

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter comprehensively detailed the strong qualitative methodology supporting this study, which aimed to explore university EFL students' perceptions regarding the contribution of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to their exposition writing skills within the specific context of Kepulauan Riau. Rooted firmly in a descriptive qualitative research design and drawing from a constructivist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018), this section systematically outlined each procedural component. Key aspects elaborated included the research design's rationale, the carefully selected research setting and participant characteristics, the comprehensive procedures of the TBLT teaching program (pre-task, during-task, and post-task phases as adapted from Ellis et al., 2019), and the multi-faceted data collection techniques involving primary semi-structured interviews supplemented by teaching notes and classroom artifacts for triangulation. Finally, it presented the rigorous data analysis methods, leveraging thematic analysis, to interpret the collected insights.

3.2 Research design

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of university EFL students regarding the contribution of task-based language teaching (TBLT) to their exposition writing skills in the context of Kepulauan Riau. The chosen approach aligned with the nature and goals of the research, which emphasized understanding and interpreting lived experiences rather than quantifying outcomes or establishing causal relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Descriptive qualitative research was particularly suited for inquiries that aimed to present detailed, nuanced accounts of phenomena as understood by those directly involved. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), this approach was grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which asserted that reality is subjective and

socially constructed. It allowed researchers to engage with participants' voices and narratives to uncover the meanings they ascribed to particular experiences or pedagogical interventions. In this study, the focus was on capturing the intricacies of students' reflections on how TBLT had influenced their writing abilities in composing exposition texts.

The relevance of this methodology restricted from its flexibility and adaptability, which made it ideal for exploring complex educational settings and learner-centered processes. Rather than seeking generalizable findings, this study endeavored to reveal context-specific understandings and subjective interpretations of TBLT's instructional dynamics. Creswell (2013) emphasized that qualitative methods were particularly effective for generating rich descriptions of phenomena embedded within specific cultural and institutional contexts, such as language classrooms in Indonesian universities.

One of the trademark characteristics of descriptive qualitative research was its use of open-ended data collection instruments, such as interviews and reflective writings, which allowed participants to express their views freely and extensively. In this study, semi-structured interviews served as the main instrument for data collection, providing participants with opportunities to articulate their personal experiences with TBLT, including perceived benefits, challenges, and pedagogical value. The design was non-interventionist; it did not manipulate the learning environment but instead documented naturally occurring insights through systematic inquiry.

The choice of a descriptive qualitative design also associated with the objective of examining not only what students experienced through TBLT but how they made sense of those experiences. As argued by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative inquiry enabled researchers to delve into the processes, beliefs, and contextual elements that shaped participants' perspectives. This epistemological stance was essential when exploring a topic as multifaceted as task-based pedagogy, which involved cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning.

Furthermore, by grounding this study in the descriptive qualitative tradition, the research was positioned to contribute meaningful knowledge to both theoretical discourse and practical pedagogy in the field of English language teaching. The

findings were expected to provide insight into the specific mechanisms through which TBLT supported the development of exposition writing skills, as perceived by learners who were directly engaged in the process. As highlighted by Ellis et al. (2019), TBLT focused on the use of authentic, meaningful tasks to promote language acquisition, making it crucial to examine learner feedback to inform the design and refinement of task-based instructional strategies.

In summary, the descriptive qualitative methodology was chosen for its suitability in capturing and analyzing the complex, nuanced, and subjective experiences of university EFL students as they engaged with TBLT. This methodological approach supported the research's aim to understand students' perspectives on how TBLT contributed to their academic writing development, ultimately offering insights that could inform curriculum development, teacher training, and instructional practice in similar EFL contexts.

3.3 Research Setting, Participants, and Sampling

The research was conducted at a university within the English Education Study Program of the Teacher Training and Education Faculty in Kepulauan Riau, Indonesia. This setting was chosen because it hosted an EFL program where task-based language teaching (TBLT) was implemented as a primary pedagogical approach for developing students' writing skills, particularly exposition text writing. As Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized, qualitative research designs are best applied in naturalistic contexts that allow phenomena to be explored within their real-world settings. The Indonesian university context also offered unique cultural and educational dynamics that were pertinent to understanding EFL student learning experiences.

Several reasons supported the choice of this institution as the research site. The researcher had over 14 years of teaching experience at universities in the region, providing familiarity with the institutional culture and ease of access to participants. This insider perspective facilitated a more naturalistic inquiry process, consistent with Creswell (2013), who argued that qualitative research benefits from the researcher's immersion in the context. Additionally, the study program had received a "B" quality accreditation, indicating a balanced academic profile where students' English proficiency levels were neither exceptionally high nor

exceedingly low, which was important for examining developmental changes. Most learners demonstrated weaknesses in English writing, as evidenced by their performance in writing courses, making them appropriate subjects for studying the potential impact of TBLT on exposition text writing. Institutional support also played a significant role, as the dean of the faculty and colleagues welcomed the study and offered access to relevant facilities. Importantly, the researcher was also the instructor for the class under investigation, ensuring direct engagement with the learning process.

3.3.1 Target Population

The target population comprised university EFL students in Kepulauan Riau who had engaged in task-based language teaching (TBLT) specifically directed at enhancing their exposition text writing skills. As Ellis et al. (2019) argued, TBLT emphasizes the use of authentic, meaningful tasks to promote language acquisition, making learners who were directly involved in such pedagogy appropriate participants for this study.

3.3.2 Sampling Method

A purposeful sampling strategy was employed, specifically criterion-based sampling with intensive case selection. This method, as highlighted by Creswell and Poth (2018) and further elaborated by Ahmad and Wilkins (2024), involved intentionally selecting participants based on pre-established criteria to ensure their direct relevance and rich experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The sampling criteria included enrollment as an EFL student at the university, active participation in a specific course where TBLT was the primary pedagogical approach for teaching exposition writing, willingness to participate in in-depth interviews, and voluntary informed consent (See Appendix 3). This strategy aligned with the epistemological orientation of qualitative inquiry, which prioritizes depth and richness of data over breadth or generalizability.

3.3.3 Sample Size and Rationale

The sample size consisted of four (4) university EFL students. The study took place at the research site for 12 meetings of 6 weeks (Oktober-November 2023). This small number was purposefully chosen to enable an intensive and irregular exploration of individual student perceptions and experiences. Ahmad and

Wilkins (2024) argued that purposive sampling strengthens qualitative inquiry by ensuring rigor in the selection process and justifying smaller sample sizes for in-depth investigation. In this study, each participant's experience was treated as a distinct unit of analysis, approaching a multiple case study design. Such an approach aligns with the descriptive qualitative tradition (Creswell & Poth, 2018), allowing the researcher to uncover unique complexities and nuances within each participant's learning process. The limited but deeply engaged sample ensured that the study captured the subjective realities of the learners, offering insights into both the perceived benefits and challenges of TBLT in developing exposition writing skills.

In summary, the research setting and sampling strategy were carefully designed to align with the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry and the study's specific objectives. The naturalistic context, purposeful sampling approach, and intensive case selection enabled the study to provide rich, context-specific insights into how university EFL students in Kepulauan Riau perceived the contribution of TBLT to their exposition text writing development.

3.4 Procedures of a task-based language teaching program

This section provided a comprehensive description of the specific TBLT intervention that the participants experienced during ten meetings over four weeks, which formed the empirical foundation of their perceptions. Such detailed contextualization was crucial for interpreting how students engaged with TBLT and for understanding the outcomes within their exposition writing development. The intervention design followed a structured three-phase model (pre-task, during-task, post-task), adapted from Ellis (2003), Willis and Willis (2007), and elaborated in Ellis et al. (2019). These works collectively affirmed the theoretical coherence and empirical effectiveness of TBLT in promoting learner-centered, meaning-focused, and interactive language learning.

3.4.1 Pre-task phase (Preparation for the task)

The pre-task phase aimed to activate schemata, provide input, and set clear expectations for task completion while maintaining a communicative orientation. Activities included topic familiarization through short readings, class discussions, and brainstorming around current social or cultural issues, such as environmental

concerns or digital media use, which linked students' prior knowledge with new learning. Vocabulary and structural scaffolding were embedded through interactive activities (e.g., matching exercises, true/false tasks) that contextualized essential lexical and grammatical forms without reducing the phase to explicit instruction. Students also engaged in strategic planning by generating ideas, developing outlines, and organizing arguments visually through concept maps. These activities reflected Skehan's (2003) emphasis on balancing cognitive load, fluency, and task preparedness while ensuring communicative authenticity. The pre-task phase thus established both linguistic and cognitive readiness, motivating students to approach the writing task with confidence and direction.

3.4.2 During-task phase (Task Cycle)

The during-task phase constituted the core of the intervention, emphasizing authentic language use and meaningful communication. Students worked individually and collaboratively in pairs or small groups to draft exposition texts. These tasks required them to analyze information, formulate arguments, and construct structured expository writing that reflected both reasoning and organization. The teacher's role shifted to that of facilitator, providing scaffolding consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, monitoring progress, and intervening only to support task completion without undermining communicative flow. Peer-to-peer interaction played a central role, as students negotiated meaning, debated ideas, and engaged in clarification requests, thereby reinforcing both linguistic development and critical thinking. As Long (2016) argued, the essence of TBLT lay in genuine task performance where learners activated interlanguage systems in context, rather than through isolated drills. By designing tasks that required authentic academic writing, the intervention mirrored real communicative needs of university learners, supporting Ellis et al. (2019)'s assertion that tasks are indispensable vehicles for promoting acquisition.

3.4.3 Post-task phase (Language Focus and Reflection)

The post-task phase shifted focus from fluency to accuracy, reflection, and metalinguistic awareness. Students presented drafts, engaged in peer comparison of expository texts, and critically examined variations in structure, vocabulary use, and rhetorical effectiveness. Teacher-led discussions targeted recurring linguistic and

rhetorical issues, drawing attention to grammar, cohesion devices, and persuasive techniques identified in student work. Revision and re-drafting activities enabled learners to integrate feedback and improve both content and form, a process supported by Ahmed and Bidin (2016) and Kafipour et al. (2018a), who demonstrated that TBLT fosters measurable gains in writing quality. Reflection activities asked students to evaluate their progress, articulate challenges, and connect their learning with broader academic goals. As Nunan (2010) emphasized, such reflective practices reinforced learner autonomy and transferred task-based skills to future writing endeavors.

3.4.4 Justification of Intervention Design

The intervention design was strongly justified by both theory and empirical evidence. Ellis et al. (2019) provided the authoritative framework for structuring the three-phase model, while Willis and Willis (2007) offered practical classroom strategies. Skehan (2003) explained the psycholinguistic principles underpinning the balance between fluency and accuracy. Long (2016) defended the pedagogical validity of tasks, highlighting their centrality in promoting meaningful acquisition. Empirical studies (Ahmed & Bidin, 2016; Kafipour et al., 2018a) corroborated TBLT's positive effects on analytic and argumentative writing, while Shehadeh and Coombe (2012) contextualized these effects across diverse EFL environments. Sanchez (2004) and Nunan (2010) further supported the role of contextualized tasks and reflective practices in maximizing learning outcomes.

In summary, the TBLT intervention was exactly designed and theoretically fixed to promote university students' exposition writing skills. By combining authentic task performance with structured phases of preparation, execution, and reflection, the program cultivated fluency, critical reasoning, and accuracy. It simultaneously aligned with empirical findings from previous TBLT research and addressed the specific contextual needs of EFL learners in Kepulauan Riau, thereby ensuring both pedagogical relevance and research validity.

3.5 Data collection techniques

There were two instruments to collect data: Semi-structured interviews and supporting data sources.

3.5.1 Primary Instrument: Semi-structured interview protocol

The main tool for collecting data in this study was a semi-structured interview protocol. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to collect detailed accounts of students' experiences while still giving space for unexpected themes to emerge during the discussion. Semi-structured interviews provided the right balance between consistency and flexibility: the guiding questions ensured that each interview covered the same core issues, while open-ended responses gave students the chance to explain their unique perspectives in their own words (Ellis et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The questions were carefully designed to connect directly with the research question, focusing on how students perceived the contribution of TBLT to their ability to write exposition texts.

The interview guide was grounded in core principles of task-based language teaching, which emphasize authentic tasks, student interaction, attention to form, and a balance between fluency, accuracy, and complexity (Skehan, 2003; Long, 2016; Ellis et al., 2019). Questions asked students to reflect on how they experienced each of the three TBLT phases—pre-task, during-task, and post-task—as well as their impressions of the overall writing outcomes. For example, students were asked how brainstorming and vocabulary activities prepared them for writing, how collaboration with peers influenced their ideas during the task, and how feedback and revision in the post-task phase improved the clarity and structure of their work. These reflections made it possible to link classroom practices with students' own perceptions of their writing growth.

To ensure that the interviews generated high-quality data, the process was carefully organized. Each interview lasted about 35–50 minutes and took place either face-to-face in a quiet room or via a secure online platform. At the start of every session, participants reviewed and signed informed consent forms and were reminded of their rights, including the option to withdraw at any time. The interviews began with general questions about students' writing backgrounds before moving into more specific questions about TBLT. This order helped build rapport and made students feel comfortable before discussing more complex issues. To help them recall their experiences, students were also encouraged to bring along

drafts or task sheets from the TBLT intervention. These documents were used to prompt discussion, so students could point to concrete examples of how their writing developed through tasks.

All interviews were audio-recorded (with permission) to ensure accuracy. In addition, the researcher took field notes to capture non-verbal cues, key observations, and initial reflections. After each session, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and checked against the audio to avoid errors. This careful documentation process improved the reliability of the data and ensured that the students' voices were represented faithfully (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012).

3.5.2 Supporting data sources: In addition to the interview protocol, supplementary sources of data were collected to provide richer context and triangulation:

Teaching notes: The researcher's teaching journals and reflective notes from each session of the ten-meeting TBLT intervention were documented. These notes included lesson objectives, task descriptions, observations of student engagement, challenges during activities, and immediate reflections on student progress. They also recorded teacher decisions about scaffolding, feedback, and adaptations of task design in real time. These teaching notes provided critical insights into how the intervention unfolded in practice and supported interpretation of student perceptions (Willis & Willis, 2007; Nunan, 2010).

Classroom artifacts: Samples of classroom materials were collected, including task instructions, handouts, and worksheets that guided pre-task, during-task, and post-task phases. In addition, students' writing before and after having the TBLT intervention of exposition texts was gathered (de-identified for confidentiality). These artifacts served two purposes: they gave context to student interview responses and offered concrete evidence of how TBLT activities were structured and completed. They also enabled the researcher to verify claims students made about their own development by examining their actual written products (Ahmed & Bidin, 2016; Kafipour et al., 2018a).

Interview list: Each of the four participating students was interviewed individually. The interview list recorded their pseudonyms, interview dates, mode

of interview (face-to-face or online), and duration. This list provided transparency and ensured that all participants' voices were systematically represented in the data set.

This combination of semi-structured interviews, teaching notes, and classroom artifacts strengthened the credibility and depth of the study. By bringing together student reflections, teacher observations, and concrete examples of tasks and writing products, the research created a triangulated account of how TBLT was perceived to influence exposition writing. This multi-source approach ensured that the findings were not only grounded in student testimony but also supported by documented classroom practices and learning outcomes.

In summary, the semi-structured interview protocol, supplemented with teaching notes and classroom artifacts, was designed and applied in a way that directly supported the goals of this study. Together, these instruments provided complementary perspectives on the role of TBLT, allowing the researcher to capture student perceptions, teacher insights, and tangible evidence of learning processes. This comprehensive design strengthened the study's ability to explain the mechanisms by which TBLT contributed to students' development of exposition writing skills.

3.6 Data analysis techniques

This study employed a systematic and layered approach to qualitative data analysis, using thematic analysis (as outlined six steps) by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022). Thematic analysis was selected for its flexibility and precision, offering a structured method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning in qualitative data. The data sources included interview transcripts, teaching notes, and classroom artifacts, enabling triangulation across perspectives and contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.6.1 Familiarization with the Data

The first phase involved close engagement with the data. Interview transcripts, classroom notes, and artifacts were read and re-read, while audio recordings were replayed multiple times to capture nuances of tone and expression. During this immersion process, the researcher recorded preliminary notes on recurring words, metaphors, and emotional responses. This stage was crucial for

developing an initial sense of how students perceived task-based language teaching (TBLT) and its impact on their writing development (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.2 Generating Initial Codes

After familiarization, the data were systematically coded. Codes were short labels that represented meaningful units of text, such as sentences or phrases. For example, excerpts were coded as “peer collaboration as idea generator,” “pre-task vocabulary as writing support,” and “post-task feedback for accuracy.” Both explicit meanings and underlying implications were coded (Braun & Clarke, 2022). An evolving codebook was maintained, containing code definitions, data examples, and connections to TBLT phases (Ellis et al., 2019; Skehan, 2003). Selected passages were double-coded to enhance consistency.

3.6.3 Searching for Themes

The researcher then examined the codes to identify broader themes. For instance, codes like “brainstorming supported idea generation” and “peer talk aided argument building” were combined under the theme Cognitive and Collaborative Support in TBLT. Other prominent themes included Perceived Language Development (covering fluency, accuracy, and vocabulary use) and Challenges in Task Implementation. These themes highlighted the major ways students perceived TBLT’s role in developing exposition writing skills (Long, 2016; Ahmed & Bidin, 2016).

3.6.4 Reviewing Themes

Themes were refined by checking them against the coded data and the full dataset. This stage ensured internal consistency within themes and clear distinctions across themes. For example, Challenges in task implementation was broken down into sub-themes such as time management issues, unequal group participation, and difficulty translating ideas into text. This refinement process reduced researcher bias and strengthened the validity of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.5 Defining and Naming Themes

Themes were clearly defined and explicitly connected to both theory and empirical findings. For instance, Cognitive and Collaborative Support was linked to Vygotskian concepts of scaffolding and Ellis et al.’s (2019) focus on interaction in TBLT. Each theme was described in detail, showing how it contributed to

answering the research question about student perceptions of TBLT in writing development.

3.6.6 Producing the Report

In the final phase, themes were organized into a coherent narrative. Evidence included direct quotations from student interviews, examples from teaching notes, and samples of classroom artifacts. For example, student reports of improved thesis statements were compared with their drafts, while teacher notes about time overruns confirmed students' accounts of time constraints. By triangulating data, the report provided a credible and robust account of how students experienced TBLT (Kafipour et al., 2018a; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012).

3.6.7 Role of Triangulation

Triangulation played a central role in the analysis. Interviews captured students' subjective experiences, teaching notes documented instructional practices and challenges, and classroom artifacts offered concrete evidence of writing growth. Comparing across these sources created a fuller picture of how TBLT functioned in the classroom. This aligns with Sanchez (2004) and Nunan (2010), who argue that both learner perspectives and teaching practices are essential for understanding TBLT in practice.

3.6.8 Integrative Explanation

By showing the movement from excerpts → codes → themes, the process demonstrates how meaning is constructed from multiple data sources (student voices, classroom artifacts, and teacher notes). This triangulation strengthens the validity of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shehadeh & Coombe, 2012).

The interview excerpt illustrates students' lived experiences and how they interpreted TBLT tasks. The artifact provides tangible evidence of learning outcomes in written products. The teaching note contributes the teacher-researcher perspective, highlighting contextual factors affecting task implementation. Together, these data sources give a richer, multi-dimensional account of how TBLT contributed to exposition writing skills.

By applying Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) thematic analysis alongside principles of TBLT, this study systematically analyzed student perceptions of writing development. Through coding, theme generation, and triangulation, the

analysis ensured trustworthiness and theoretical grounding. Ultimately, this approach explained the mechanisms and perceived contributions of TBLT to university EFL students' exposition writing in Kepulauan Riau, offering insights that are valuable for teaching practice and curriculum development.

3.7 Concluding remarks of chapter three

In conclusion, this chapter exactly detailed the strong and systematic qualitative methodology employed to capture the complex, nuanced, and subjective experiences of university EFL students. The application of thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022), alongside strong triangulation across interview narratives, detailed teaching notes, and concrete classroom artifacts, provided a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions. This approach, firmly grounded in a constructivist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018), not only ensured the trustworthiness, credibility, and validity of our findings but also illuminated the intricate mechanisms and specific ways in which task-based language teaching (TBLT) was perceived to influence exposition writing development. By transparently presenting how meaning was systematically derived from these multiple perspectives, this methodological framework strengthened the study's contribution, offering valuable, context-specific insights capable of informing pedagogical practices, curriculum development, and teacher training in similar EFL contexts, both within Kepulauan Riau and internationally.