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TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND ITS IMPACT ON VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' USE OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES IN A WRITING CLASSROOM

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Article info.	ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, there has been an increasing emphasis on independent learning, and students have been encouraged to take personality for their studies. In that context, self-regulation is seen as a vital ingredient to performance in educational setting (Zimmerman, 1990, 2000; Wolters and Rosenthal, 2000). How to promote students' self-regulated learning (SRL) is a crucial question among educators since SRL does not take place automatically (Winne, 2005) and is not easily induced (Struyven et al., 2006). Therefore, research about the conditions that facilitate SRL attracts greater attention (Richardson, 2001). As such an attempt, the current empirical study is to investigate the extent to which task-based language teaching (TBLT) can help Vietnamese students increase the use of self-regulated learning strategies in a writing classroom. Sixty-nine students were instructed to write descriptive and argumentative paragraphs under task-based learning condition during a period of ten weeks. The results showed that students significantly improved their overall scores of self-regulatory writing strategies, especially their scores of personal self-regulation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

One of the important goals of education today is to assist students in becoming self-regulated learners. Self-regulatory skills will help students not only to improve their learning during their school years but also prepare them for further education, or life-long learning (Nota *et al.*, 2004). Being able to regulate one's own learning is viewed by educational psychologists and policy makers as the key to successful learning in school and beyond (Boekaerts, 1999).

In Vietnam, students have very few chances to develop their self-regulatory skills. Similar to other Asian countries such as China (Burnaby and Sun, 1989; Liao, 2004), South Korea (Li, 1998), and

Japan (Nishino and Watanabe, 2008), English language teaching in Vietnam has been predominated by traditional models of direct instruction oriented towards developing knowledge about the English language at the expense of developing communicative competence. It has been commonly observed that the prevailing model of language learning in Vietnam is listening to the teacher, then repeating, then copying linguistic models provided by the teacher on the chalkboard (Canh, 1999; Kennett and Knight, 1999; Hiep, 2007). That analytical learning and teaching style encourages learners to learn and memorize rules instead of being engaged in other types of activities (Canh, 2011). In such a context, a study investigating how a teaching approach could motivate students to self-regulate

their own learning is worth conducting. The current study is such an attempt.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Self-regulated learning

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has been defined quite differently by different researchers. For Zimmerman (1986) , SRL refers to the degree to which students are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active in their own learning process. For Lindner and Harris (1993), SRL is a unified process which involves the integration of appropriate beliefs and utilization of cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, perceptual and environmental components in resolving academic tasks. For Butler and Winnie (1995), SRL is a deliberate, judgmental, and adaptive process in which the learner continually makes decisions in the areas of resource distribution, meaningful practice, strategy selection and his or her efficacy. For Pintrich (1999), SRL is defined as the strategies that students use to regulate their cognition as well as their use of resource management strategies that students use to control their learning. For Ross (2003), SRL is an active, constructive process by which learners set goals, monitor their learning, control their cognition, motivation and behavior, while taking into consideration the relevant features of their learning context and environment.

Despite having different definitions, these researchers share a consensus in which self-regulated learning involves a learner being active and independent in his or her own learning process. In other words, SRL refers to the self-directive processes and self-beliefs that enable a learner to transform his or her mental abilities into an academic performance skill such as writing or reading (Zimmerman, 2008). In this way, self-regulated learning emphasizes autonomy and control by the individual who monitors, directs, and regulates actions toward goals of information acquisition, expertise expansion, and self-improvement (Paris and Paris, 2001).

2.2 Self-regulated learning and writing

Because a great part of the skill in writing involves "the ability to exert deliberate control over the process of composing" (Flower and Hayes, 1980, p. 39), writing is commonly viewed as a difficult and demanding task which requires writers to have extensive self-regulation and attentional control (Kellogg, 1996). Regarding the relationship of self-regulation and writing, Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) relate self-regulation to "self-initiated

thoughts, feelings and actions that writers use to attain their literary goals" (p. 76).

Self-regulation is thought to enhance writing performance because writing requires learners to self-regulate and control their attention to manage their writing environment (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987; Kellogg, 1987; Ransdell and Levy, 1996; Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997; Graham and Harris, 2000). Planning, monitoring, evaluating and revising are some of the self-regulatory mechanisms which can be integrated into writing subroutines to help writers accomplish a writing task effectively (Zimmerman and Risemberg, 1997).

According to Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997), writing self-regulation processes can be classified into environmental, behavioral and personal processes. Self-regulation of environmental processes is about self-regulating the writing setting which can be either physical or social. Environmental structuring and self-selected models, tutors, or books are two components of environment self-regulation. Behavioral self-regulation refers to the adaptive use of a performance strategy and consists of self-monitoring, self-consequences (self-rewarding or self-punishing) and self-verbalization. Personal self-regulation involves the adaptive use of cognitive and affective strategies. In Zimmerman and Risemberg's model, personal self-regulation processes include time planning and management, goal setting, setting self-evaluative standards, applying cognitive strategies and mental imaginary.

2.3 Task-based language teaching and self-regulated learning

TBLT is an analytical approach to language pedagogy which exposes students to holistic chunks of contextualized, functional language that they can analyze themselves (Ducker, 2012). Central to TBLT is a task that learners are required to perform (Prabhu, 1987); new language is expected to be generated in the process of completing the task.

Various designs have been proposed for a task-based lesson (Prabhu, 1987; Estaire and Zanón, 1994; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). On the basis of a review of all these designs, Ellis (2006) synthesizes the three basic phases that reflect the order of a task-based lesson. The first phase is the pre-task phase which includes various activities that teachers and students can undertake before they start the task. This phase aims to prepare students to perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition. The second phase is the during task phase which centers around the task itself and affords various instructional options of task-performance or pro-

cess-based learning. The final phase is the post task which involves procedures for following-up on task performance. Three major pedagogical goals for the post task phase in Ellis' view include: (1) providing an opportunity for repeating the task, (2) encouraging learners to reflect on how they perform the task, and (3) giving learners opportunities to pay attention to form or difficult grammar structures. It can be seen from Ellis' (2006) synthesis that a task-based framework does not predetermine a fixed structure for a lesson but allows for creativity and variety in the choice of options in each phase.

Regarding the relationship between TBLT and SRL, research indicates that students may develop their self-regulation effectively in those classrooms where they are involved in complex meaningful tasks, that is, tasks that "address multiple goals, extend over time, integrate cognitive processes, and allow for the creation of a variety of products" (Perry *et al.,* 2004, p. 1857); where learners have chances to control their learning processes and products (Many *et al.,*, 1996); and where they have opportunities to evaluate their own work (Neuman and Roskos, 1997; Perry, 1998). In the same vein, Paris and Paris (2001) claim that a task-based approach will promote and necessitate SRL if activities are designed carefully with teachers providing appropriate modelling and scaffolding.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research questions

The research question addressed in this study was:

To what extent does TBLT help students develop their self-regulatory writing strategies?

3.2 Participants

Sixty-nine students (13 males, 56 females) from 18 to 19 (mean age: 18.15) enrolled in a freshman English Language Learning program participated in this study. These students had passed a national entrance exam with an English test including eighty multiple-choice questions to test students' grammar knowledge and reading skills. Their writing skills were tested in an indirect way in this test, that is, students were asked to choose the sentence that best combined pairs of given sentences.

A preliminary survey with closed questions administered before the course shows that these students had had very little experience in writing paragraphs and had not been exposed to TBLT before. By contrast, all of the students had experienced seven years of learning English as a foreign language in high school where heavily form-focused approaches were and still are the standard teaching method-

ologies by all accounts. They had been exposed to English language teaching for 2 hours a week (on average) prior to the onset of the study.

3.3 The TBLT writing course

In this ten-week course, writing tasks were designed for the purpose of generating communicative needs which learners needed to meet. In addition, two task sheets which clarified a possible procedure for task completion were designed in accordance with Ellis' (2003) definition of a task. Each task sheet was a work plan that required learners to use language in a meaningful way to achieve their learning outcome – a written text. In particular, the students had to write a text in which they shared personal experiences about a place they had been to with their friends ("descriptive tasks") and a text in which they expressed their opinion on an issue that could influence their personal learning and living conditions ("argumentative tasks"). In the process of completing these writing tasks, students were supposed to give primary attention to meaning, sharing their experience of a city they liked or convincing the university staff to take an action that would result in better learning and living conditions, which resembles the way language is used in the real world.

In the *pre-task* phase, students constructed their own writing plans through analyzing text samples (models) provided in the task sheet, planning their own writing, and exchanging ideas with classmates. Then, in the *task-cycle*, students wrote their texts, drawing on the insights they had gathered during the pre-task phase. They were encouraged to use dictionaries, the internet and grammar books and to help each other put their thoughts to paper in all stages of the writing process. Finally, in the *post-task* phase students reflected on their own texts, exchanged texts with their friends, provided and received feedback, and applied their own criteria of text quality to their own and their peers' texts.

The teacher's comments on students' first drafts focused on meaning issues only. Some popular comments on these drafts include "This description did not convince me to like the city you describe." for a weak descriptive text or "With some modifications, your description could become more interesting." for a better text. After reading these general comments, students discussed with their writing partners how they could make their texts more interesting to the readers. Since they were only given very general comments, they had to figure out by themselves and with the help from their friends why their texts were not good enough.

While doing so, some of them also took other aspects of their texts into consideration, including the organization, coherence, cohesion, vocabulary choice as well as grammar and spelling of their texts.

Later, in the second drafts, the teacher gave more specific comments on both form and meaning. Students' errors in these drafts were highlighted and labelled. Thus, when writing the third drafts, students in the TBLT group had opportunities to notice the grammatical structures that they misused in addition to revising other aspects of their texts such as content, coherence and cohesion. Form-focused activities were conducted as a part of this post-task stage with students' common grammar errors being analyzed and reviewed. These activities helped students focus on form after they had written and revised their texts for several times.

3.4 Research instruments

The most popular instruments to measure self-regulation include self-report questionnaires, observations and interviews (Winne and Perry, 2000; Montalvo and Torres, 2004; Boekaerts and Corno, 2005).

A *questionnaire* on self-regulatory writing strategies (see Appendix) was designed based on Zimmerman and Risemberg's (1997) Triadic Self-Regulatory Processes in Writing. The questionnaire consists of 30 statements describing what students can do to self-regulate their own environmental processes or their use of context-related strategies (statements 1 to 8); their behavioral processes or their use of performance strategies (statements 9 to 14), and their personal processes or their use of cognitive or affective strategies (statements 15 to 30). Participants were asked to rate statements on a 7-point Likert-scale in which 1 indicated "Not at all true of me" and 7 corresponded to "Very true of me". The questionnaire was evaluated by three Vietnamese researchers in the field of language education to see whether it could describe typical ways Vietnamese students self-regulated their learning. Then, the questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese and piloted first with ten students of the same background to test whether they understood the statements correctly. After being revised, the translated version of the questionnaire was piloted with 90 students from 18 to 19 years old and from the English Language Studies field – the same cohort as the one from which the participants of this study were drawn. The Cronbach's alpha for the pilot test was 0.86, which shows that the questionnaire was reliable. The questionnaire was delivered to students in the pretest (before the writing course), immediate posttest (right after the writing course), and delayed posttest (ten weeks after the immediate posttest).

Besides the questionnaire, *focused group interviews* were conducted after the writing courses. The discussions were conducted in small groups of five students, which is an ideal number to prevent group fragmentation and focus loss (Cohen *et al., 2011*). A discussion guide was used by the interviewer. The group discussion format was selected because it is time saving (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Gay *et al.*, 2006). In fact, it took each group about 40 minutes to finish the discussion tasks. This type of interview is less intimidating than one-on-one interviews (Cohen *et al.*, 2011), which was especially crucial for encouraging the participant students in the study to share their ideas and experiences. Most of the participants openly discussed the topics given, and there was no pressure of being interviewed.

Classroom and students' pair-work activities were indirectly observed via *video recordings*. All lessons were video-recorded by a cameraman. The researcher asked the cameraman to record the teacher's activities, her interactions with students and their responses and activities in class. The presence of the cameraman in the classrooms somehow made the teacher nervous, but this soon disappeared as the lesson proceeded. In the first class lesson, students were asked if any of them would like to be arranged to seats where they would not be recorded. However, no students objected to the filming. On the whole, there was little nervousness or tension among students while being watched and video-recorded. These video recordings provided supportive evidence for self-regulatory strategies that students reported in their questionnaires and focused group interviews.

In addition, three pairs of students in the PPP group and three pairs of students in the TBLT group were also randomly selected for being video-recorded. These videos provided more detailed information on students' activities in the classroom.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quantitative data

Table 1 shows the data from the self-reported questionnaires of students in the pretest, immediate posttest and delayed posttest. In general, students in this condition increased the scores of their self-regulation from the pretest to the immediate posttest, and from the immediate posttest to the delayed posttest for all three types of self-regulation as well as their overall self-regulatory strategies

Table 1: Changes of the TBLT students' self-regulatory writing strategies

	Pretest	Immediate Posttest	Delayed Posttest
Self-regulatory writing strategies	4.24 (.890)	4.34 (.803)	4.54 (.745)
Environmental processes	4.94 (1.10)	4.99 (.784)	5.07 (.856)
Behavioral processes	3.34 (1.18)	3.38 (1.16)	3.60 (1.11)
Personal processes	4.48 (.921)	4.80 (.663)	4.94 (.722)

SD in parentheses

Repeated measure ANOVAs (RM-ANOVAs) show that students significantly improved their scores of self-regulatory writing strategies $F(1.91, 130) = 5.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta_P^2 = .076$ and their scores of personal self-regulation, $F(1.75, 119) = 11.3$, $p < .001$, $\eta_P^2 = .14$. The effect sizes for these analyses were found to be high according to Murphy and Myors' (2004) standards. There were no significant differences in students' scores of environmental and behavioral self-regulation. Table 2 shows the results of RM-ANOVAs of self-regulation data of the TBLT condition.

Table 2: Results of repeated measures ANOVAs on students' self-regulation

Self-regulation	MS	df	F	p	η_P^2
Self-regulatory writing strategies	1.65	1.91	5.63	.005**	.076
Environmental processes	.35	1.79	.69	.48	.01
Behavioral processes	1.42	1.91	2.20	.117	.031
Personal processes	4.44	1.75	11.3	.000**	.14

* p < .05

** p < .01

Post-hoc tests using paired samples t-tests showed that students significantly improved their scores on self-regulatory writing strategies between the pretest (M = 4.24, SD = .80) and the delayed posttest (M = 4.94, SD = .72); t = 3.29, p = .002, d = .92 and between the immediate posttest (M = 4.34, SD = .80) and the delayed posttest (M = 4.94, SD = .72); t = 2.43, p = .018, d = .79. The effect sizes (d = .92 and d = .79) were found to be high according to Cohen's (1988) standards. There was no significant difference between the pretest and the immediate posttest.

Post-hoc tests using paired samples t-tests revealed that students only significantly increased their self-regulation of personal processes between the pretest (M = 4.48, SD = .92) and immediate posttest (M = 4.80, SD = .66) with t(68) = 2.79, p = .007; d = .40; and between the pretest (M = 4.48, SD = .92) and the delayed posttest (M = 4.94, SD = .72) with t(68) = 4.67, p < .001; d = .56; but not between the immediate and delayed posttests. The effect sizes (d = .40 and d = .56) for these analyses were found to be medium according to Cohen's (1988) standards.

4.2 Qualitative data

With regard to the self-regulation of *environmental processes*, all respondents said that they mostly asked for help from their teachers when they were at high school. For example, five respondents in the three focus groups reported that they used to ask their teachers at high school to show them whether they could use a particular word to fill in the blank of a writing exercise or whether they combined the two sentences into one correctly. Regarding learning in this TBLT condition, all respondents reported that they looked for help from more sources such as the internet, dictionaries or grammar books. One of the respondents said:

"At high school, whenever I needed help or had problems with my writing exercises, I usually asked my teacher for help. At university, I often surfed the internet, read sample essay books or asked my roommates at the dorm who were second- or third-year students of English Studies. I also checked up vocabulary in the dictionaries." (Focused group 1 - Respondent5)

When being asked about the level of freedom, they had in a writing class in this condition, all respondents said that they were free to choose a place to sit to write their texts. One of the respondents elaborated:

"I like the freedom I had when learning this course. I was free to choose a place that I felt the most comfortable sitting to write my text. When I wanted to ask for help from a friend, I could come to him or her and ask." (Focused group 2 - Respondent3)

However, seven out of fifteen respondents said that they would like it better if they could write at home

because that was where they felt the most comfortable. One respondent said:

"I think it was unnecessary for us to write our texts in class. After I had explored the sample texts given by the teacher and built up the plan to write, it would be better if I could choose to write at home whenever I wanted to. I think writing at home will be more inspiring than writing in class because I feel more comfortable to sit at my desk at home than in class." (Focused group 1 - Respondent3)

Another respondent from the same group said:

"I agree with her [Respondent 3] that it would be more comfortable to write at home and submit our texts to our teacher a week later. However, I think it would be better for our final exam when we wrote in class. I don't feel comfortable in the exam room either but I have to write a good text there, too. So, it's better to train myself and be prepared for the exam by being used to writing in class." (Focused group 1 - Respondent2)

Videos of classroom and students' pair-work showed that students consulted different resources from the pre-task phase to the revision stage. They made use of the availability of dictionaries, grammar books, sample essay books and internet to look up the meaning of difficult words, find appropriate vocabulary to put into their texts, look for interesting ideas or check a grammar rule they were not sure about. During the first class session, students seemed to be confused by all the freedom they had. When they were more familiar with it during later sessions, they showed they could be very independent and active in using resources as well as choosing a "good" place to sit to write their texts. Some students chose to sit near a good student to ask for help more conveniently while some others chose to sit at the end of the classroom or far from other students to avoid distractions.

Regarding self-regulation of *behavioral processes,* five respondents said that they usually felt very tired after each lesson. Therefore, they would like to have a free evening when they could do whatever they liked after they had finished their first drafts. One of these respondents said:

"I was usually very tired because I had many things to think of when doing the [writing] task and I felt my brain had worked much harder than usual. Therefore, sometimes, after I finished my text, I asked my friends out for a coffee." (Focused group 1 - Respondent 1)

In the same vein, one respondent from another focus group said:

"I guess my friends and I had to work really hard during our writing lessons, much harder than in other subjects. We had to learn how to write mostly by ourselves. I usually felt tired, even exhausted, especially when I just finished revising my first draft. It was hard to figure out by myself how to improve the text with no specific comments on my text content, organization and grammar." (Focused group 1 - Respondent4)

Videos of students' pair-work showed some self-regulation of behavioral processes among the students. For example, when students read the sample texts, some of them articulated a sentence they were not sure about and repeated the sentence until they thought they understood it. In addition, some of them counted the number of words they had written to see whether they fulfilled the task requirements regarding text length. However, not every student being recorded did these things. These self-monitoring and self-verbalization strategies were used by only two out of six students being recorded.

The focused group interviews and the videos also provided a lot of information on students' self-regulation of *personal processes.* Nine respondents reported that they had learned to plan and manage their time better. One of the respondents said:

At high school, I didn't have to do many things when I learned writing skills, so I didn't learn how to plan and manage my time for my writing. For example, when we learned how to write a letter, the teacher gave us an incomplete letter with some blanks and some phrases. All we had to do was choosing an appropriate phrase to fill in each blank. It didn't take us much time to do this activity. However, at university, we had to do different small tasks by ourselves within a class session. Thus, I had to learn how to manage my time better so that by the end of the class session, I finished the tasks that the teacher required me to do. (Focused group 2 - Respondent1)

These respondents also recognized the opportunities for time planning and managing that the TBLT course gave them. A respondent said:

"At university, we had to learn by ourselves most of the time; therefore, we tried our best to finish our work on time. The time pressure made us work at our own pace better." (Focused group 2 - Respondent5)

Another respondent said:

"I learned to arrange my work reasonably so that I could find time for surfing the internet for interest-

ing ideas for my writing." (Focused group 3 - Respondent5)

In addition, these respondents reported that they would like to improve their writing skills by the end of the course and get good marks for the tests, which is a manifestation of goal setting strategy. One of the respondents said:

"Writing skill is a subject by itself at the university and not integrated with other skills in the English subject as in high school, so the scores from the writing course will have an impact on our GPA [general point average]. I would like to get good marks for this course, so I have invested a lot of my time and effort into it." (Focused group 1 - Respodent1)

All respondents said that they were more involved in the writing tasks at university. They reported having developed many cognitive strategies during the course. One of the respondents said:

"Whenever I received a writing task, I had to read the requirements carefully and thought of the resources I could use to complete the task. I felt I was much more involved in the task than I did before." (Focused group 2 - Respodent5)

Another respondent from the same focus group added:

"The topic for the writing task that the teacher gave us was quite broad, so I had to think very carefully to choose what to write, then I limited myself to my choice and developed my ideas from that choice. Later, I made an outline for my text with all the ideas I had developed." (Focused group 3 - Respondent4)

One of the respondents also said:

"I had more freedom to write at the university, so I could try different grammar structures and new vocabulary to make my text interesting. I also learned how to state my opinion directly instead of beating around the bushes as I used to." (Focused group 1 - Respondent4)

Another one said:

"I've learned how to generate ideas, organize them and put them into my writing. I've also learned to choose an appropriate word to put into a specific context and learned interesting ideas or vocabulary that my friends used in their texts." (Focused group 3 - Respodent5).

Another opinion from this group was:

"I've learned a lot of things from this writing course, from organizing my ideas effectively to

checking my own spelling and grammatical errors as well as writing a good title for my text." (Focused group 1 - Respondent5).

Videos of pair-work activities also supported what students reported. All the three pairs showed that students worked very hard individually and with a partner to produce a text as well as to revise it until it was good. Students read the task very carefully, discussed with a friend whether they understood the task in the same way, drew a mind map for organizing their ideas, wrote and rewrote a phrase or a sentence until they were satisfied with it. During the first sessions, there were more interactions between them, but later on, students worked mostly by themselves. They only asked their friends for help when they were not sure which word was better to put into the text.

4.3 Discussion

Students in the current study showed an upward trend for their overall self-regulation as well as their self-regulation of environmental structuring, behavioral and personal processes over the time. The results of the current study confirm that TBLT creates good conditions for students to develop their self-regulated learning since they had a certain level of control over their learning processes.

For environmental self-regulation, students in the TBLT condition did not have limited opportunities to self-regulate their contexts as their friends. They chose to move to any place in the classroom at any time they liked as long as they felt comfortable to conduct the tasks. In addition, they were free to choose any resources they found useful for their learning. Since students were not provided with the learning materials, they were not limited in terms of the resources they could use. As a result, students in this group used anything they found resourceful such as bilingual dictionaries to check up vocabulary, a grammar book to consult a grammar structure they were not sure about or their friends whom they could ask for help.

There was no significant increase of behavioral self-regulation between the pretest and immediate posttest and between the pretest and delayed posttest. Although some students reported that they liked to reward themselves after completing the task, not all students felt the same way. Students with higher level language proficiency may not have thought that the task was that difficult for them and they did not feel the need to reward themselves for task completion. In addition, since students in this group were busy completing their writing within the class hour, not all of them tracked their own performance by counting the

number of words they had written, which is an indication of behavioral self-regulation. It could be interpreted that TBLT created some conditions for students to self-regulate their behaviors. The pressure from learning how to write a text mostly by themselves urged students to use some self-regulatory strategies such as self-monitoring, self-consequence or self-verbalization. However, not all students perceived the pressure to the same extent. Better students may not have felt it equally necessary to use these strategies as the weaker students did. For that reason, there was not a significant difference of the self-regulation of behavioral processes between the pretest and immediate posttest.

The most remarkable development of students' self-regulation is that of personal self-regulation. There were significant increases from the pretest to the immediate posttest and from the pretest to the delayed posttest. Students reported that they used their cognitive and affective strategies more often after they learned under the task-based condition. The increased use of these adaptive strategies resulted from the fact that they completed the tasks mostly by themselves. They were free to plan the time they needed for each subtask, to set specific goals for their tasks, to evaluate their first drafts by themselves, to build up their own outlines and do everything they could to have a good written output. As a result, they learned whether they should continue a strategy that they found useful or they should modify the one that did not work for them. During the process of being involved in such complex meaningful tasks of writing, they developed their self-regulation of their personal processes.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study was set out to explore the impact of TBLT on Vietnamese students' use of self-regulatory writing strategies after they were instructed how to write descriptive and argumentative paragraphs for one semester of ten weeks. Students showed an upward trend in developing their self-regulatory strategies from the pretest to the immediate posttest and from the immediate posttest to the delayed posttest. The self-regulatory process that developed the most after the TBLT course was the self-regulation of personal processes.

From the current study, two suggestions can be made to improve students' use of self-regulation strategies. First of all, students should be given more freedom in choosing where and when to write. In other words, the teacher should let students use the time in the classroom only for activities that need interaction such as analyzing sample texts, giving feedback to each other's text outlines,

and giving comments on each other's first drafts. Other activities that students can do well at home such as generating ideas for texts, writing first drafts and revising drafts should be done at home or wherever they like. Secondly, Asian teachers should build up the belief that students can work by themselves, and make their students believe this too. In the current study, students have long been heavily dependent on their teachers when learning at primary, secondary and high school levels. As a result, the students were highly confused with the freedom in the TBLT condition. That did not mean they were not self-regulated by nature, but meant that the educational system did not create opportunities to exercise their self-regulation. Therefore, as discussed above, students became more independent in the later sessions and improved their writing performance although they had received little help from the teacher. In other words, students' self-regulation can be improved when the teacher helps students believe that they can work well by themselves.

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