



## Original Research

# The effects of task-based learning on English reading motivation among vocational college students

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*The English language proficiency of students enrolled in vocational colleges in China has remained a significant concern for teachers and curriculum developers. Task-based learning has been put forward as a feasible approach to tackle this problem. Research on the effects of task-based learning on English reading motivation among vocational students can provide new ideas for vocational English reading education. The aim of this study is to explore the effects of task-based learning on the English reading motivation of Chinese vocational students. This study employed a mixed method approach, a quasi-experiment in phase 1 and followed by semi-structured interviews in phase 2. The population for this study comprised of vocational college students in Guizhou Province, China. Random sampling and purposive techniques were used in this study. Instruments include pretest, post-test, questionnaire, and semi-structured protocol. Data obtained from pretest and post-test was analysed descriptively, independent sample t-test, paired sample t-test and data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The average score of reading motivation for external ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) and internal ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) are at a low moderate level for control group and average score of reading motivation in terms of external ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) and internal ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) are at a low moderate level for experimental group. Two main themes emerged namely improved motivation and their critical thinking skills. The findings of this study have implications for English reading instruction and motivation for vocational college students.*

**KEYWORDS:** English reading performance, interest, motivation, task-based learning, vocational college students

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The English language proficiency of students enrolled in vocational colleges in China has remained a pressing concern for teachers and curriculum developers (Niu, 2021). Although the Ministry of Education together with the Chinese government has highlighted the significance of English language education, a multitude of provinces located at the rural areas, encompassing

Guizhou province, proceed to grapple with substantial obstacles in effectually facilitating language instruction (Hu & Zhang, 2020). Vocational students generally believe that English reading is difficult, which also leads to their low interest in English reading learning (Niu, 2021). Additionally, for non-English majors, English reading has little relevance to their major. Consequently, they neither love nor want to learn English reading

(Wu, 2020). Without the pressure of entrance examinations for vocational students, they seriously lack the motivation to learn English reading (Wu, 2020). At the same time, they do not take a keen interest in the subject. Many students view the subject as a learning task and do not want to learn English on their own (Hasan, 2014). Moreover, students in vocational colleges have a low interest in learning English reading due to their poor foundation in English reading (Wu, 2020; Guo, 2021; Niu, 2021). Guo (2021) mentioned that many vocational college students have poor English reading ability in middle school, which has significantly impacted their interest in English reading. Therefore, there is a natural resistance to English reading. Niu (2021) also believed that the unsatisfactory English reading performance of vocational students had a negative impact on their interest in reading. From their perspective, long-term English learning is boring. To maintain students' interest in English learning, it is necessary to constantly stimulate students' interest in the teaching process (Santi et al., 2021). One possible method to tackle this problem is the application of task-based learning (TBL), an effective pedagogical approach that has received rising recognition in the realm of English as a Foreign Language teaching and learning. TBL embodies student-centred approach that provides opportunities for students to engage in real-world tasks that are meaningful to encourage language learning (Hu & Zhang, 2020). This approach has been demonstrated to improve students' interest, motivation, and overall performance specifically in several language skills, comprising reading comprehension (Zhou, 2021). However, the efficiency of TBL in the setting of vocational college students in Guizhou, China, continues to be largely unexamined. This study is designed to comprehensively examine the effects of TBL on vocational college students' English reading performance, motivation and interest in Guizhou, China. The results of this research can extend meaningful insights and practical significance for teachers and curriculum developers and the broader spectrum of English language education, and vocational college students (Bao, 2023; Yang et al., 2023).

Thus, while the current landscape presents significant challenges, it also underscores opportunities for transformative educational practices that can enhance English reading comprehension among vocational college students in China, thereby contributing to their overall educational and professional development in a globalised context.

The study intends to address the following research questions.

1. What are the effects of TBL and traditional teaching methods on English reading motivation among vocational college students?
2. What are the vocational college students' views regarding the use of TBL to enhance their English reading motivation?

Research hypothesis: there are no significant differences of traditional teaching method on students' reading motivation before and after the intervention for control group and the experimental group.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed method research design, specifically, a quasi-experimental design, with surveys and semi-structured interviews as the research methods ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the effects of TBL. As Denscombe (2017) asserts, combining qualitative and quantitative data enables a better understanding of research phenomena, improving the robustness of the findings by capturing both statistical significance and contextual depth. This approach is supported by Creswell and Clark (2017), who emphasise that a mixed-methods design provides a comprehensive framework for addressing complex research questions and enhances the validity of the results. The research design incorporates a pretest-post-test approach to evaluate the effects of TBL on the dependent variables: English reading performance, motivation, and interest.

### 2.1. Participants/Subjects

The population of this research comprised from the vocational students in Guizhou province. Guizhou province is located in southwestern China, is home to 46 vocational colleges. These institutions collectively accommodate students who have completed high school or graduated from secondary school. The students enrolled in these colleges are typically between the ages of 18 and 21. This age range is particularly significant as it often coincides with transitional educational challenges, such as adjusting to higher education demands and developing specific academic skills (Li, 2021). A random sampling technique was employed to assign students to either the control or experimental groups. A total of 64 students were selected and each 32 students were assigned to the control and experimental groups. According to Zikmund (2002), probability sampling ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. This approach minimises bias and is considered robust for drawing generalisable conclusions. As for the interviews, 10 students from the experimental group were selected using the purposive sampling technique. The students were selected due to the following reasons. They were full-time, non-English major students from Guiyang Preschool Education College enrolled in a College English Reading course. First, the English reading curriculum for non-English majors in Chinese vocational colleges is highly standardised, making these students representative of the broader population of non-English majors across the nation (Hu, 2021). Weller et al. (2018) investigated saturation and sample size via 1,147 interviews, concluding that a modest sample size is enough for gathering a limited number of widely accepted concepts. Moreover, although a limited sample ( $n = 10$ ) may include some of the most significant ideas, it might also, via meticulous probing, contain the bulk of essential notions. A sample size of ten was considered sufficient for the qualitative analysis and scope of this study (Hyrkäs, 2003). This method may be employed when specific cases or individuals are selected based on their unique characteristics or relevance to the study, but it may not always yield a representative sample (Yin, 2003).

## 2.2. Instruments

For the pre-test and post-test, the researcher adapted instrument from The Star Reading English reading ability assessment system, developed by Renaissance Company, represents a sophisticated, data-driven approach to measuring English reading proficiency (Yang, 2006; Yang, 2022). The questionnaire for motivation and interest based on TBL was adapted from Wigfield et al.'s (1996) measure of children's motivations for reading. A four-point Likert-type scale instrument was developed based on previous studies focusing on TBL. Each level for instance, low moderate represents mean values closer to the lower end of the moderate range (2.5-3.0). High moderate represents mean values closer to the upper end (3.1-3.5). The

researchers employed a four-point Likert scale to exclude a neutral midpoint as they sought to capture the respondents' decisive and conclusive opinions, hence precluding objectivity or contradiction. This choice prompted respondents to articulate a definitive preference, hence enhancing the accuracy of the obtained data. The descriptive analysis referring to the mean score interpretation, as outlined in the table below.

Since the researchers wanted to assess the level of motivation, they referred to the interpretation of mean scores suggested by previous expert – one of which we have included below (Table 1). Terms like low, low moderate, high moderate, and high, are the interpretations of mean scores based on our data analysis.

Table 1  
*Mean score interpretation*

MEAN SCORE	INTERPRETATION
0.00 – 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Low Moderate
3.01 – 4.00	High Moderate
4.01 – 5.00	High

As for the semi-structured interview protocol, the researcher adapted the instrument from (Deci & Ryan, 1985) to facilitate a nuanced exploration of participants' experiences, offering a comprehensive view of how TBL influences their reading motivation and interests.

## 2.3. Data collection

Before the intervention, pretests were administered to both the control and experimental groups to establish baseline data. This initial data collection aims to capture the current status of the students' abilities and attitudes, providing a foundation for subsequent comparisons. The pretests and post-tests consisted of standardised English reading assessments. The questionnaires and interviews were designed to gauge students' motivation and interest in English reading and performance. The intervention in the form of TBL was implemented over a period of 10 weeks. Each week, the students in the experimental group engaged in one 40-minute TBL session, designed to enhance their English reading skills through task-oriented activities. These activities were designed to promote active learning, critical thinking, and practical application of language skills. On the other hand, the control group continued with the traditional teaching approach, which typically involves teacher-centred instruction and rote learning practices. After the 10-week intervention, post-tests were administered to both the control and experimental groups. The post-tests measured any changes in English reading performance, motivation, and interest, allowing

for a direct comparison between the experimental and control groups. The questionnaire was administered to experimental group and interviews were carried out with students from the experimental group.

## 2.4. Data analysis

Quantitative data from the pretests and posttests were subjected to statistical analyses to determine whether there are any significant differences between the experimental and control groups. Data obtained from the pre-test, post-tests and questionnaire were analysed using t-tests, ANOVA, and regression. Additionally, qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically to provide deeper insights into students' motivational and interest changes. Ethical approval was sought from the research department of Guiyang Preschool Education College, and inform consent was obtained from all participants prior to the experiment and interviews.

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Current research in China predominantly focuses on applying TBL to enhance English listening and speaking skills, yet there remains a paucity of studies on its application in reading instruction. Zhengling (2022) introduced task-based teaching in senior high school English classes, evaluating its practical effectiveness and examining changes in student motivation and reading strategies pre- and post-implementation. Tang (2019) expanded TBL theories by integrating it into senior high school

English reading courses, assessing its feasibility. Zhang (2021) provided detailed strategies for applying TBL in college-level English reading courses, emphasising pre-class preview tasks, their importance, and fostering independent reading (Santi et al., 2021; Tang, 2019; Zhang, 2021). These studies contribute valuable insights into the potential of TBL to transform English language education by emphasising practical application and evaluating its impact on student learning outcomes and motivation. However, there remains a need for further research to explore the adaptation of TBL specifically in reading instruction contexts, particularly within vocational education settings.

### 3.1. Current state of English language instruction in vocational colleges

In the current stage of English teaching in vocational colleges, teachers face a multitude of challenges that hinder the effectiveness of language instruction. One of the primary issues is the diverse range of student backgrounds. Vocational colleges enrol both high school graduates and graduates from secondary vocational schools. High school graduates typically receive three years of systematic English education, providing them with a relatively solid foundation in the language. In contrast, students from secondary vocational schools generally have limited exposure to English courses, resulting in considerable disparities in English proficiency levels among vocational college students (Bao, 2023; Zhou, 2021).

This heterogeneity in students' English language backgrounds poses a significant challenge for teachers, who must address a wide spectrum of proficiency levels within a single classroom. This situation necessitates differentiated instruction strategies to effectively meet the needs of all students, from those with a strong command of the language to those requiring basic language support. Consequently, teachers must invest significant effort into developing and implementing tailored instructional approaches that can bridge the proficiency gap and facilitate meaningful learning experiences for all students.

Furthermore, vocational college students are generally exempt from taking the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) and Band 6 (CET-6) exams, which are mandatory for undergraduate students in China. This exemption has implications for the students' motivation to learn English. The CET-4 and CET-6 exams serve as critical external motivators for undergraduate students, as these exams are often prerequisites for graduation and are highly valued by employers. In contrast, vocational college students are only required to pass basic end-of-year examinations in their first year, which do not carry the same level of significance or provide the same extrinsic motivation. Consequently, vocational students lack external motivators for English learning, which further exacerbates their low levels of motivation (Jiang & Husain, 2023).

#### 3.1.1. English reading performance

English reading education stands as a pivotal component of language learning worldwide, recognised for its essential role in

developing fundamental skills such as reading comprehension, critical thinking, and overall linguistic proficiency (Smith, 2020). The landscape of English reading education has evolved significantly, reflecting diverse pedagogical approaches and educational philosophies aimed at equipping learners with the necessary tools to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. In China, where English proficiency is increasingly valued as a gateway to academic and professional opportunities, the implementation of effective reading education strategies has become paramount (Ni et al., 2022). This review explores the current trends and practices in English reading education within the Chinese context, examining how educational theories, methodologies, and technological advancements shape teaching practices and impact student outcomes. By delving into these dynamics, this review aims to illuminate the evolving strategies that educators employ to enhance students' reading abilities and foster broader language competencies in China's educational landscape (Ni et al., 2022).

In global educational contexts, English reading education plays a crucial role in enhancing students' literacy skills and cultivating a deeper understanding of texts spanning various genres and disciplines (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Effective instructional practices encompass a range of strategies designed to foster active engagement and comprehension among learners. These include pre-reading activities that activate prior knowledge, guided reading sessions that scaffold understanding through teacher support, and post-reading discussions that encourage critical analysis and reflection (Banditvilai, 2020). Such strategies are foundational in developing students' ability to navigate complex texts and derive meaning from diverse literary and informational sources.

#### 3.1.2. Task-based learning

TBL, which focuses on practical language use and real-world tasks, has shown promise in enhancing students' language proficiency and intrinsic motivation (Chua & Lin, 2020). These approaches not only cultivate essential language skills but also nurture critical thinking and problem-solving abilities relevant to vocational settings (Wei, 2024). In 2001, the National English Curriculum Standards (NECS) issued by the Ministry of Education advocated the implementation of TBL in English subject education. The NECS encouraged teachers to create a real situation for students English learning. TBL is a good way to achieve this purpose. In addition, the latest document issued by Ministry of Education, PRC Guidelines on college English Teaching continues to encourage the use of TBL.

TBL is a pedagogical approach grounded in the constructivist teaching model. It represents a form of collaborative learning in which instruction is driven by problem-solving and the completion of tasks (Hu, 2021). Long (1985) pointed out that language must be acquired through conversational interaction in which students complete tasks. Communicative interaction is more conducive to language understanding. Nunan (1989) proposed a design framework based on classroom communication

tasks and pointed out the implementation of networking tasks. The framework requirements should include: (1) goal; (2) input activity; (3) teacher role; (4) learner role; (5) context.

Among them Nunan (1989) mainly proposed: The goal of language communication is social communication and cultural communication. From knowledge to skills, from language to culture, this has generated a great response in the field of foreign language teaching and opened up new ideas for foreign language teaching. The real evolution of TBL into a new type of pedagogy began in 1996. The teaching framework of TBL comprised of three-stage model of TBL, namely pre-task, task cycle and post-task (Willis, 1996). This model centres on task organisation and the specific operation process of TBL. This task-based teaching model points out a clearer and more operable teaching task for the first time.

Aflah (2021) mentioned that TBL is characterised by learning in the process of doing and learning in the process of using. TBL embodies the people-oriented, student-centred and provides important methodological support for modern education reform. Moreover, Cai (2024) found that if a teacher can guide students to use what they learn in an authentic situation it will not only guarantee the English language application ability but also improve students' level of learning ability and specialty literacy. Teachers organise and carry out communicative classroom activities by providing students with different English reading tasks so as to achieve the teaching purpose of cultivating students' English reading ability in real English reading situations. Since the introduction of TBL into China, it has always been used in the practice and application of second language teaching. In class, teachers will be instructors rather than educators. They help students to complete the tasks in the teaching process (Han, 2018). However, most of current Chinese context research on the teaching method focus on speaking and comprehensive courses practice and the proportion of studies on English reading is very small (Chen & Wang, 2019). Tang (2019) believed that TBL is an imported product for China because the teaching method appeared and developed abroad. So, there are some shortcomings in the understanding, application and the implementation of TBL in the Chinese classroom (Tang, 2019). Hu (2021) also believed that TBL is developed in foreign countries and in the process of development it is inevitably affected by foreign teaching environment and conditions. How to make TBL more suitable for English education in Chinese universities has become the concern of scholars (Chen & Wang, 2019).

After more than 20 years of practice and research, TBL plays a decisive role in English teaching in China and has made a great contribution to the cause of English education. However, Wang (2021) said task-based teaching method has not been well use in current English teaching in vocational colleges. There are many shortcomings in the teaching process of most vocational college colleges. Most students in vocational colleges fail the college entrance examination or graduate from secondary vocational schools. These students have a weak foundation of study.

Lack of knowledge makes students less motivated to learn. In the practice of English reading, vocational students do not understand many words, resulting in insufficient grasp of the context, which seriously affects the students' English learning atmosphere (Wang, 2021).

2021 Chinese vocational college English Curriculum Standards emphasised that its urgent to improve students' English reading ability. The standard requires teachers to gradually de-emphasise the teaching of specialised grammar knowledge in English reading course. At the same time, teachers should let students learn in situations and topics so as to cultivate students' interest in English reading.

### 3.1.3. Motivation

Motivation plays a crucial role in both education and psychology, particularly in its impact on foreign language teaching and learning. It encompasses the psychological processes that initiate, direct, and sustain behaviour towards achieving specific goals (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In the context of language learning, motivation is fundamental as it influences students' initiative to engage with the language, their persistence through challenges, and their overall success in mastering English.

Motivation can be broadly categorised into two main types: external motivation and internal motivation. External motivation refers to factors outside the individual that drive behaviour, such as rewards, grades, or external pressures like societal expectations or economic incentives (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the realm of language learning, external motivation often manifests as instrumental motivation, where learners are motivated by practical benefits such as career advancement, academic requirements, or fulfilling external expectations (Lambert, 1974). On the other hand, internal motivation involves factors that originate within the individual, such as personal goals, interests, and values. Internal motivation is closely aligned with integrative motivation, which reflects a positive attitude towards and a strong personal interest in the culture and people associated with the target language (Gardner et al., 1985). Integrative motivation encourages learners to engage deeply with the language, culture, and community associated with the language, thereby enhancing their learning experience and proficiency.

In terms of motivation, vocational college students also demonstrate a low level (Niu, 2021). Zhang (2024) emphasised that vocational college students generally display low motivation in English learning. They require teachers' questioning, assessments, and other interventions to enhance their engagement in English learning activities. Liu (2022) classified the English reading motivation of vocational students into three categories: Self-actualisation type, Obligation-fulfilment type, and Ambiguity type. Self-actualised students aspire to fulfil their self-worth through English learning. The purpose of Obligation-Fulfilment students' English learning is to achieve utilitarian goals such as earning credits or passing exams. Approximately two-thirds of vocational college students fall under this category (Liu, 2022). The final group often exhibits a negative attitude towards

English learning due to a lack of clear motivation. Zhang (2024) identified three issues regarding the English reading motivation among vocational college students: instrumental motivation (utilitarian motivation) is evident, while integrative motivation (motivation driven by interest in English and related culture) is insufficient. The learning environment is not enough to stimulate the motivation, such as a bad learning atmosphere. Learners lack confidence and self-negate their English learning. Moreover, Xu and Durgunoğlu (2019) argue that students' reading performance correlates directly with their motivation and interest in learning English. To foster greater engagement among vocational students, educators must move away from outdated teaching models and embrace innovative approaches that align with contemporary educational needs and apply them judiciously in classroom practice.

### 3.1.4. Past studies

Past studies have highlighted numerous factors that contributed to the problems encountered by Chinese vocational students in mastering and learning English language. In March 2021, the Ministry of Education released the English Curriculum Standards for Vocational College Education, which emphasise that improving reading proficiency not only expands knowledge and vocabulary but also enhances language comprehension skills. The promotion of comprehensive skills encompassing listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation is instrumental in fostering enhanced English communication abilities for the future. Despite the Chinese government's significant emphasis on English education, Chinese students' proficiency remains relatively low based on the IELTS performance for the test taker report. This issue is particularly pronounced within vocational colleges (Tang & Gao, 2023). Recent studies have continued to highlight these challenges. For instance, Zhang (2023) found that despite increased resources and policy support, vocational college students still struggle with achieving high proficiency levels in English due to inadequate teaching methodologies and lack of practical language use opportunities. Similarly, Liu (2022) emphasised the need for pedagogical innovation, suggesting that TBL could address some of these deficiencies by providing more interactive and student-centred

learning experiences. Furthermore, Wang (2018) argued that aligning English education with real-world communication needs and vocational contexts could significantly improve student outcomes and engagement.

At vocational colleges specifically, the challenges in English reading comprehension are even more pronounced. Yan (2019) underscores this disparity, noting that vocational college students often face significant difficulties in grasping and interpreting written English texts. Factors contributing to these challenges include limited exposure to English language materials, varying levels of foundational English proficiency among students, and instructional methods that may not sufficiently emphasise reading comprehension skills. Moreover, the implications of these findings extend beyond academic performance alone. Proficiency in English, especially in reading comprehension, is crucial for vocational college students aiming to compete in a globalised job market where English proficiency is often a prerequisite for career advancement and international collaboration. Addressing these weaknesses becomes imperative not only for improving academic outcomes but also for enhancing vocational education's capacity to prepare students for the demands of a modern workforce.

In light of these challenges, the integration of innovative pedagogical approaches such as TBL holds promise. TBL not only addresses the cognitive aspects of learning by engaging students in meaningful tasks but also fosters language acquisition through contextualised practice, thereby potentially bolstering students' reading comprehension skills in English. By leveraging TBL's student-centred and task-driven approach, vocational colleges in China can potentially bridge the gap in English reading proficiency, thereby equipping students with essential skills for success in both academic and professional spheres.

## 4. STUDY RESULTS

### 4.1. What are the effects of TBL and traditional teaching methods on English reading motivation among vocational college students?

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of respondents who have answered the questionnaire and take the Star reading tests.

Table 2  
Demographic Information

GROUP	TOTAL OF STUDENTS	GRADE	AGE RANGE	GENDER*	
				MP (%)	FP (%)
Experimental	32	First-year	18-21	29 (91)	3 (9)
Control	32	First-year	18-21	25 (78)	7 (22)

\*M: Male; F: Female; P: Percentage

A total of 64 first-year students (academic year 2022–2023) from two classes at a vocational college in Guizhou Province, China, participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 21 years. Thirty-two students were assigned to the

experimental group and 32 to the control group. The experimental group comprised 91% male students ( $n = 29$ ) and 9% female students ( $n = 3$ ), while the control group consisted of 78% male students ( $n = 25$ ) and 22% female students ( $n = 7$ ).

Table 3  
*Students' English reading motivation*

ASPECTS	CONTROL		EXPERIMENTAL	
	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
External	3.08	0.69	3.47	0.71
Internal	3.20	0.67	3.56	0.71

As is shown in Table 3, the average score of reading motivation in terms of external ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) and internal ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) are at a low moderate level for control group.

Meanwhile, the average score of reading motivation in terms of external ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) and internal ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) are at a low moderate level for experimental group.

Table 4  
*Students' English reading motivation in terms of external motivation for control group (post-test)*

ITEM	NM	MNM	BM	MM	CM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	INTERPRETATION
I take initiative in English reading class.	3 (9.4%)	7 (21.9%)	19 (59.4%)	1 (3.1%)	2 (3.1%)	2.75	0.91	Low Moderate
By reading English, I can have a deeper understanding of foreign customs and human relations and broaden my horizon.	0	6 (18.8%)	20 (62.5%)	4 (12.5%)	2 (6.3%)	3.06	0.75	High Moderate
I look forward to finding out my reading grade.	0	3 (9.4%)	21 (65.6%)	5 (15.6%)	3 (9.4%)	3.25	0.76	High Moderate
In order to get good grades and win praise from my teachers and parents, I took English reading seriously.	0	5 (15.6%)	18 (56.3%)	6 (18.8%)	3 (9.4%)	3.21	0.83	High Moderate
I anticipate that engaging in English reading will enhance my comprehension of the distinctive structural characteristics inherent to various textual genres.	0	2 (6.3%)	25 (78.1%)	1 (3.1%)	4 (12.5%)	3.21	0.75	High Moderate
English reading helps me express my ideas in a more organised way.	0	5 (15.6%)	16 (50%)	6 (18.8%)	5 (15.6%)	3.34	0.93	High Moderate
By learning English reading, I hope to read English Novels and English newspapers.	0	2 (6.3%)	18 (56.3%)	8 (25%)	4 (12.5%)	2.43	0.80	Low Moderate
I hope I can use what I have learned in English reading class in my future job.	1 (3.1%)	4 (12.5%)	18 (56.3%)	6 (18.8%)	3 (9.4%)	3.18	0.89	High Moderate
I like to acquire new knowledge by reading.	0	7 (21.9%)	20 (62.5%)	2 (6.3%)	3 (9.4%)	3.03	0.82	High Moderate

Table 4

*Students' English reading motivation in terms of external motivation for control group (post-test) (continued)*

ITEM	NM	MNM	BM	MM	CM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	INTERPRE TATION
It is important for me to see my name on a list of good readers.	0	5 (15.6%)	18 (56.3%)	5 (15.6%)	4 (12.5%)	3.25	0.87	High Moderate
I like hearing the teacher say I read well.	0	6 (18.8%)	19 (59.4%)	3 (9.4%)	4 (12.5%)	3.15	0.88	High Moderate
External Motivation						3.08	0.69	High Moderate

The descriptive analysis indicates that external motivation for control group is at a high moderate level with a mean value of 3.08 and a standard deviation of 0.69. The item with the highest mean value is 'English reading helps me express my ideas in a more organised way' with a mean value of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 0.93, placing it at a high moderate level. Based on these findings, 5 individuals or 15.6% stated 'com-

pletely matched'. However, 5 individual or 15.6% stated 'mostly not matched'. Meanwhile, the item with the lowest mean value is 'By learning English reading, I hope to read English Novels and English newspapers' with a mean value of 2.43 and a standard deviation of 0.80, at a moderately low level. Based on these findings, 2 individuals or 6.3% stated 'mostly not matched'. However, 4 individual or 12.5% stated 'completely matched'.

Table 5

*Students' English reading motivation in terms of external motivation for experimental group (post-test)*

ITEM	NM	MNM	BM	MM	CM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	INTERPRE TATION
I take initiative in English reading class.	0	9 (28.1%)	15 (46.9%)	6 (18.8%)	2 (6.3%)	3.03	0.86	High Moderate
By reading English, I can have a deeper understanding of foreign customs and human relations and broaden my horizon.	0	0	15 (46.9%)	10 (31.3%)	7 (21.9%)	3.75	0.80	High Moderate
I look forward to finding out my reading grade.	0	0	21 (65.6%)	6 (18.8%)	5 (15.6%)	3.50	0.76	High Moderate
In order to get good grades and win praise from my teachers and parents, I took English reading seriously.	0	0	15 (46.9%)	7 (21.9%)	10 (31.3%)	3.84	0.88	High Moderate
I anticipate that engaging in English reading will enhance my comprehension of the distinctive structural characteristics inherent to various textual genres.	0	2 (6.3%)	19 (59.4%)	4 (12.5%)	7 (21.9%)	3.50	0.91	High Moderate
English reading helps me express my ideas in a more organised way.	0	2 (6.3%)	13 (40.6%)	6 (18.8%)	11 (34.4%)	3.81	0.99	High Moderate
By learning English reading, I hope to read English Novels and English newspapers.	9 (28.1%)	13 (40.6%)	3 (9.4%)	7 (21.9%)	0	2.25	1.10	Low Moderate
I hope I can use what I have learned in English reading class in my future job.	0	3 (9.4%)	14 (43.8%)	8 (25%)	7 (21.9%)	3.59	0.94	High Moderate



Table 5

*Students' English reading motivation in terms of external motivation for experimental group (post-test) (continued)*

ITEM	NM	MNM	BM	MM	CM	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	INTERPRE TATION
I like to acquire new knowledge by reading.	0	3 (9.4%)	17 (53.1%)	8 (25%)	4 (12.5%)	3.40	0.83	High Moderate
It is important for me to see my name on a list of good readers.	0	2 (6.3%)	10 (31.3%)	11 (34.4%)	9 (28.1%)	3.84	0.91	High Moderate
I like hearing the teacher say I read well.	0	2 (6.3%)	14 (43.8%)	7 (21.9%)	9 (28.1%)	3.71	0.95	High Moderate
External Motivation						3.47	0.71	High Moderate

The descriptive analysis indicates that overall external motivation for experimental group is at a high moderate level with a mean value of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.71. The item with the highest mean value is 'In order to get good grades and win praise from my teachers and parents, I took English reading seriously' and 'It is important for me to see my name on a list of good readers' with a mean value of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.88 to 0.91, placing it at a high moderate level. The item with the lowest mean value is 'By learning English reading, I hope to read English Novels and English newspapers' with a

mean value of 2.25 and a standard deviation of 1.10, at a moderately low level. Based on these findings, 9 individuals or 28.1% stated 'not matched'. However, 7 individual or 21.9% stated 'mostly matched'.

The comparison of traditional teaching method on students' reading motivation was conducted using a paired sample t test. Before conducting the paired sample t test analysis, the researcher ensured and confirmed that the data were normally distributed and homogenous. To verify the normal distribution of the data, the researcher conducted a normality test (Table 6).

Table 6

*Normality test for control group*

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION	SKEWNESS		KURTOSIS	
	VALUE	SE	VALUE	SE
External Pre-Test	0.116	0.414	-0.915	0.809
External Post-Test	1.110	0.414	-0.824	0.809
Internal Pre-Test	0.278	0.414	-0.193	0.809
Internal Post-Test	-0.630	0.414	-0.583	0.809

Table 6 shows that all aspects are normally distributed with Skewness and Kurtosis values for external before intervention (Skewness = 0.116, Kurtosis = -0.915) and after intervention (Skewness = 1.110, Kurtosis = -0.824) within the range of  $\pm 1.96$ . It also shows the internal aspects are normally distributed with Skewness and Kurtosis values (Skewness = 0.278, Kurtosis = -0.193) and after intervention (Skewness = -0.630, Kurtosis = -0.583) within the range of  $\pm 1.96$ . Table 7 shows the results of the paired sample t test.

Based on the findings, there were no significant disparities observed in the external motivation of the control group following traditional teaching method intervention, with post-test results has higher mean compared to pre-test outcomes. Table 6

also shows there were significant disparities observed in the internal motivation of the control group following traditional teaching method, with post-test results has higher mean compared to pre-test outcomes. Consequently, null hypothesis 3 is accepted, indicating no significant differences of traditional teaching method on students' motivation before and after the intervention for control group.

The comparison of TBL method on students' reading motivation was conducted using a paired sample t test. Before conducting the paired sample t test analysis, the researcher ensured and confirmed that the data were normally distributed and homogenous. To verify the normal distribution of the data, the researcher conducted a normality test as presented in Table 8.

Table 7  
*Paired sample t-test for control group*

PAIR	STUDENTS' MOTIVATION	MEAN	N	STD.	t	df	Sig.
Pair 1	External Pre-Test	2.91	32	0.70	-1.006	31	0.322
	External Post-Test	2.96	32	0.65			
Pair 2	Internal Pre-Test	2.31	32	0.63	-7.769	31	0.000
	Internal Post-Test	2.92	32	0.70			

Table 8  
*Normality test for experimental group*

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION	SKEWNESS		KURTOSIS	
	VALUE	SE	VALUE	SE
External Pre-Test	-0.132	0.414	-0.597	0.809
External Post-Test	0.493	0.414	-0.630	0.809
Internal Pre-Test	0.155	0.414	0.074	0.809
Internal Post-Test	0.591	0.414	-0.330	0.809

Based on Table 8, all aspects are normally distributed with Skewness and Kurtosis values for external before intervention (Skewness = -0.132, Kurtosis = -0.597) and after intervention (Skewness = 0.493, Kurtosis = -0.630) within the range of  $\pm 1.96$ . It also shows the internal aspects are normally distributed with Skewness and Kurtosis values (Skewness = 0.155, Kurtosis = 0.074) and after intervention (Skewness = 0.591, Kurtosis = -0.330) within the range of  $\pm 1.96$ . Table 9 shows the results of the paired sample t test.

The analysis revealed significant disparities in both external and internal motivation for the experimental group following the TBL intervention. The post-test results in these areas demonstrated higher mean scores compared to the pre-test outcomes, indicating substantial improvements in students' motivation levels as a result of the TBL intervention. The marked rise in external motivation indicates that, under the TBL approach, students developed a stronger interest in reading, influenced by external factors such as rewards and recognition. Similarly, the significant improvement in internal motivation indicates that students experienced a boost in their intrinsic interest and engagement with reading, likely due to the more engaging and interactive nature of TBL. Consequently, null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that TBL produced significant differences in

students' motivation levels before and after the intervention. This finding underscores the effectiveness TBL in enhancing both external and internal motivation among students in the experimental group.

#### 4.2. What are the students' views regarding the use of TBL on their reading motivation?

The researcher carried out interviews with students to explore their views of using TBL on their English reading motivation. Students shared that teacher's use of TBL in the classroom facilitated in terms of improving their motivation. Two main themes emerged namely improved motivation and their critical thinking skills.

##### 4.2.1. Improved motivation

The students' feedback acquired through the study reveals that TBL plays a significant role in enhancing their motivation for reading. R1 indicates that having specific tasks related to new vocabulary encourages students to actively seek out and understand unfamiliar words:

'... and I'm motivated to look them up and understand their meanings' (R1).

'I feel motivated to learn English' (R2).

This intrinsic motivation to explore and learn new terms is a direct result of the task-based approach, which provides a clear and purposeful goal for students. R3 underscores the idea that having a structured objective associated with reading tasks increases students' motivation by giving them a sense of purpose and direction:

*'It definitely motivates me because I know I'm working towards a goal' (R3).*

*'I like the way the teacher teaches, it is very interesting, I have the motivation to learn' (R4).*

Furthermore, R4 statement reflects how TBL not only sets a goal for students but also fosters a sense of achievement upon completing tasks: *'It motivates me because I know that there's a purpose behind reading. Completing the tasks gives me a sense of accomplishment and helps me stay motivated' (R5).*

The satisfaction derived from reaching a goal reinforces students' motivation to engage with the reading material. The sense of accomplishment that comes from finishing a task encourages continued effort and participation, demonstrating how goal-oriented activities can drive sustained motivation (Table 10).

Table 9  
Paired sample t-test for experimental group

PAIR	STUDENTS' MOTIVATION	MEAN	N	STD.	t	df	Sig.
Pair 1	External Pre-Test	2.88	32	0.63	-3.421	31	0.002
	External Post-Test	3.47	32	0.71			
Pair 2	Internal Pre-Test	2.96	32	0.66	-3.596	31	0.001
	Internal Post-Test	3.56	32	0.71			

Table 10  
Themes and coding: Improved motivation

THEME	CODING	EXCERPTS/RESPONDENTS
Improved motivation	motivated to learn	<i>'and I'm motivated to look them up and understand their meanings' (R1)</i>
	motivated to learn	<i>'I feel motivated to learn English' (R2)</i>
	it definitely motivates me	<i>'It definitely motivates me because I know I'm working towards a goal' (R3)</i>
	I have the motivation	<i>'I have the motivation to learn' (R4)</i>
	it motivates me because...	<i>'It motivates me because I know that there's a purpose behind reading. Completing the tasks gives me a sense of accomplishment and helps me stay motivated' (R5)</i>

#### 4.2.2. Improved critical thinking

The students' feedback reveals that TBL has significantly enhanced their analytical skills and their ability to synthesise and communicate information. R1 indicating that engaging with task-based activities has led to notable growth in these critical cognitive abilities:

*'My analytical skills and ability to synthesise information have improved a lot' (R1).*

*'I am more confident when it comes to critical thinking through TBL activities' (R2).*

This feedback underscores that TBL effectively develops students' skills in analysing and synthesising information from various sources. R2 statement reflecting a clear advancement in their capacity to critically evaluate and interpret information:

*'Yes, I think my ability to analyse and evaluate information is more developed now' (R3).*

*'I am able to think deeper and I can share my thought with my friend while doing the task' (R4).*

These statements highlight that TBL helps students refine their analytical skills, which are essential for effective academic

Table 11

*Themes and coding: Improved critical thinking*

THEME	CODING	EXCERPTS/RESPONDENTS
Improved Critical Thinking	analytical skills	'My analytical skills and ability to synthesise information have improved a lot' (R1)
	synthesise information	
	critical thinking	'I am more confident when it comes to critical thinking through TBL activities' (R2)
	ability to analyse and evaluate	'Yes, I think my ability to analyse and evaluate information is more developed now' (R3)
	able to think deeper can share thoughts	'I am able to think deeper and I can share my thought with my friend while doing the task' (R4)
		'Absolutely. I think my ability to analyse, synthesise, and communicate information has improved significantly' (R5)

and real-world problem-solving. Moreover, R3 elaborated that TBL not only enhances students' analytical skills but also improves their ability to integrate and articulate information:

*'Absolutely. I think my ability to analyse, synthesise, and communicate information has improved significantly' (R5).*

The development of these skills is crucial for higher-order thinking and effective communication, which are central to academic success and professional competence. The findings of this study reveal that while TBL offers various benefits, it also presents significant challenges, particularly related to tasks that demand extensive analytical skills and deep critical thinking. This aspect of TBL is crucial because it underscores how the cognitive demands of tasks can impact students' learning experiences and outcomes. The feedback from participants highlights that these rigorous tasks can sometimes be overwhelming, especially for students facing time constraints or struggling with complex cognitive processes. One major challenge identified in the study is that the analytical demands of TBL tasks can be overwhelming for students.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In terms of reading motivation, both the control and experimental groups showed low to moderate levels of both external and internal motivation. This suggests that vocational college students generally exhibit low levels of motivation related to their English reading practices. One major factor is the perception of English reading as a challenging and unenjoyable task. Niu (2021) reveals that many students find English reading to be demanding and do not see its value beyond fulfilling course requirements. This perception can lead to a lack of intrinsic motivation, where students engage in reading more out of necessity than personal interest or enjoyment.

For the control group, external motivation was at a low to moderate level. The item with the highest mean value was 'students hope to use what they have learned in English reading

class in their future job and like to acquire new knowledge through reading,' while the item with the lowest mean value was 'by reading English, students can gain a deeper understanding of foreign customs and human relations and broaden their horizons.' This pattern reflects a general trend where students show only a moderate level of external motivation towards their English reading activities. Law et al. (2022) highlight that students often display low motivation in English learning due to the perceived lack of relevance of the language to their immediate career needs. This low motivation can be exacerbated when students do not see a direct connection between their English reading tasks and their future job prospects. The finding that students hope to apply their learning in future jobs demonstrates a pragmatic approach to external motivation, driven by perceived tangible benefits.

For the experimental group, external motivation was also at a low to moderate level. The item with the highest mean value was 'students like hearing the teacher praise their reading performance,' while the item with the lowest mean value was 'students take initiative in English reading class.' This pattern underscores a general trend where external motivational factors are somewhat effective but still present significant challenges. Wu (2020) highlights that vocational students often lack motivation for English learning due to the absence of high-stakes exams or other external pressures that might otherwise drive their academic efforts. Without such pressures, students may find it challenging to maintain motivation.

Data from the interviews supported the survey findings. Students' feedback showed that TBL plays an important role in enhancing their motivation for reading. It was apparent that students became more motivated to look up words and comprehend their meanings. This, in turn, motivated them to learn English. The task-based approach provided opportunities for students to activate their intrinsic motivation, which indirectly encouraged them to learn new vocabulary words and gave them a

clear purpose to learn English. Students' feedback specifies that TBL significantly upsurges their motivation to read. This feedback reveals how TBL's planned, objective-driven reading tasks improve students' distinctive motivation to relate with new vocabulary and examine unacquainted terms. TBL translates reading from a passive task into an active, substantial endeavour by offering a clear and purposeful aim, motivating students to discover and understand new vocabulary. Prasansaph (2024) highlights the need of improving task design and implementation to augment the effectiveness of TBL in enabling student learning. Tian's (2024) research stresses that well-organised reading tasks not only captivate students but also induce them to examine and adapt new words. Tian (2024) declares that well-crafted reading tasks related with learning objectives may evidently increase student interest and promote language acquisition. This study's findings indicate that TBL markedly improves students' critical thinking abilities and their capacity to synthesise and express knowledge. Extensive research indicates that task-oriented techniques in TBL enhance the development of analytical skills, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving ability. Vu and Nguyen (2021) assert that TBL promotes student engagement in intricate cognitive processes via task completion, hence enhancing comprehension and analytical reasoning. Ellis (2017) contends that TBL's focus on problem-solving and real-world application aids students in honing their analytical abilities by necessitating the evaluation, synthesis, and application of material in significant situations. This viewpoint corresponds with the study's conclusions that TBL enhances students' analytical skills, which are crucial for proficient academic achievement.

Following Hu's (2021) perspective, which emphasises that while TBL was developed in foreign contexts and has been shaped by those environments, there is a pressing need to adapt it to better fit the specific conditions of English education in Chinese universities. Hu (2021) argues that TBL's foreign origins imply that its effectiveness is contingent upon careful adaptation to meet local educational needs, which includes addressing how traditional methods can sometimes fall short in motivating students. Traditional teaching methods, as noted by Hu (2021), often fail to address individual motivational needs comprehensively, which can result in only modest improvements in external motivational factors. The feedback from the study reveals that while TBL offers significant benefits for students, it also presents several challenges. These challenges include demanding tasks, repetitive tasks, restrictive tasks, and tight deadlines. One of the primary challenges identified is the demanding nature of the tasks used in TBL. Students often find these tasks to be highly challenging and requiring substantial effort, which can be overwhelming and counterproductive.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that TBL significantly enhances students' reading motivation when compared to traditional teaching methods. This underscores the importance of integrating TBL strategies into educational practices. Teachers are

encouraged to design and implement meaningful, real-life tasks that require students to use language in practical contexts and foster collaboration among peers. Such tasks should be carefully crafted to engage students and stimulate their interest, potentially leading to the development of a regular reading habit.

To maximise the effectiveness of TBL, teachers should focus on creating diverse and captivating learning materials that challenge students and ignite their enthusiasm for reading. By incorporating a variety of texts and topics, educators can cater to different interests and learning styles, making reading an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Additionally, establishing a supportive classroom environment is crucial. Teachers should foster a setting that encourages active participation, where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and asking questions. Providing consistent, constructive feedback on students' reading progress is also essential for maintaining motivation.

The study's findings indicate a need for curriculum enhancements to address students' low reading proficiency and motivation effectively. Educational institutions must prioritise revising their curriculum frameworks to incorporate comprehensive reading programmes that integrate both traditional and contemporary teaching methods, such as TBL. This approach addresses existing gaps and aligns with best practices in language education, promoting a more engaging and effective learning experience. To facilitate these curriculum improvements, it is crucial to support professional development for educators. Teachers should receive ongoing training in advanced reading instruction techniques and innovative teaching strategies to stay abreast of the latest pedagogical advancements. This training will empower educators to implement effective instructional practices and adapt their teaching methods to better meet students' needs.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research emerge, focusing on expanding and deepening our understanding of reading proficiency, motivation, and interest among vocational college students. One significant avenue for future research is to investigate the long-term effects of TBL on students' reading proficiency, motivation, and interest. While this study demonstrated immediate improvements in the experimental group's outcomes, it is crucial to explore whether these benefits are sustained over an extended period. Longitudinal studies with follow-up periods extending several months or even a year could offer valuable insights into the enduring impact of TBL interventions. This would help determine whether the improvements observed are temporary or if TBL can lead to lasting gains in students' reading skills and motivation. This mixed-method study has several relevant limitations that require attention. The 10-week intervention with 40 minutes per week is likely too short to show real changes in motivation, especially since the analysis mostly uses basic statistics. Due to the academic semester, available contact hours' time and cost constraints of the study, a longer duration and intensive interventions, preferably supported by longitudinal designs and advanced statistics, would enhance the results and give a better picture of motivational changes.

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