defective grammatical structure which could hinder communication
Vocabulary	Has appropriate choice of words	Contains lexical errors but with no hindrance to communication	Has defective word choice which could hinder communication

(**Adapted from Pearson PTE:** https://pearsonpte.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/08/Score-Guide.pdf)
Total score out of 6 (2x3=6) ………………

D. Rubrics for Written Essay

	INTRODUCTION Background/History Thesis Statement CONCLUSION	MAIN POINTS Body Paragraphs	ORGANISATION Structure Transitions	MECHANICS Spelling, punctuation, capitalisation
1	Background details are a random collection of information, unclear, or not related to the topic. Thesis is vague or unclear. Conclusion does not summarise main points.	More than one of the following problems may be evident: The main idea is not identifiable. The writer shares some information, but it is limited or unclear. Details are missing or repetitious.	No discernible organisation. Transitions are not present. Connections between ideas seem confusing or incomplete.	Distracting errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalisation.
2	Introduction adequately explains the background, but may lack detail. Thesis states the position or belief. Conclusion is recognisable and ties up almost all loose ends	The main idea can be identified. The writer shares some information, facts and experiences, but may show problems going from general observations to specifics. Stronger support and greater attention to details would strengthen this paper.	Organisation is clear. Transitions are present	A few errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalisation. (3-4)
3	Introduction creates interest. Sufficient background information is provided. Thesis clearly states the position or belief. Conclusion effectively summarises topics.	The main idea can be identified. The writer shares relevant information, facts and experiences. There is a clear distinction between general observations and specifics. Supporting details are relevant and explain the main idea.	Logical progression of ideas. Transitions are present equally throughout essay.	Punctuation, spelling, capitalisation are generally correct, with few errors. (1-2)
4	Well-developed introduction engages the reader	The main idea or a thesis statement is clearly defined.	Logical progression of ideas with a clear structure that enhances	Punctuation, spelling, capitalisation

and creates interest. Contains detailed background information. Thesis clearly states a significant and compelling position or belief. Conclusion effectively wraps up and goes beyond restating the thesis.	There may be more than one key point. Appropriate relevant information and details are shared from a variety of sources including personal experiences, observations, and prior knowledge. Supporting details are accurate, relevant, and helpful in clarifying the main idea(s).	the thesis. Transitions are mature and graceful.	are correct. No errors.

Adapted from

Total score out of 16 (4x4 =16) …………..

Grand Total for writing test = 10+10+6+16=**42**

APPENDIX 2: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Table ….. checklist for observation

DATE		VENUE			TIME	
ELEMENT		**RESPONSE**			**COMMENT**	
		Good	Satisfactory	Poor		
Preparation: To show whether the teacher creates an enabling environment to get the class ready and that all needed teaching and learning materials are ready for the lesson.						
Language use: To indicate whether various aspects of language are used and emphasised in the lesson.						
Student Participation (Confidence Level): To indicate how students get involved in class and their enthusiasm to participate.						
Classroom management and atmosphere: To show how the teacher ensures that the lessons are run smoothly and orderly without behaviours that distracts teaching and learning.						
Use of technology: To indicate the use of technology such as projectors, smart phones, computers etc. to aid teaching and learning.						
Level of presentation: To show how conversant the teacher is with the lesson and how confidently, the lesson is delivered.						

Good= highly satisfactory with qualities of high standards

Satisfactory=acceptable with sufficient expectation although not outstanding or exceptional

Poor= unacceptable or below expectations. Performance lacks understanding or motivation

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interviews would be conducted with 15 participants (students), who would be purposely selected based on their performance in the posttest – lowest, average and highest scores – to provide a balanced range of responses from the different performance levels. Each interview will last for approximately ten minutes and would be held at the end of the intervention.

1. Before the intervention programme, did you know of the task-based language teaching approach?
2. What do you think are the advantages of the approach?
3. What are the disadvantages you observed with the teaching approach?
4. What do you think can be done to improve on the approach?
5. What is your overall impression of the method of teaching?
6. What is your impression of the role of the teacher who taught you with the TBLT approach?
7. In your view, how did students apply themselves and participate within the TBLT approach?
8. Do you have any further comments on the use of the TBLT approach?

APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Unit for Academic Literacy

March, 2019

Dear Student,

INFORMED CONSENT: RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN INTERVENTION PROGRAMME TO IMPROVE THE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF MATURE STUDENTS.

You are kindly requested to take part in a research project aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of task-based language teaching method to improve the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students.

The research project will involve an intervention programme which will entail instruction using task-based language teaching (TBLT) method. The intervention will last for ten weeks (one semester).

You will be requested to take tests (reading, writing and speaking) before, during and after the intervention programme, and also be requested to provide responses to questionnaires before and after the intervention. In addition, an observation will be made on your participation during the intervention.

Furthermore, interviews would be conducted with selected students. You may be selected to participate in the interview sessions. The interviews will be semi-structured and will involve answers to questions pertaining to your attitudes, perceptions, challenges, interest, etc. of the programme, You will also have the opportunity to speak freely on your views, gains and challenges of the programme, should you be selected to participate in the interviews. The interviews will be voice recorded to enable me to easily transcribe them. I will also be taking notes during the interview sessions.

You are assured of confidentiality. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the raw data: Your name will be required for tallying purposes only. Should

any information you give be presented verbally in the research report, anonymity would be maintained, and pseudonyms would be used. The information you give will not be used against you in anyway, and will be solely for research purposes. You will not be disadvantaged in any way, either by participation or non-participation. You are free to withdraw from the programme at any time, should you choose to do so, and any information supplied will be destroyed.

The research data will be converted to conference presentations and research articles, as well as assist in improving the curriculum and teaching of the Language and Writing skills course. The raw data will be stored for fifteen years at the Unit for Academic Literacy, on the 17th Floor of the Humanities Building at the University of Pretoria.

If you would like further information on the research project or the intervention programme, you are welcome to contact me on the address below.

Yours Sincerely

------------------------------------   --
Susana Adjei-Mensah (Researcher)   Naomi Boakye, PhD. (Supervisor)
Valley View University   University of Pretoria
Email: sadjei-mensah@vvu.edu.gh   Email: Naomi.boakye@up.ac.za
Tel: +233 243110630   Tel: +27 12 420 5905

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the information included in the above letter, and I am willing to participate in the research programme outlined. I agree that the following data may be used for the purposes outlined in the letter:

(a) My performance in the reading, writing and speaking tests

(b) My responses to questionnaires

(c) My interview responses on the intervention

(d) My performance during the observation

Please **tick** to indicate your willingness to participate or otherwise in the following:

a. Tests   Yes □   No □

b. Questionnaires   Yes □   No □

c. Interview   Yes □   No □

d. Observation   Yes □   No □

-------------------------------   ----------------------------

Signature of respondent   Date

APPENDIX 5: APPROVAL LETTER FROM INSTITUTION

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Valley View University
Oyibi

12th September, 2018

The Pro-Vice Chancellor
Valley View University
Oyibi

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO USE VALLEY VIEW UNIVERSITY AS A CASE STUDY

I wish to seek permission to use Valley View University as my case study for my Ph.D. thesis. The thesis topic is *EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) APPROACH TO IMPROVE THE LANGUAGE (READING, WRITING AND SPEAKING) SKILLS OF MATURE STUDENTS IN A GHANAIAN UNIVERSITY"*

The research will involve an intervention programme which will entail instruction using Task-based Language Teaching method. The intervention will last for one semester. First-year mature students in the regular mode when approved will be needed for the intervention.

It is believed that this research when completed will offer language teachers a basis to adopt a student-centred language teaching approach to improve the language proficiency of mature students.

I wish to assure you that all ethical issues will be explained to the students to seek their consent before the research commences.

Counting on your usual cooperation.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Susana Adjei-Mensah

APPENDIX 6: ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Research Ethics Committee

17 April 2019

Dear Ms Adjei-Mensah

Project:	**Evaluating the effectiveness of a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach to improve the language (reading, writing and speaking) skills of mature students in a Ghanaian university**
Researcher:	**S Adjei-Mensah**
Supervisor:	**Dr. N Boakye**
Department:	**Unit for Academic Literacy**
Reference Number:	**18203800 (HUM20190104)**
Degree:	**Doctoral**

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence.

The application was **approved** by the **Research Ethics Committee** at an ad hoc meeting on 15April 2019 as the outstanding permission was submitted as requested. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Research and Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail:PGHumanities@up.ac.za

cc: Dr N Boakye (Supervisor)   Prof A Carstens (HoD)

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr L Blokland; Dr K Booyens; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsebe; Ms D Mokalapa

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APPENDIX 7: LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1

Content/ course outline content	Sentence Construction: Avoiding Errors: Fragments, Coma splice, Run0on	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, class building activity	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks This section will be recorded in the researcher's log
Topic	Getting to know one another and a report from the long vacation		Students will know their peers in the classroom to familiarise with them	1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of Language	Speaking				
Aim	To get students to know each other and get prepared for the semester's work				
Materials needed	Video clip, pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, recorders, observation check sheet, researcher's logbook.				
Pre-task activities	let students watch a video of a conversation about getting to know each other				

Task cycle	Task	Students are to to work with another student they think share similar traits:interest , food, hobby, interest				
	Planning	Student plan how to report to the class on what they have learnt about theor counterpart				
	Reporting	One student represents the group to report to class				

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Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Language challenge oserved are addressed				
	Practice					

Lesson 2

Content/ course outline content	Punctuations	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic	Students should write a story about a movie/story they have been told of			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Speaking / Writing				
Aim	To get students know the importance of punctuations in writing.		Students will be able to use punctuations effectively in any given material		

Materials needed	Printed text, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, researcher's logbook.					
Pre-task activities	let students read a printed text with varied punctuation marks				30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students write story, then they share their stories in pairs and compare the punctuation marks that have been used in their neighbors then sort out the most commonly used punctuations to the least used work then order them.	Ordering and sorting, story-telling comparing and contrasting, group work		20 mins.	
	Planning	Student plan how to report to the class			10 mins	
	Reporting	One student represents the group to report to class			20 mins.	
	Analysis				40 mins	

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Post-task (Language Focus)	Practice	Students rewrite their stories by being mindful and using the correct punctuations.				

LESSON PLAN

Types of tasks: Listening, Ordering and sorting, Problem-solving, Comparing and contrasting, Story-telling, Projects and creative

Lesson 3

Content/ course outline content	The Writing Process	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	students should explain to their friends the process they go through to prepare a sermon at church or give a speech			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Speaking / Writing				
Aim	To get students know the various stages needed in any writing process		Students will be able to follow the writing		

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			process in any given writing task.		
Materials needed	A video clip, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, researcher's logbook.				
Pre-task activities	let students watch a movie on the registration process of something			30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students should outline the various steps they go through to complete their registration process on campus. They are to compare with their colleaques if any step has been skipped or there are variations in the steps. They are to agree on the steps as a group	Ordering and sorting, group work, creating	20 mins.	
	Planning	Student plan how to report to the class as a group on their steps.		10 mins	

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	Reporting	One student represents the group to report to class			20 mins.	
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis				40 mins	
	Practice	Students take note of the importance of each stage of the writing process by				

Lesson 4

Content/ course outline content	Outlining and Note Taking	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	A letter to HOD explaining why could not write end of semester examination			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing				
Aim	To get students know how to develop an outline		Students will have an outline ready		

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Materials needed	A video clip, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, researcher's logbook.				
Pre-task activities	let students see sample outlines on various topics				30 mins.
Task cycle	Task	Students work with their peers to ensure that they have enough reasons they could put in their letters. They do this by taking notes. They then draft the letter considering all the important elements in a formal letter.	Ordering and sorting, group work, problem-solving activity		20 mins.
	Planning	Student plan how to report to the class as a group on their steps.			10 mins
	Reporting	One student represents the group to report to class			20 mins.
	Analysis				

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Post-task (Language Focus)		Language challenegs are addressed			40 mins	
	Practice	Students take note of the importance of note-taking and outlining				

Lesson 5

Content/ course outline content	Paraphrasing, Summarizing and Quoting	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	Identify a community-based problem and address it			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking				
Aim	To get students to know how to paraphrase and summarize as well as quote from sources during research		Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	A video clip, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, researcher's logbook.				

Pre-task activities		let students see sample paraphrases, summaries, and quotation.			30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students should research on a community-based challenge and suggest solutions. Get inputs from opinion leaders and country, world, expert opinion on the subject matter.	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving		20 mins.	
	Planning	Student plan how to report to the class as a group on their steps.			10 mins	
	Reporting	One student represents the group to report to class			20 mins.	
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Language needs are noted and addressed			40 mins	

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	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				

Lesson 6

Content/ course outline content	Paragraph Development	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	Students are to plan a road trip for their next vacation			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking				
Aim	To enable the students know how to write introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs and concluding paragraphs		Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	A video clip, sample paragraphs, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, and researcher's logbook.				

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Pre-task activities	Students watch a short video on the major paragraphs that constitute an essay and the key elements in an introductory paragraph.				30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students should write the introduction of their essay considering the key elements presented in the video	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving		20 mins.	
	Planning	Students compare their introductions in groups and determine the similarities and differences in how they wrote their introductions			10 mins	
	Reporting	One person from each group shares how their introductory paragraphs were written			20 mins.	
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their shortfalls and are given further inputs on best			40 mins	

		approach to writing introductions.				
	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				

Lesson 7

Content/ course outline content	Paragraph Development Continued	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, compare and contrast	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	Students are to identify community based problem and indicate how to curb it (continuation)			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking				
Aim	To enable the students know how to write introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs and concluding paragraphs		Students will have a task report ready		

Materials needed	A video clip, sample paragraphs, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, and researcher's logbook.					
Pre-task activities	Students read sample body paragraphs from different sources. Each member in a group will read a different body paragraph. All those with similar paragraphs will sit together, discuss then move back to their original groups.				30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students will write/create a body paragraph based on what they've read or heard from their colleaques	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving, creating		20 mins.	
	Planning	Students discuss what they have done with their group members and plan how to share their body paragraphs with class.			10 mins	
	Reporting	One person from each group shares how their			20 mins.	

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		body paragraphs were written				
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their shortfalls and are given further inputs on best approach to writing body paragraphs.			40 mins	
	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				

Lesson 8

Content/ course outline content	Types of composition	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, compare and contrast	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	Students are to come up with at least four practical steps that can be used to curb the spread of the covid various aside the			1:00pm to 3:00pm	

	usual protocols of washing of hands, wearing mask and social distancing					
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking					
Aim	To enable the students know the various types of essays			Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	Sample passages consisting of various essay types.					
Pre-task activities	Students are made to read different passages of different essay types but on covid.				30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students will summarise what they have individually read to their group members	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving, creating		20 mins.	
	Planning	The group puts gogether the information reveived from members in a form of an eassy.			10 mins	
	Reporting	One person from each group shares what the group have written verbally.			20 mins.	
	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their reports.				

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| Post-task (Language Focus) | | They are asked to work as a group to come up with an essay. Thee various types of essays are explained to them. They are asked to report to at the next lesson. | | | 40 mins | |
| | Practice | Students meet after class to write their essays | | | | |

LESSON PLAN

Types of tasks: Listening, Ordering and sorting, Problem-solving, Comparing and contrasting, Story-telling, Projects and creative

Lesson 9

Content/ course outline content	Types of composition continueued	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, compare and contrast	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks

Task Topic:	Students are to come up with practical steps that can be used by parents to ensure their wards's safetly from covod with the assumption of schools				1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking					
Aim	To enable the students know the various essay types			Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	A video clip, sample paragraphs, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, and researcher's logbook.					
Pre-task activities	Students read sample body paragraphs from different sources. Each member in a group will read a different body paragraph. All those with similar paragraphs will sit together, discuss then move back to their original groups.				30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students will write/create a body paragraph based on what they've read or heard from their colleaques	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with		20 mins.	

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	Planning	Students discuss what they have done with their group members and plan how to share their body paragraphs with class.	other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving, creating		10 mins	
	Reporting	One person from each group shares how their body paragraphs were written			20 mins.	
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their shortfalls and are given further inputs on best approach to writing body paragraphs.			40 mins	
	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				

LESSON PLAN

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Types of tasks: Listening, Ordering and sorting, Problem-solving, Comparing and contrasting, Story-telling, Projects and creative

Lesson 10

Content/ course outline content	Sources of information and documentation	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, compare and contrast	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	If u were a proprietor/proprietress of a school, what measures can you put in place to help avoid the spread of the COVID-19 in your school?			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking				
Aim	To enable the students know how to write introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs and concluding paragraphs		Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	A video clip, sample paragraphs, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, and researcher's logbook.				
Pre-task activities	Students read sample body paragraphs from different sources. Each member in a group will read a different body			30 mins.	

	paragraph. All those with similar paragraphs will sit together, discuss then move back to their original groups.					
Task cycle	Task	Students will write/create a body paragraph based on what they've read or heard from their colleaques	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving, creating		20 mins.	
	Planning	Students discuss what they have done with their group members and plan how to share their body paragraphs with class.			10 mins	
	Reporting	One person from each group shares how their body paragraphs were written			20 mins.	
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their shortfalls and are given further inputs on best approach to writing body paragraphs.			40 mins	

	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				

Lesson 11

Content/ course outline content	Reading process	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, compare and contrast	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:	Plan a farewell party for a colleague at work or church who is being transferred to a different unit or department			1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking				
Aim	To enable the students know how to write introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs and concluding paragraphs		Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	A video clip, sample paragraphs, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters,				

	observation check sheet, and researcher's logbook.				
Pre-task activities	Students read sample body paragraphs from different sources. Each member in a group will read a different body paragraph. All those with similar paragraphs will sit together, discuss then move back to their original groups.				30 mins.
Task cycle	Task	Students will write/create a body paragraph based on what they've read or heard from their colleaques	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences), problem solving, creating		20 mins.
	Planning	Students discuss what they have done with their group members and plan how to share their body paragraphs with class.			10 mins
	Reporting	One person from each group shares how their body paragraphs were written			20 mins.

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Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their shortfalls and are given further inputs on best approach to writing body paragraphs.			40 mins	
	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				

Lesson 12

Content/ course outline content	Overview of Semester's work	Task Type/Activities to Use eg pair work, group work, compare and contrast	Expected outcome	Time allocation	Remarks
Task Topic:				1:00pm to 3:00pm	
Aspect of language	Writing, speaking				

Aim	To enable the students know how to write introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs and concluding paragraphs			Students will have a task report ready		
Materials needed	A video clip, sample paragraphs, Pieces of papers, projector, makers, dusters, observation check sheet, and researcher's logbook.					
Pre-task activities	Students read sample body paragraphs from different sources. Each member in a group will read a different body paragraph. All those with similar paragraphs will sit together, discuss then move back to their original groups.				30 mins.	
Task cycle	Task	Students will write/create a body paragraph based on what they've read or heard from their colleaques	group work, comparism (groups compare their problems identified with other group members to see similarities and differences),		20 mins.	
	Planning	Students discuss what they have done with their group members and plan how to share their body paragraphs with class.			10 mins	

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	Reporting	One person from each group shares how their body paragraphs were written	problem solving, creating		20 mins.	
Post-task (Language Focus)	Analysis	Students are given feedback on their shortfalls and are given further inputs on best approach to writing body paragraphs.			40 mins	
	Practice	Students reassess their work and do the necessary corrections				