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Research Article

Task-Based Language Teaching and E-Portfolios in Enhancing EFL Students' Autonomous Learning Competencies and Speaking Performance

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is a crucial component of language learning, yet enhancing EFL learners' oral performance remains a challenge. Specifically, traditional English-speaking classrooms in Vietnam have limited students' ability to actively engage in, monitor, and be responsible for their own learning process. As a result, their oral performance is poorer compared to other skills. This study investigated how Task-Based Language Teaching integrating with e-portfolio could mitigate these challenges and improve students' speaking performance. Drawing on Ellis' Task-Based Language Teaching model, Barrett's e-portfolio framework, and Tham and Trinh's dimensions of learner autonomy, the research was carried out with 26 English as a Foreign Language students at a university in Ho Chi Minh City over two action research cycles, following Burns' framework. In Cycle 1, the qualitative data from the interviews revealed that signs of self-regulation and self-assessment emerged while participants' level of accountability were limited. In Cycle 2, after introducing scoring rubrics, peer feedback and self-reflection forms, participants demonstrated greater responsibility and significant improvements in speaking performance. These results suggest that integrating Task-Based Language Teaching with e-portfolios through iterative cycles not only enhances speaking skills but also cultivates essential competencies for autonomous learning, offering practical implications for EFL pedagogy.

Key words: learners' autonomy, TBLT, e-portfolios, speaking performance

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INTRODUCTION

Students' autonomous learning competencies play a vital role in students' academic development, particularly in enhancing speaking performance. In other words, those who are autonomous can strengthen their communicative competence effectively as they are able to regulate their learning process, assess their performance, and take responsibility[1]. Firstly, self-regulation highlights the learner-centred learning process, which requires students to actively monitor themselves[2]. Additionally, self-assessment offers students chance to access and use language independently[3]. When learners use resources for learning on their own, it helps increase ownership of responsibility for learning English[3,4]. In general, learners who demonstrate higher levels of self-regulation, self-assessment, and accountability are more effective in planning, practicing, and improving their speaking skills. As a result, autonomous learners have made significant gains in attaining accent, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency and accuracy in the target language[3]. Specifically, self-regulated students were found to have their fluency, syntactic and lexical complexity, and accuracy enhanced. Additionally, self-assessment pushed learners to study autonomously to accomplish their learning purposes and improve their capabilities for future performance[5]. It is evident that autonomous learning competencies are important in language acquisition, especially speaking skill.

However, developing these competencies is hardly an easy task. Specifically in Vietnam, English is taught in traditional teacher-centred classrooms, where opportunities for self-directed practice, independent reflection and responsibility remain limited[6,7]. To illustrate, Tuan[8] indicated that students acknowledged the significance of learning autonomy; however, they were not confident in their abilities to autonomous learning and in reality, their autonomous learning practice in speaking class was relatively low due to the traditional teaching methodology. In the Vietnamese educational context, students' autonomous learning competencies require substantial improvement.

It is suggested that setting goal, selecting materials, using technology, practising speaking outside class, and encouraging self-reflection can boost learners' autonomous learning competencies resulting in better speaking performance[7]. In response to this, in-

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tegrating TBLT and e-portfolios can be a promising measure. TBLT which places learners at the centre of learning with authentic and personalized tasks promotes autonomy in learners[9–11] and language outcomes such as vocabulary improvement and speaking skills[5]. In addition to this, e-portfolios create a structured space for reflection, feedback, and evidence of progress over time boosting students' learning autonomy[1] along with speaking performance[12,13]. It can be concluded that the combination of TBLT and e-portfolios not only can enhance students' speaking performance but also nurture their autonomous learning competencies, which plays an essential role in their academic success.

Task-based Language Teaching

A task is defined as a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others and should bear some resemblance to a task that people perform in real life[14]. When tasks are transformed from the real world into classroom, they become pedagogical in nature[15]. Nunan[15] defines a pedagogical task as follows:

A pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end (p.4).

In this definition, a pedagogical task focuses on meaning and has a sense of completeness. Later on, definitions of task are more outcome oriented. A task is an outcome oriented instructional segment[16] and is an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome[17].

Although there are various definitions of task, it has been argued that these definitions failed to distinguish task-as-workplan and task-as-process[18–20]. Ellis et al.[20] proposed that a task cannot be defined in terms of process as this is to some extent at least unpredictable. A task can be defined as a workplan or an instructional activity based on four criteria including meaning focus, gap completion, learners' own linguistic and non-linguistic resources, and communicative outcome[18].

The current study adopts the perspective of task-as-workplan for certain justifications. Firstly, the action nature of the study requires tasks to be systematically designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined across cycles. Secondly, the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios necessitates tasks to function as instructional units which can be documented, reflected and revised over time. Thirdly, Ellis'[18] definition aligns closely with the focus on autonomous learning competencies, because task-as-workplan allows learners to demonstrate greater engagement in regulating their learning processes to achieve communicative outcomes. Therefore, in this study, a task is defined as an instructional activity focusing on meaning and communicative gaps, where learners draw on their linguistic resources to obtain an identifiable oral outcome. The definition lays the foundation for investigating how task performance, reflection, and revision through e-portfolios can improve learner autonomy and speaking performance, which is also consistent with the pedagogical principles underlying TBLT. Ellis et al.[20] propose the three key principles that detail how learning revolves around tasks, including learning by doing, individual development, and learners' communicative needs. Concerning the first principle, language acquisition is conceptualized as an incidental process wherein learners acquire linguistic knowledge and skills through task performance, rather than for it. The second principle is individual development in which learning takes place in line with learners' internal syllabuses. Tasks provide the space for learners to integrate task content and their own language resources. Lastly, tasks should present relevance with real communicative demands of learners, which would directly link to learners' perception of linguistic proficiency. In sum, these principles indicate the need for pedagogical practices that can both engage learners in meaningful task performance and support self-reflection, evaluation, and responsibility.

E-portfolios

Although TBLT can raise learner autonomy through meaningful task performance, it does not ensure sustained self-reflection, evaluation, and accountability. Not to mention, oral tasks are often transient requiring a systematic mechanism for evaluating and revisiting performance. To compensate for these limitations, e-portfolios support documentation, reflection and formative assessment over time, thereby extending TBLT beyond classroom context.

In this sense, e-portfolios are commonly conceptualized as digital collections of learners' artifacts which demonstrate their learning processes, progress and achievement. For example, Barrett[21] proposes a comprehensive definition of e-portfolio as follows:

An electronic portfolio uses technologies as the container, allowing students or teachers to collect and organize portfolio artifacts in many media types (audio, video, graphics, text). Hypertext links organize

the material, connecting evidence to appropriate outcomes, goals, or standards (p.438).

E-portfolio offers an ongoing collection of material, selection, reflection and presentation from an archive[22]. Additionally, e-portfolios can also be regarded as tools to display students' performances and their improvement or achievement over a period[13,23]. Zhang and Tur[24] synthesize that "an e-portfolio is a comprehensive electronic collection of multimodal artifacts as learning evidence that can be used in teaching, learning, assessment, and showcasing; it illustrates skills development, focusing on the learning process, progress, and achievement" (p.66). The literature informs that e-portfolios are collections of different kinds of artifacts on an online platform which learners can make decisions about artifact selection, reflection, and presentation. This definition features the learner-centred and process-oriented nature of e-portfolios.

The literature highlights the pedagogical purposes of e-portfolios including teaching, learning, assessment and showcasing[21,24]. Regarding assessment portfolios, they are tied to a set of standards with feedback or validation and support the learners' ongoing learning, which relates to the concept of assessment for learning[21]. Barrett[21] highlighted the interrelationship which the purpose and organization of portfolio are agreed with learners, the artifacts selected by learners for feedback to improve learning formatively and the intrinsic motivation is promoted. In other words, e-portfolios provide iterative cycles of performance, feedback, and reflection, thereby developing greater awareness of learning goals and criteria. This process supports continuous and formative assessment for learning development, rather than merely measuring outcomes.

Literature also suggests that e-portfolio assessment enables students to integrate their learning and make connections between modules in an authentic and meaningful way[25–27]. In other words, the implication of e-portfolios "requires self-regulation, self-reflection, and self-evaluation"[24] which can directly link with elements of learning autonomy including self-regulation, self-assessment, and accountability. This is because learners can engage in metacognitive practices that support autonomous learning when selecting artifacts, responding to feedback, and documenting progress.

In speaking classes, e-portfolios can transform oral performance to learning evidence through audio or video recordings. These tangible products allow learners to review their spoken output, identify errors, and track their improvement over time. As a result, learners' level of fluency, pronunciation, lexical and grammatical accuracy, and confidence increase significantly[12,13]. Moreover, when embedded within TBLT framework, e-portfolios can function as a mediating tool to connect task performance to reflection, autonomy, and speaking improvement.

Autonomous learning competencies

Autonomous learning is featured as a natural development involving a self-directed, self-regulated, and internally motivated process during which learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning actively[28]. Additionally, autonomy in learning is driven by the learners' intrinsic need for self-determination and personal growth. The process involves both cognitive abilities such as information processing and learning strategies and affective control namely emotions, self-efficacy, and confidence. This concept highlights the central role of self-development through taking responsibility for learning, setting meaningful goals, managing progress.

McCombs and Whisler[28] introduced seven principles underpinning autonomous learning. The first principle states that learners engage in learning for personal growth and achievement of goals thanks to the intrinsic force. The second principle emphasizes how learners' beliefs, goals, and self-concepts affect the way learners process and interpret information. Third, learners' learning engagement can be influenced by positive self-esteem and internal control. Fourth, self-reference, or connection between learning and personal goals, enhances motivation and learning. The fifth principle asserts that positive emotions (confidence and interest) promote self-regulated learning, whereas the opposite is seen for negative ones (anxiety). Sixth, learners pursue autonomy when they perceive learning as relevant to personal goals and when they feel competent and in control. Lastly, support from teachers, peers, and family, as well as developmental maturity, shape the learner's ability to be autonomous.

Building on this framework, Tham and Trinh[1] propose that autonomous learning competencies comprise the three key dimensions including self-regulation, self-assessment, and personal accountability. Self-regulation demonstrates how learners are able to set clear learning goals, adopt appropriate strategies and tasks that support their individual needs and references. In addition, self-regulated learning also requires monitoring and managing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to meet these goals[29]. Second, self-assessment involves learners' ability to measure their learning

progress by acknowledging areas for improvement and being responsible for making adjustments. This evaluative process enriches learners' motivation, self-confidence, and engagement, which are crucial for autonomous learning. Lastly, personal accountability refers to learners' own duty for their learning outcomes, independent of teacher involvement. This dimension promotes learners' sense of ownership and the ability to self-direct learning.

Overall, these autonomous learning competencies play a vital role in fostering learners' independence in language learning. As these competencies equip learners to establish clear goals, critically reflect on their performance, and engage in self-correction, they significantly enhance students' overall speaking proficiency. Furthermore, the integration of these competencies and the framework of TBLT and e-portfolios can provide learners structural opportunities to regulate their own speaking task, assess their performance, and sustain accountability through systematic reflection and feedback.

TBLT and e-portfolios in enhancing autonomous learning competencies

The integration of Ellis's[18] model of TBLT with Barrett's[21] e-portfolio framework creates a complementary approach to enhancing autonomous learning competencies. Ellis'[18] model of TBLT consists of the three phases in a lesson: the pre-task phase, main task phase and post-task phase. During the pre-task phase, educators prepare learners for task execution through structured preparatory activities - such as strategic planning or exposure to model performances - which inherently foster self-regulation. Following that is the main task phase which allows students to perform task individually, in pairs with the teacher, or in small groups. During this form-focused instruction phase where the attention is drawn to the correctness of language use through corrective feedback, learners are encouraged to identify strengths and weaknesses, and monitor their performance. In the post-phase, students are expected to solve the linguistic problems noted during the tasks, which cultivates their learning accountability.

It is evident that TBLT's phases align seamlessly with the stages of e-portfolio development. Barrett[21] lays a foundation for a framework including five main stages in constructing e-portfolios initiating with identifying the purposes, subjects and resources; collecting learning materials; reflection and evaluation; connecting and sharing learning materials; and culminating in presenting the portfolio. Self-reflection and evaluation are the key components of these stages, contributing to learners' autonomous learning competencies. Through the integration of task-based activities and ongoing process of e-portfolios, learners are motivated to be accountable for their learning, which eventually improves their speaking performance.

Together, these models foster learners' autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance. By embedding task-based activities within the ongoing process of e-portfolio construction, learners are not only guided to take responsibility for managing, evaluating, and showcasing their learning, thereby strengthening their overall autonomy but are also given meaningful opportunities to improve speaking performance. As demonstrated in Figure 1, the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios provides a coherent framework for enhancing speaking performance and autonomous learning competencies.

In Vietnam, previous studies have primarily examined either TBLT or e-portfolios in isolation, focusing on their role in enhancing writing skills, autonomous learning, or speaking performance. For example, much of the existing research has centered on process-based writing instruction supported by e-portfolios[30], while other studies have explored the effectiveness of e-portfolios in fostering learner autonomy[1,31], or TBLT in promoting communicative competence[32–34]. However, these strands of research have rarely been integrated. This action research seeks to address this pedagogical gap by integrating TBLT and e-portfolios in my own teaching context, with the aim of enhancing students' autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance.

This study is aiming at investigating the effectiveness of integrating TBLT and e-portfolio as an assessment tool in enhancing students' autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance.

Research question 1: How does the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios enhance EFL learners' autonomous learning competencies?

Research question 2: How does the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios enhance EFL learners' speaking performance?

METHOD

Research design

This study employed an action research design for 8 weeks, following Burns'[35] model, across the two cycles (Figure 2). This research design was selected as it encourages reflective practice and allows the researcher to systematically investigate and intervene in

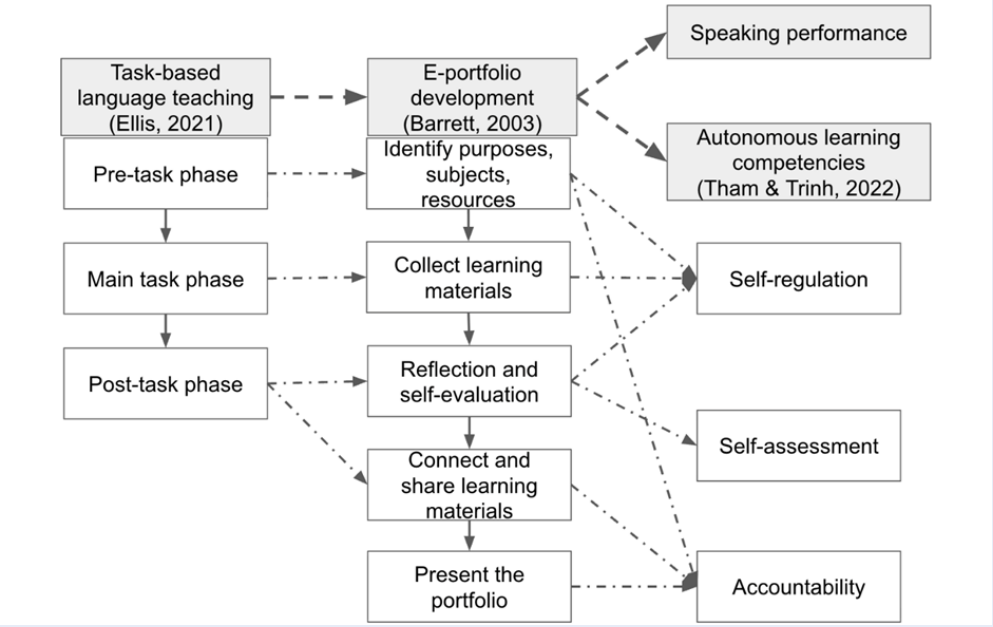

Figure 1: The theoretical framework for integrating TBLT and E-portfolios to enhance autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance [Source: authors]

problematic teaching and learning situations, aiming to bring about practical solutions[36]. This approach is well-suited for exploring classroom-based innovations, such as integrating TBLT and e-portfolios assessment into speaking instruction.

Cycle 1: Plan, Action, Observe, and Reflect

Plan: The researcher identified students' difficulties with autonomous learning competencies (low self-regulation, limited self-assessment, weak accountability) in speaking tasks. A plan was made to integrate TBLT activities with e-portfolio reflections.

Action: Participants engaged in TBLT tasks, uploaded and reflected on their recordings via e-portfolios during the first three weeks. Figure 3 shows the intervention of cycle 1.

Observation: The data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews with 10 students, which explored students' initial perceptions of how TBLT and e-portfolio improve autonomous learning competencies, speaking performance, challenges and suggestions.

Reflection: The findings indicated that while students began to engage in self-regulation and reflection, they needed clearer scaffolding and more structured feedback to strengthen accountability. These insights informed the design of Cycle 2.

Cycle 2: Plan, Action, Observe, and Reflect

Planning: Based on the Cycle 1 findings, adjustments were made since week 4: structured reflection prompts, and the teacher and students' co-feedback were added to support autonomous learning competencies more explicitly.

Action: The revised intervention was implemented, with students continuing TBLT tasks and e-portfolio submissions but with enhanced scaffolding. Figure 4 illustrates the redesigned intervention during weeks 4-8.

Observation: Multiple sources of data were collected, including questionnaires on learner autonomous learning competencies, follow-up interviews, pre-tests and post-tests of speaking performance. The triangulation of data collection provides both qualitative and quantitative evidence of learning outcomes.

Reflections: The findings showed greater improvements in learners' speaking performance through aspects such as fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and idea generation, along with the stronger development of self-regulation, self-assessment, and personal accountability.

The context of the study

The study was conducted in a language centre which belongs to the University of Social Science and Humanities, Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City. The centre has been famous for offering various foreign language courses since 1996, especially English communication and test preparation courses.

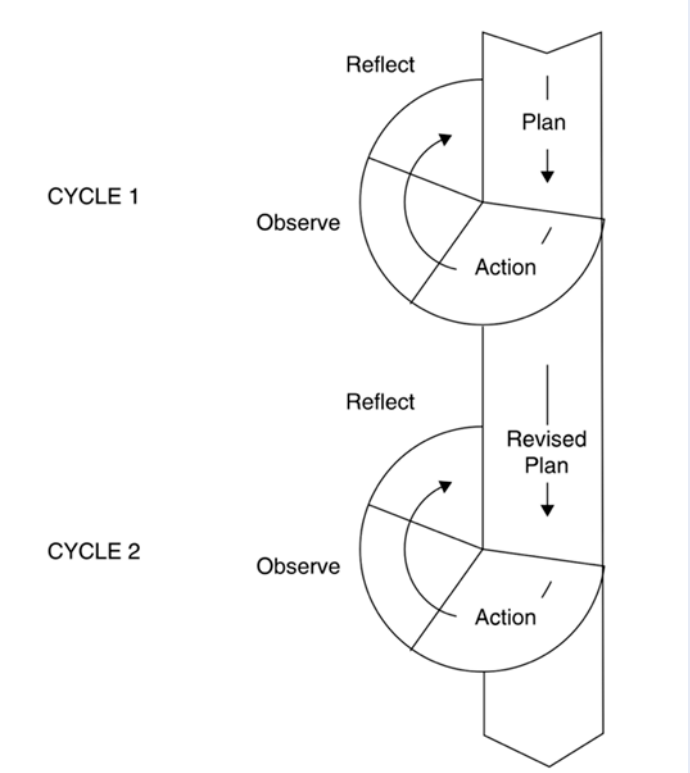

Figure 2: The two Cycles in Burn's action research framework [Source: 35]

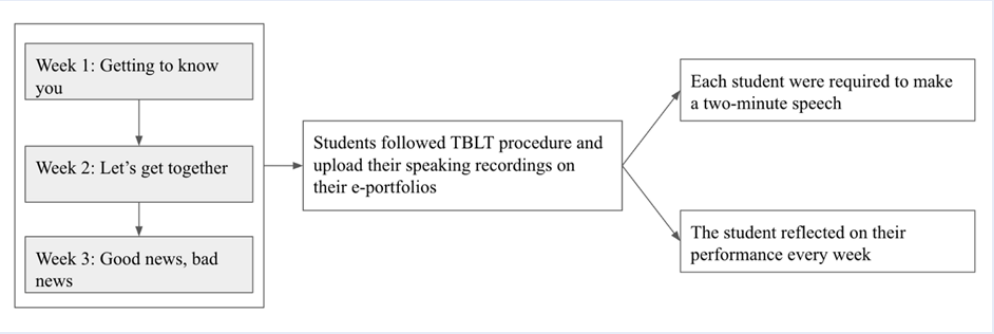

Figure 3: Cycle 1 intervention [Source:authors]

The students at this centre are all nonnative speakers of English. They are studying English to prepare for English proficiency tests like IELTS, VSTEP, or APTIS.

Participants

The research employed a convenience sampling method, focusing on non-English major university students at the centre. The sample consists of 26 students aged between 18 and 23 years old from the researcher's class, all of whom participated in the questionnaire, interviews and pre-test and post-test to gauge their autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance. Ethical considerations were carefully addressed as all participants were informed about the purposes and procedure of the study. The participation was entirely voluntary and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. To ensure confidentiality, participants' information was kept anonymous and their responses would solely be

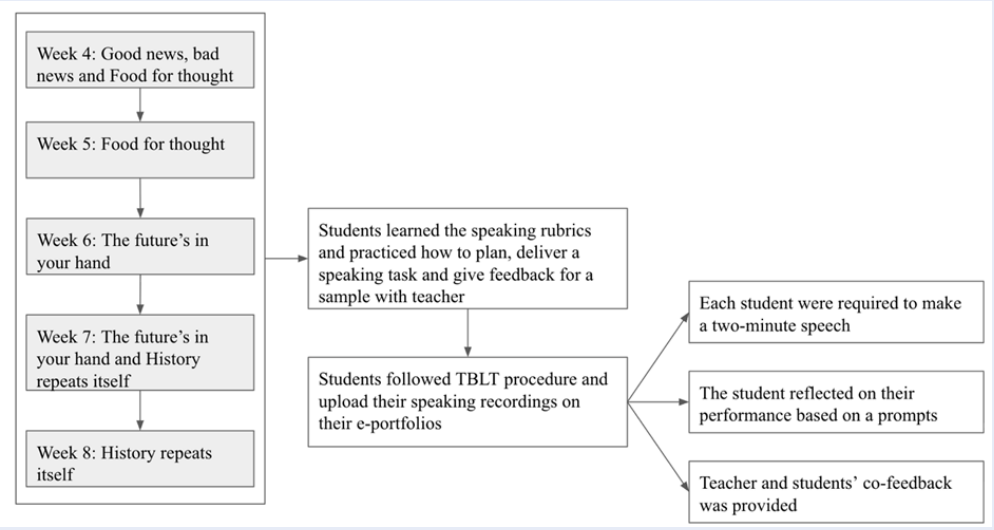

Figure 4: Cycle 2 intervention [Source: authors]

used for the current research's purposes.

From the demographic information collected, it can be seen that half of the participants are males, they are mostly freshmen (92.3%), and they have studied English as a compulsory subject at school for many years. They have completed the placement test of the university to ensure the equal distribution of their English proficiency at level A2.

Research tools

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was structured into the three main sections. Section 1 collects participants' demographic information, including age, gender, and English proficiency level. Section 2 explores learners' perceptions of how TBLT and e-portfolios enhance various aspects of autonomous learning, adapted from Tham and Trinh[1]. This section comprises 16 items measuring the three key autonomous learning competencies: self-regulation (learners' ability to plan, monitor, and manage their learning), self-assessment (learners' reflection on performance and awareness of learning progress), and accountability (learners' sense of responsibility and ownership in the learning process). Section 3 focuses on learners' perceptions of how TBLT and e-portfolios contribute to the enhancement of their speaking performance. This section includes 21 items that evaluate learners' experiences with the implementation of TBLT and e-portfolios in speaking instruction, specifically in terms of fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, idea generation, and opportunities for feedback and revision.

To check the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed on SPSS. As presented in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.960, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for the scale. This suggests that the questionnaire items reliably measure the underlying constructs of the study.

Interviews

In Cycle 1, the interviews served as the primary data collection method, providing exploratory evidence about how students engaged with TBLT and e-portfolios to improve their autonomous learning practices and speaking performance. The interview questions include the benefits, challenges, and suggestions to improve the intervention. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese for 15 to 20 minutes.

In Cycle 2, to further explore students' perceptions and complement the quantitative findings, a semi-structured open-ended interview was conducted in after the questionnaire. The interview was divided into three parts. Part 1 explored learners' development of autonomous learning competencies including self-regulation, self-assessment, and accountability. Part 2 focused on students' perceptions of how TBLT and e-portfolios influenced their speaking performance. Part 3 encouraged students to share their overall experiences.

Pre-test and post-test

To investigate learners' speaking improvement after the intervention, pre-test and post-test results were collected. These tests were administered by the centre and consist of two parts. Part 1 was an introduction and interview section lasting 2-3 minutes, where

Table 1: The reliability statistics of the questionnaires [Source: authors]

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.960	.959	40

students responded to three personal or general questions. Part 2 involved an individual long-turn task lasting 3-4 minutes, in which students were required to present their opinions about a given situation. To ensure the comparability of the pre-test and post-test, both assessments followed the same structure and format, were administered under similar conditions and assessed using the same rubric. Although different topics were used in the two tests to minimize memorization effects, they were designed to be equivalent in terms of difficulty and communicative demands ensuring the valid and reliable comparison between them.

The students' speaking performances were assessed by a trained rater with experience in evaluating EFL speaking. To ensure scoring reliability, all speaking performances were evaluated using a detailed analytic rubric provided by the centre, which evaluates students' performance across the key criteria including fluency, accuracy, coherence, and vocabulary. The rater followed standardized scoring criteria and conducted repeated scoring with time intervals to maintain consistency. This procedure helped minimize subjectivity and ensured stable measurement of students' speaking performance.

Data analysis

An analysis, conducted using SPSS version 30, was undertaken on the quantitative data. Following this, the qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on Swain's[37] thematic analysis model. This model consists of the seven steps: preparing a table, familiarizing with data, coding a priori and posteriori, creating a posteriori code, adding them to the table, cutting and pasting text into a Google sheet document, and collapsing posteriori codes into themes.

RESULTS

Cycle 1

In Cycle 1, when students had received no specific guidelines and scaffolding, the four dominant themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews including the improvement of autonomous learning competencies, speaking performance, challenges, and suggestions after the intervention.

Autonomous learning competencie s in Cycle 1

The theme focuses on three different dimensions of autonomous learning competences after the intervention. The findings in Cycle 1 indicate that learners started engaging in self-regulation and self-reflection, although their accountability remained limited.

Concerning self-regulation, most students claimed that TBLT activities allowed them to plan and manage their preparation and work independently. For example, one student stated: "the TBLT and e-portfolio allowed me to finish speaking assignments on time and systematically track my learning progress" (T2). One student also noted that planning before speaking boosts their confidence when they perform their speaking task.

Turning to self-assessment, learners reported being able to reflect on their own performance. One student (T7) clarified that he can "understand the strengths and weaknesses" in his speaking performance clearly. Interview responses showed that learners had initial awareness of their capability and specific areas for improvement such as pronunciation or grammar use. However, this process lacked clear criteria and formality.

On the other hand, the level of learners' personal accountability is relatively low in Cycle 1. Some learners expressed confusion about how to revise their speaking performances after receiving feedback. Others said that they completed the tasks because of the course requirements rather than speaking improvement. The data clearly demonstrate that learners could regulate and reflect on their speaking performance though ownership of learning had yet to be fully developed.

Speaking performance in Cycle 1

The second theme explores how TBLT and e-portfolios can enhance speaking performance. Most students reported to have their lexical resource improved as the combination facilitates them "to remember vocabulary" (T6). In addition, students also state to have their speaking skill improved generally, "It helps me improve my speaking skills" (T9). It became clear that students recognized that TBLT and e-portfolios can make speaking skill better.

Challenges of applying TBLT and e-portfolios in Cycle 1

Although students agreed that their autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance improved after they had experienced TBLT and e-portfolios, they also experienced several challenges.

Firstly, most students had challenges identifying the assessment criteria and expectation for their revisions. For example, one student stated that "I occasionally found it challenging to fully understand what was expected in the revisions" (T1). Several students also expressed the need for suggestions for improvement in the feedback provided.

Secondly, students found it hard to reflect synthetically on their own performance. Comments about this were fairly common:

I also struggled at times with knowing exactly how to reflect deeply and meaningfully on my learning. Regarding the teacher's feedback, although it was helpful, there were moments when the comments were too general or brief, making it hard for me to understand how to improve specifically. Additionally, applying the feedback effectively sometimes required more guidance or examples (T2).

Suggestions for improving the implementation of TBLT and e-portfolios

Learners also left comments on how to improve the intervention. The majority of participants voiced for the clearer scaffolding, which would make they know what is expected. One student explained: "To improve this method, I suggest providing clearer guidelines and examples for how to reflect effectively in the e-portfolio" (T2). Moreover, some students recommended more structured feedback from both teacher and friends. One student was more concerned that: "Additionally, incorporating short peer-review sessions could allow us to learn from each other and reflect more deeply on our own work" (T1). Regarding the feedback, students suggested "more specific comments with examples" (T7).

Cycle 2

Based on the suggestions from Cycle 1, Cycle 2 incorporated scaffolding strategies and used multiple data sources to evaluate the intervention. The findings are presented in the two main themes beginning with the improvement of students' autonomous learning competencies and students' improvement in terms of speaking performance.

Autonomous learning competencies in Cycle 2

Compared with Cycle 1, the participants in Cycle 2 reported to be more autonomous in their learning. Specifically, they also described that they took greater responsibility for their learning than the participants in Cycle 1.

Self-regulation

Quantitative data supported that students expressed positive perception towards how the implementation of TBLT and e-portfolios improve their self-regulation (see Table 2) in the second cycle. The majority of students reported that the intervention helped them set clearer goals for their speaking tasks (M = 3.96) and plan the suitable schedule for completing those tasks (M = 3.92). They could prepare vocabulary (M = 3.88) and ideas (M = 3.85) for their performance, and overcome psychological hindrances (M = 3.81). Additionally, students stated that they could get over linguistic difficulties (M = 3.73) as well as modify ideas (M = 3.73) when speaking.

The data from the interview supported the questionnaires result. Learners described that they prepared outlines and rehearsals for their own speaking performance. They were able to schedule their learning logically, one of them clarified (T8):

The e-portfolio helped me organize my learning process and clearly track my progress over time. I usually noted down what I have to do to complete the task step by step so that I could complete the speaking assignment along with giving comments for my friends at the same time. Now, I know how to put my own learning in a timetable (T8).

Moreover, similar to the participants in Cycle 1, the participants in Cycle 2 could keep track and monitor their learning progress systematically and confidently without relying heavily on teacher's directions.

Self-assessment

The questionnaire result revealed generally high levels of agreement concerning self-assessment development using provided rubrics and reflection prompts (see Table 2). Mean scores for items related to identifying students' strengths and weaknesses (M = 3.77), assessing grammar (M = 3.85), vocabulary (M = 3.77), organization (M = 3.77), and ideas (M = 3.69) were high.

Qualitative data further demonstrated this development. The Cycle 2 participants appreciated the guidelines, sample demonstrations and feedback which encouraged them to reflect and identify strengths and weaknesses. One student stated:

It helped me reflect on my work, identify strengths and weaknesses, and assess my grammar and vocabulary use easier. In addition, the guidelines and feedback from the teacher and friends were specific and constructive, allowing me to recognize the areas I needed to improve. This motivated me to put more effort into my work and continuously improve (T8).

Several said that they had carefully considered the feedback from teacher and peers and incorporate selectively. In addition, most students were more aware of their learning progress when replaying their speaking recordings frequently to compare recent with previous ones.

Personal accountability

Table 2: The students' autonomous learning competence [Source: authors]

Dimensions	Items	Statements I think TBLT and e-portfolios in the course helped me …	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Students' self-regulation	C1	plan the schedule for completing the speaking tasks.	3.92	.628
	C2	set goals for the speaking tasks.	3.96	.662
	C3	find materials to prepare the necessary vocabulary for the task.	3.88	.816
	C4	find materials to prepare the necessary ideas for the task.	3.85	.784
	C5	use strategies to overcome linguistic difficulties in speaking English.	3.73	.827
	C6	use strategies to overcome psychological difficulties in speaking English.	3.81	.801
	C7	modify ideas to ensure a logical organization while speaking.	3.73	.874
Students' self-assessment	D1	identify my strengths and weaknesses while speaking.	3.77	.765
	D2	assess my ideas when speaking.	3.69	.970
	D3	assess my vocabulary when speaking.	3.77	.863
	D4	assess my grammar when speaking.	3.85	.967
	D5	assess my organization when speaking.	3.77	.815
Students' personal accountability	E1	set a timetable during the learning process.	3.77	.652
	E2	try to finish speaking assignments on time.	4.00	.800
	E3	choose an appropriate learning method outside the classroom (e.g., discussing, peer reviewing, reflecting, questioning, etc.).	3.81	.749
	E4	choose a practice method properly (e.g., recording my talk, making a video with peers, etc.).	3.85	.732

The survey's results showed that students become more responsible for their learning (see Table 2). Students took more duty to meet their deadline on time (M = 4.00) and select suitable methods to practice speaking (M = 3.85). In addition, students could plan their learning through a clear timetable (M = 3.77) and do extra practice beyond classroom (M = 3.81).

Qualitative data indicated that, unlike Cycle 1, the Cycle 2 participants developed greater sense of accountability as they could reflect on their own learning easier thanks to the scaffolding, as this student pointed out:

Lastly, having everything in one place made it easier to reflect on my learning and feel more responsible for my own improvement. Overall, it was a motivating and insightful learning experience (T7).

This student was particularly insightful as he realized that a responsible student can be more self-motivated and eager to delve deeper into their learning. In the second Cycle, most students could control their learning progress actively, one student highlighted:

It helps me develop speaking skills, when recording and uploading to the platform helps me more control over my learning. I can listen record assignments

again to review the topics (T8).

They could also recall learned knowledge, some stated: "It helped me remember again about things what I learned in the class, becoming more active in my learning" (T6). This indicates that the speaking class became more student-centered, making students active agents in their learning.

The improvement of speaking performance

To quantitatively illustrate the impact of TBLT and e-portfolios, Table 3 shows that there was a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance, $t(25) = -14.40$, $p < .001$. The negative mean difference indicates that post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, confirming the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, Table 4 compares students' average speaking score before and after the intervention. The result presents that students' speaking score increased significantly.

Table 5 demonstrates how students' speaking improved through their perspective. Linguistically, students agreed that their fluency (M = 3.69), grammar (M = 4.08), vocabulary (M = 4.04), pronunciation (M = 3.77), and organization were enhanced. From a psychological perspective, their confidence (M = 3.81), awareness (M = 3.88), and comfortability (M = 3.81) were boosted. Moreover, the feedback they received from the teacher and peers was found to be useful (M = 3.96).

Interview responses echoed these perceptions. All of the interviewees stated that their speaking performance was enhanced significantly thanks to TBLT, e-portfolios, and feedback. One student, for instance, said:

It helps me improve my speaking skills from the feedback, uploading and revising my recordings. The tasks were useful and closely related to my study, the sequence from preparing to revising was well-structured (T9).

Students' speaking accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation witnessed a dramatical growth. One student clearly commented that:

Secondly, the structured feedback from the teacher and friends helped me improve specific areas of my speaking performance, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency or argument development. The comments were constructive and guided me on how to revise effectively. (T2)

It can be seen that students highly valued the feedback, which explains how scaffolding and clearer guideline help students to fully understand, comfortably exchange comments and consistently boost their speaking performance.

Collectively, findings across the two action research cycles highlight notable changes in students' autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance. The findings in Cycle 1 demonstrated initial emerging autonomous learning competencies while that in Cycle 2 revealed more consistent development of autonomy through the introduction of scaffolding and reflection prompts. These findings lay foundation for the following discussion in the next section.

DISCUSSION

Research question 1: How does the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios enhance EFL students' autonomous learning competencies?

The findings indicate that students' autonomous learning competencies including self-regulation, self-assessment, and accountability were progressively developed through the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios. Importantly, this development was gradual rather than immediate, which shows the important role of instructional design and scaffolding.

In Cycle 1, students demonstrated only emerging signs of autonomy where reflections were often superficial and portfolio submissions were inconsistent. This is because they were uncertain about how to plan and prepare their speaking performance effectively or revise their recordings independently. However, after the introduction of scaffolding, the students in Cycle 2 became more actively involved in planning, monitoring and managing their learning, showing stronger self-regulation. For example, they believed that they were able to identify the requirements, set goals, and find materials to prepare for the task. This is consistent with Tham and Trinh [1] and Amini et al. [4] who affirmed that students could access external materials for vocabulary and ideas, choose appropriate methods to overcome psychology related to English speaking difficulties. This result is also in line with Yastibas and Yastibas's [12] who reported that students could select and organize the content, set goals, and evaluate their learning process. These results support that learners in autonomy-oriented classrooms take an active role in their learning processes, while teachers function mainly as facilitators.

In terms of self-assessment, it was found that guided reflection and structured prompts encouraged deeper evaluative practice. Students recognized the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses while speaking. Additionally, they based on the provided rubrics to assess their ideas, vocabulary, grammar,

Table 3: The paired Sample t-test results for students'pre-test and post-test speaking scores [Source: authors]

Measure	Mean difference	Standard Deviation (SD)	t	df	p-value
Pre-test and post-test	-0.71	0.252	-14.40	25	.000

Table 4: The students' speaking preand post-test [Source: authors]

	Mean		Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	7.731	26	.5698	.1117
Post-test	8.442	26	.5537	.1086

Table 5: The students' perception towards the improvement of their speaking performance [Source: authors]

Items	Statements After experiencing TBLT and e-portfolios, I found …	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
F1	my speaking fluency improved.	3.69	.549
F2	my pronunciation has become clearer.	3.77	.815
F3	my idea organization become more logical.	3.81	.694
F4	more aware of how to improve my speaking.	3.88	.711
F5	feedback helpful to revise my speaking tasks.	3.96	.662
F6	feedback helped me correct my grammar mistakes.	4.08	.628
F7	feedback helped me correct my vocabulary mistakes.	4.04	.599
F8	comfortable recording and listening to my speaking performance.	3.81	.849
F9	my confidence was boosted.	3.81	.849

and organization. This echoes Tham and Trinh's[1] argument that systematic e-portfolio organization allows learners to regulate and evaluate their learning activities. However, this finding contrasts with research conducted by Duong[38] which found a high level of hesitation among students when engaging in self-assessment. The current study suggests that such reluctance can be alleviated by using clear assessment rubrics and scaffolding to organize speaking e-portfolios.

With respect to personal accountability, the students in Cycle 1 did not report noticeable growth; however, there was an evident increase in Cycle 2. In the second Cycle, students took greater initiative in setting a timetable to finish speaking assessment on time, choosing suitable learning and practice strategies. This finding is consistent with Tham and Trinh's[1] study, which showed that learners demonstrated high awareness of their learning responsibilities and greater initiative when supported by structured learning environment. The contrast between the two cycles indicates that accountability is not an automatic outcome but can be cultivated through explicit scaffolding, consistent feedback, and clear portfolio requirements.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that autonomous learning competencies evolved progressively across two cycles. In Cycle 1, learners began to regulate and assess their own speaking performance over time while still taking low responsibility for their learning. In Cycle 2, nevertheless, the integration of scaffolding measures such as assessment criteria, reflection prompts, and feedback enabled participants to take greater ownership of their learning. Therefore, they can set clear goals, monitor progress, evaluate speaking performance critically, and be responsible for task completion. This confirms that when meaningful tasks are combined with structured opportunities for reflection and feedback, autonomous learning competencies can be effectively fostered.

Research question 2: How does the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios enhance students' speaking performance?

The findings indicate that the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios was associated with notable improvements in students' speaking performance across multiple components, including vocabulary, grammar,

fluency, pronunciation, and idea generation. The pre-test and post-test results in Cycle 2 showed measurable gains, with the most substantial improvements in fluency and idea generation. This suggests that repeated practice with communicative tasks allowed students to speak more naturally and generate ideas more effectively. The noticeable gains in fluency can be attributed to repeated performance, which reduces cognitive load and allows learners to shift attention from form to meaning. As they familiarize themselves with task structures, then could allocate more cognitive resources to message delivery bringing more natural speech at length. This finding aligns with Yekta and Kana'ni[39] who confirmed the improvements in fluency thanks to using Google Drive-based e-portfolios. In addition, Zheng and Barrot[13] also suggested that e-portfolios allow the high visibility of their performances resulting in sustained engagement through accountability.

Qualitative data further reinforced these results. Students reported becoming more confident, more accurate, and better able to monitor their errors through self-recording and feedback. The chance to record, review, and revise oral performances enabled leaners to notice linguistic issues that may not have been apparent during real-time speech production. These findings are consistent with Ellis'[18] argument that TBLT facilitates authentic communicative practice and Barrett's[21] view that e-portfolios support reflection and revision. Together, these results confirm the effectiveness of this integrated approach in enhancing oral proficiency.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study examined the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios in enhancing learners' autonomous learning competencies and speaking performance through two action cycles. The findings reinforce the conception that autonomous learning competencies are not innate, but can be cultivated through instructional design. Across the cycles, learners demonstrated gradual and meaningful development in self-regulation, self-assessment, and personal accountability. While Cycle 1 revealed emerging signs of autonomy and limited responsibility, Cycle 2 provided clearer evidence that scaffolding, rubrics, reflection forms, and feedback significantly enhanced learners' engagement with their learning processes. Importantly, learners became more systematic in planning and monitoring their speaking tasks and more critical in evaluating their performance based on criteria. The introduction of explicit guidelines fostered greater accountability, allowing learners to take ownership of their learning outcomes, meet deadlines, and participate in learning more actively. These findings highlight the central role of instructional design in supporting autonomy development and also demonstrate that reflective practice must be intentionally embedded rather than assumed to emerge naturally.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is suggested that teachers implementing TBLT in speaking classrooms should integrate scaffolding strategies including transparent assessment criteria, guided reflection prompts, and opportunities for feedback. E-portfolios can serve as an effective platform for supporting these practices by connecting task performance with reflection, revision, and responsibility. In terms of research implications, the findings point to the value of iterative action research in refining autonomy-supportive pedagogy. Future studies could investigate the long-term sustainability of autonomous learning behaviors over extended periods, involve larger populations, or compare task-based instruction with and without e-portfolio integration. Further research may also explore how different types of scaffolding influence specific dimensions of learner autonomy.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TBLT: Task-based Language Teaching
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
T: Student
C: Students' self-regulation
D: Students' self- assessment
E: Students' personal accountability
F: Students' speaking performance

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This manuscript has no conflicts of interest

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

The first author, Vo Ly Gia Ngan, was responsible for conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, resources, validation, writing of both original and revised drafts, as well as reviewing, editing, and finalizing the manuscript. The second author, Le Hoang Dung, contributed to conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, resources, validation, and reviewing the manuscript. The findings of the current study indicate that the integration of TBLT and e-portfolios significantly enhances students' autonomous learning competencies, including self-regulation, self-assessment, and personal accountability. Besides, the combination was also beneficial for students' speaking performance. Therefore,

this paper contributes to the theoretical comprehension of combining task-based learning methods and technology to foster long-term self-directed learning, especially in speaking performance.

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Bài nghiên cứu

Dạy học ngôn ngữ dựa trên nhiệm vụ và hồ sơ học tập điện tử trong việc nâng cao tính tự chủ của người học và kỹ năng nói của sinh viên học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ

Võ Lý Gia Ngân*, Lê Hoàng Dũng

TÓM TẮT

Kỹ năng nói là một thành phần quan trọng của quá trình học ngôn ngữ, tuy nhiên việc nâng cao năng lực nói của người học tiếng Anh như ngoại ngữ vẫn còn nhiều thách thức. Cụ thể, các lớp học nói tiếng Anh theo phương pháp truyền thống tại Việt Nam đã hạn chế khả năng của sinh viên trong việc chủ động tham gia, theo dõi và chịu trách nhiệm đối với quá trình học tập của mình. Do đó, năng lực nói của sinh viên thường thấp hơn so với các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ khác. Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu cách thức mà việc tích hợp dạy học ngôn ngữ dựa trên nhiệm vụ với hồ sơ học tập điện tử có thể khắc phục những khó khăn này và cải thiện kỹ năng nói của sinh viên. Qua mô hình dạy học ngôn ngữ dựa trên nhiệm vụ của Ellis, khung hồ sơ học tập điện tử của Barrett và các khía cạnh của năng lực học tự chủ theo Duong My Tham và Nguyen Le Trinh, nghiên cứu được thực hiện với 26 sinh viên học tiếng Anh như ngoại ngữ tại một trường đại học ở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh trong hai chu kỳ nghiên cứu hành động, theo khung nghiên cứu của Burns. Trong chu kỳ 1, dữ liệu định tính từ các cuộc phỏng vấn cho thấy các dấu hiệu ban đầu của tự điều chỉnh và tự đánh giá đã xuất hiện, trong khi mức độ trách nhiệm cá nhân của người tham gia vẫn còn hạn chế. Trong chu kỳ 2, sau khi áp dụng bảng tiêu chí đánh giá, phản hồi đồng đẳng và phiếu tự phản ánh, người tham gia thể hiện mức độ trách nhiệm cao hơn và có sự cải thiện đáng kể trong kỹ năng nói. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy việc tích hợp dạy học ngôn ngữ dựa trên nhiệm vụ với hồ sơ học tập điện tử thông qua các chu kỳ thực nghiệm lặp lại không chỉ giúp nâng cao kỹ năng nói mà còn phát triển các năng lực cốt lõi của học tập tự chủ, từ đó mang lại những hàm ý thực tiễn cho việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh như ngoại ngữ.

Từ khoá: tính tự chủ của người học, dạy học ngôn ngữ dựa trên nhiệm vụ, hồ sơ học tập điện tử, kỹ năng nói

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