p-ISSN 2252-7427, e-ISSN 2541-3635
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p-ISSN 2252-7427 e-ISSN 2541-3635
Indonesian EFL Journal
AISEE
The Association of Indonesia Scholars of English Education

SCAFFOLDING CREATIVITY: A CHAT ANALYSIS OF TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED PRE-TASKS IN POETRY WRITING

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APA Citation: Lestari, S., Muslim, A. B., & Damayanti, I. L. (2026). Scaffolding creativity: A chat analysis of technology-mediated pre-tasks in poetry writing. *Indonesian EFL Journal, 12*(3), 1045-1056. https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v12i3.60

Received: 03-03-2026 Accepted: 21-06-2026 Published: 30-09-2026

Abstract: This study explores the pre-task stage of Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TM-TBLT) for teaching poetry in a creative writing class for higher education students, employing the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). A group of 26 fifth-semester English Education students was part of a 14-week TM-TBLT program for preparing creative poetry writing, employing QR codes, Google Forms, blackout poetry makers, Canva, and Google Classroom. The data was collected through classroom observation, video, and documents to investigate the relationships between the tool, the regulation, the community, and the division of labor in the pre-task stage design. The findings show the benefits of technology integration in the pre-task stage, such as increased access to authentic poetry, literary analysis, and multimodal engagement, for the development of poetic literacy and learners' preparation for creative writing. However, the challenges faced during the program include the lack of a clear policy for the use of artificial intelligence, the lack of collaboration in the asynchronous environment, and the lack of balanced group participation. The study contributes to the limited body of research on TM-TBLT for poetry instruction and provides recommendations for peer collaboration, digital literacy development, and the integration of artificial intelligence for authenticity, creativity, and learners' autonomy.
Keywords: *technology-mediated task-based language teaching; pre-task; poetry writing; cultural historical activity theory*

INTRODUCTION

Literature holds a central place in higher education, serving as a powerful tool for developing students' critical thinking, empathy, communication skills, and cultural understanding (Arboleda-Arboleda & Castro-Gárces, 2019; Dodou, 2020; Zakaria et al., 2021). Its multifaceted nature allows students to engage with diverse perspectives, fostering a deeper sense of global citizenship and ethical reflection. By engaging with complex narratives and poetic structures, learners must synthesize information and articulate nuanced arguments, both of which are essential markers of academic excellence.

The integration of literature into the university curriculum is therefore essential for both academic and personal development (Zakaria et.al, 2025; Sutiarni, 2025). Beyond the humanities, it supports the development of core professional competencies, such as legal reasoning and analytical writing, which prepare students for varied and successful careers. This pedagogical foundation ensures that students not only master their specific fields of study but also graduate with the sophisticated interpersonal and cognitive skills required in the modern professional landscape.

However, poetry in the EFL context is sometimes perceived as difficult, leading students and teachers to anxiety and disinterest (Turner, 2016; Blake & Snapper, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires innovative and effective teaching strategies. Effective poetry instruction often involves student-centered, interactive, and multimedia approaches such as multimodal and visual arts integration (Almufayrij, 2023; Kim, 2024; Kim & Kim, 2024). These methods

increased engagement and comprehension compares tpo traditional, teacher-centered models (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016). In addition, a study done by Aituganova (2023) shows that an online and multimodal approach to poetry significantly improves the students' achievement, attitudes, and retention among university students.

Digital technologies have altered the landscape of language education, providing novel ways for teaching creative writing in higher education. Within this evolution, traditional Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has transitioned into Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TM-TBLT), a technology-enhanced format where digital tools act as mediators for engagement, collaboration, and creativity (González-Lloret, 2014, 2015; Zheng & Warschauer, 2017). In this framework, technology is not merely an add-on but a core component that shapes how linguistic tasks are designed and executed.

The subject matter of poetry is particularly suitable for TM-TBLT, as the genre stresses a balance of linguistic accuracy and imaginative understanding (Iida, 2010; Sulastri et al., 2022). By utilizing digital tools such as YouTube, QR codes, collaborative applications, and AI platforms, students can access authentic models of verse, analyze the complex use of literary devices, and engage in the process of multimodal writing (Rikala, 2014; Tukhtabayeva et al., 2024). These technological affordances allow students to move beyond the printed page, transforming poetry into a dynamic, multisensory experience.

The pedagogical implementation of TM-TBLT is structured across three phases: the pre-task, the task-cycle, and the post-task. Each phase is critical to the overall success of the teaching and learning process, with the pre-task phase serving a foundational role in activating students' prior knowledge. By introducing key language, motivating learners, and providing necessary strategic support, this initial stage effectively reduces the cognitive load and prepares students for the rigorous demands of the main creative task (Anwar & Arifani, 2016; Li, 2023).

Although TM-TBLT has been explored in various language skills, little research addresses its application to poetry writing in higher education, particularly from a Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) perspective. This is because of the perception of poetry as a very personal, spontaneous form of art that is not conducive to the structured, task-based approach that is taken with communicative language frameworks. There is a perception of tech in poetry that is skeptical, seeing it as diminishing the human touch.

However, in the EFL classroom, it is important that the connection between poetry and tech is re-examined, and TMTBLT can give students a level of multimodal literacy that connects the aesthetic with the digital world. Previous studies mostly emphasize the benefits of multimodal and collaborative learning (Lai, 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Muthmainnah et al., 2025) but often neglect the systemic tensions, such as unclear tool-use guidelines, uneven group participation, and over-reliance on AI.

This research addresses this gap by evaluating the implementation of the TM-TBLT pre-task phase for poetry writing. It offers theoretical insights into the interplay of tools, community, and learner agency, and provides practical recommendations for fostering equitable, authentic, and sustained creative engagement in digital learning environments. The objective of this research is to investigate how the implementation of Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TM-TBLT) enhances students' creativity in poetry writing while identifying the systemic tensions that arise within this digital activity system.

METHOD

Using a single case study, this research investigates the phenomenon in the classroom context where TM-TBLT was implemented (Yin & Davis, 2007). This study evaluates the implementation of technology-mediated task-based language teaching in the creative writing course, specifically in the teaching and learning of poetry. The case study is employed based on its capacity to produce an in-depth, integral view of contemporary phenomena within real-life settings, with the boundary between the teaching intervention and the classroom becoming blurred. Focusing on a single entity, it reveals the systemic tensions and experiences of both teachers and students with regard to digital creativity.

As an elective course, all participants are 26 students who enrolled in the course, and a teacher. The students were in the fifth semester, consisting of twenty female students and 6 male students. All of them agreed to be participants by fillingout the consent form. In addition, there are also two instructors involved in the course. Two lecturers from the course of Creative Writing participated. The first lecturer is a 42-year-old female lecturer who has around ten years of teaching experience in the university and five years of teaching creative

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writing. The second lecturer is a 29-year-old male lecturer who has two years of teaching experience in the university and one year of teaching creative writing. Although the teaching years may vary considerably between the two lecturers, they possess parallel work backgrounds in the area of technology-enhanced language learning. Both lecturers attended numerous seminars and conferences related to education technology. Furthermore, the two possess parallel expertise in Task-Based Learning and Teaching. Thus, they would make apt and knowledgeable participants in exploring the effectiveness related to technology-enabled TBLT in the context of creative writing.

The implementation of the pre-task took 3 meetings of the whole season. It included activities such as listening to the poetry using YouTube, creating a poem using blackout poetry maker, or creating the missing line by using live worksheets. All the activity pre-task of TM-TBLT was mediated by technology, such as YouTube, Live worksheet, Blackout Poetry Maker, Google Classroom, Canva, etc.

The data collection was done through observations using video recording and observation sheets, which were filled out by the researcher as an observer. The observations were done for 14 meetings of the implementation of TM-TBLT in teaching poetry in the creative writing class. In analyzing the data, this study uses the framework of cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) by Engeström (2001). This framework aims to help researchers, educators, or practitioners systematically understand and evaluate complex human activities by looking at the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which those activities occur. Using CHAT as a framework, this study result a complex relation represented by subject, object, tools, community, rules, and division of labor during the implementation of TM-TBLT in the creative writing course. Besides their relations, this framework also reveals the contradictions and tensions, which finally support the change and innovation. The analysis followed a systematic procedure, wherein the raw data from the videos, observations, and instructional materials were mapped into the nodes of the Activity System, as per the CHAT framework. The nodes considered in the analysis are as follows: (1) Subject: The node focused on the aspect of teacher agency and student involvement. (2) Tools: The node focused on the digital tools, e.g., Canva, AI, and pedagogical frameworks. (3) Rules: The node focused on the rules derived from the syllabus requirements and the rules in the videos. (4) Community: The node focused on the interactions between the students. (5) Division of Labor: The node focused on the division of labor between the teacher and the student, as observed in the videos.

The analysis also considered the aspect of critical incidents in the videos, wherein the difficulties or misalignments in the teaching/learning process were noted as contradictions or Tension. For example, the difference between the pedagogical goal (Object) and the digital tool (Tool) could be noted as a primary or secondary contradiction.

The framework is shown in the figure below.

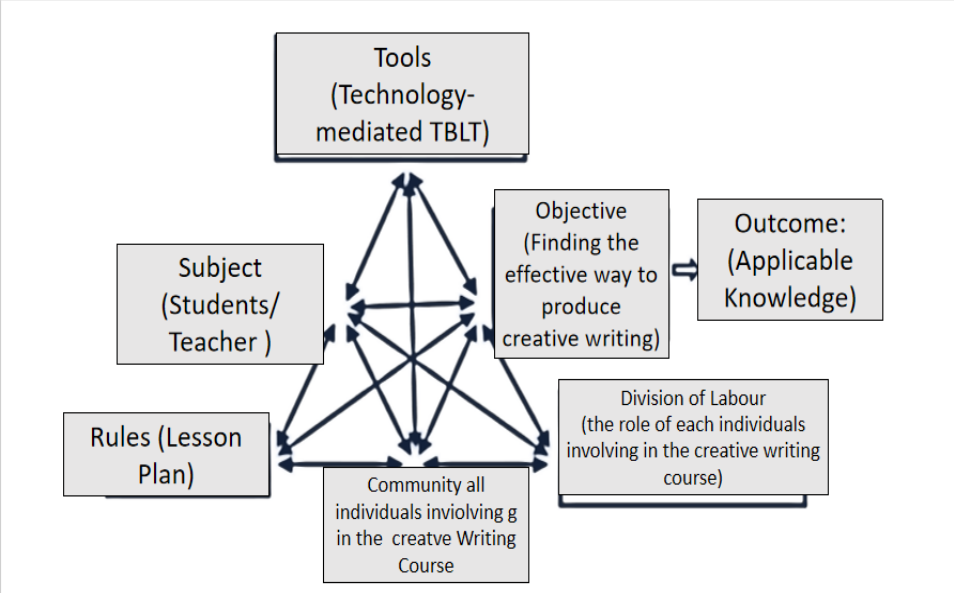


Figure 1. *Cultural historical activity theory in the context*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the pre-task of TM-TBLT in teaching poetry in the creative writing course

The use of the pre-task stage in the Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TM-TBLT) framework in the Creative Writing course reveals a learning process through technology to intensify learning. This phase aims as a preparation for the extensive learning activities by preparing students cognitively, affectively, and creatively for the more complex work in the task-cycle phase. Practically, the instructor uses a range of digital tools, including QR codes, web archiving of poems, blackout poetry makers, Google Forms, and collaborative resources like Canva and Google Classroom to introduce students to poetry texts, literary devices, and analysis methods.

Through reading and annotating poetry, selecting the appropriate words, studying figurative language, and responding to visual cues (i.e., AI-generated images or situational photos), the students are asked to engage the content cognitively and emotionally. In so doing, they establish an arena whereby students are asked to think about the theme of the poems, relate them to themselves, and start constructing meaning through collective discussion and interpretation.

Coding and analysis of observational data from lesson plans, as well as student work, indicate that application of the pre-task phase is not arbitrary. It stems from a CHAT-based design. Under this paradigm, every component of the learning activity system, such as subjects, tools, rules, community, division of labor, as well as objects, interacts to produce preferred outcomes. Such outcomes are increased participation of students, improved poetic ability, and preparation for the components of the course that demand creative production. The pre-task phase constitutes a most crucial time during which technology-driven input gets intertwined with social learning, with a resultant stronger and independent participation in writing poems.

Purposeful interaction through technology

The technology used at the pre-task phase was intentional and pedagogically driven based on the lesson planning. Across all of the classroom periods observed, digital technologies such as QR codes, internet-based poetry archives, Google Forms, and interactive digital worksheets were used to enable students' initial engagement with poem texts. These technologies served as gateways to content access and as enhancers of more intensive engagement with the content. For example, QR codes allowed students to access selected poems; in this context is a code that linked to the Website related to A Poem for Saraah Bartmaan in the 4th meeting, a live worksheet of filling in the missing lines in the poetry of Maya Angelou. (source: document analysis, and observation sheet).

Google Forms were utilized, however, not only to have students respond but also to promote critical thinking, as in lessons where students selected their absolute favorite digital poem and stated why they had done so.

Excerpt 4

> I used Google Form at the 13th meeting for the students to decide the best digital poetry they prefer on Two version of Rumi's digital Poetry, after they had done some analysis of both poems in the pre-task activity

It is also documented in the figure below, as the Google form used for the final decision of the analysis.

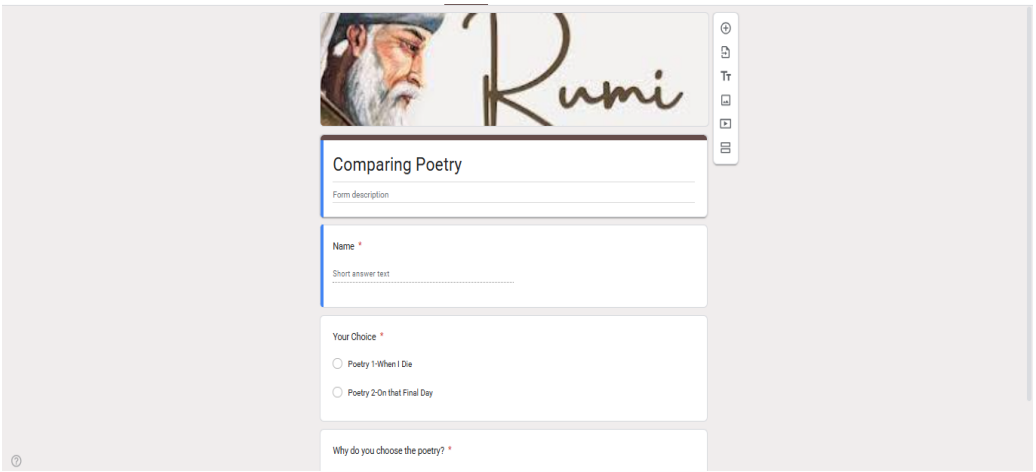


Figure 2. *Google Form used in the pre-task activity*

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Meanwhile, worksheets uploaded into Google Classroom guided the students through analysis activities, having them identify poetic devices (e.g., metaphor, symbolism), interpret thematic material, and provide personal connections to the texts. It is shown in the figure 3 where the students uploaded their analysis into Google Classroom.

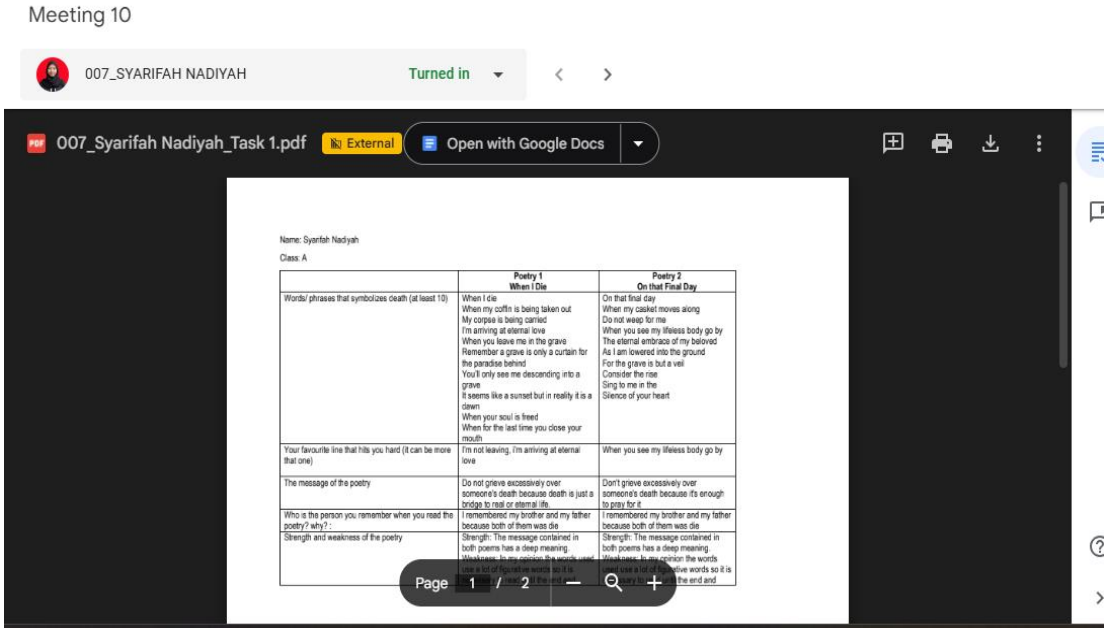


Figure 3. *Google Classroom in the pre-task-activity*

In addition, in the pre-writing task with haiku in the 4th meeting, the students utilized visual prompts accessed through QR codes to produce descriptive language and image, mediating between visual literacy and poetic production. Such multimodal engagement formed both emotional tone and linguistic sensibility, setting the stage for more independent and inventive production. Figure 4 shows a Qr code linked to the students' worksheet.

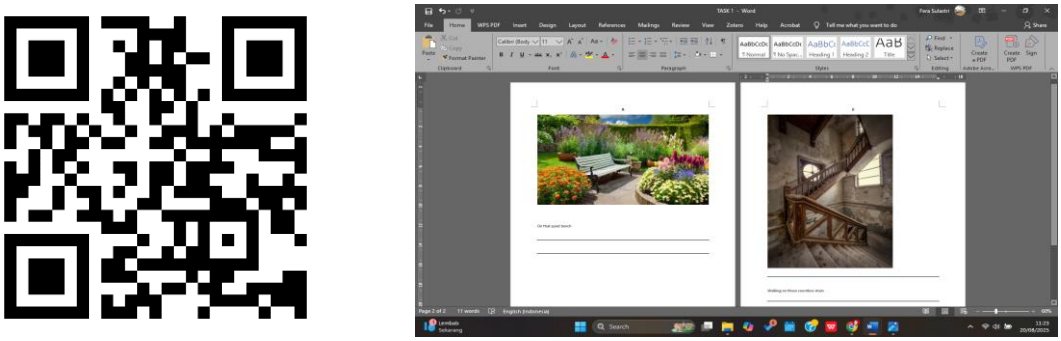


Figure 4. *QR code for live worksheet*

In addition, the interview is expressed in the excerpt 5 below:

> The students scan the barcode, which leads to the worksheet for creating a Haiku based on the picture with an additional prompt.

Lastly, the pre-tasks enabled by technology were able to tap into students' prior knowledge, sharpen literary inquiry, and render the process of learning more personalized, which are the required conditions for meaningful language development under the TM-TBLT method.

Systemic but flexible rules

The implementation of pre-task activities in the Creative Writing course closely paralleled the key phases of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) by beginning with receptive tasks before subsequently following up on more productive or creative tasks. For example, in the 7th meeting, the students were asked to fill in the missing line of the Cage Bird Poetry by Maya Angelou while listening to the YouTube digital poetry of their peers.

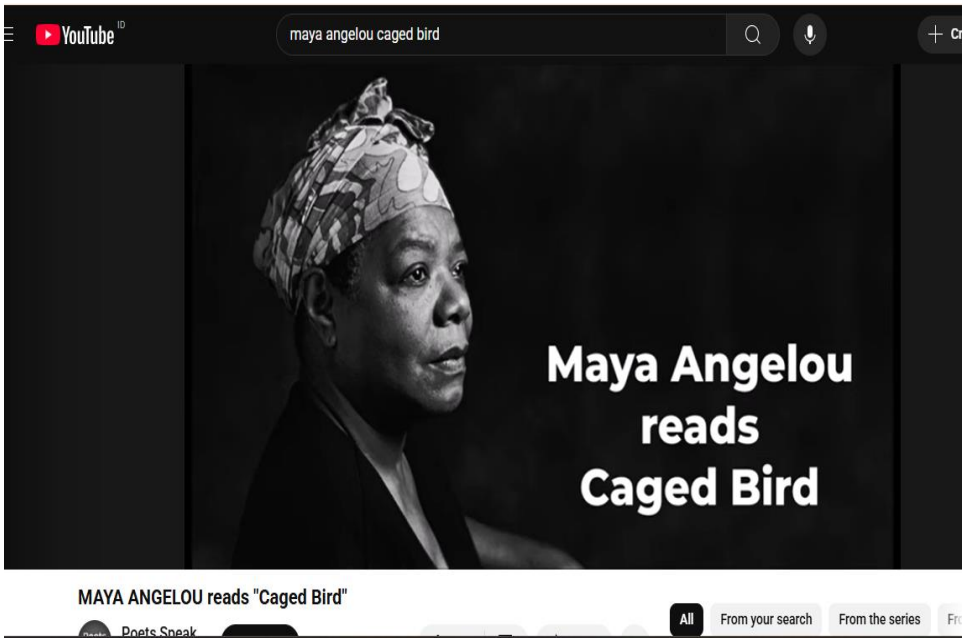


Figure 5. *YouTube video for listening activity in pre-task*

These structured learning pathways were intended to scaffold the students' thinking and language preparation by first presenting them with significant themes, wordings, and forms of poetry. In this process, the pre-task phase had played a pivotal bridging role of helping the students absorb poetic structure and language features before they were actually required in freestanding composition.

The classroom observation revealed important tensions in instructional rules and procedures. In particular, most sessions were characterized by a great deal of teacher talk or highly explicit description, which, although intended to clarify the task at hand, unconsciously reduced the scope for student exploration and interaction (source: observational video of the 1st meeting).

Rather than building towards autonomy, these highly structured methods instead created student passivity, which reduced the dialogic and exploratory ethos that TM-TBLT is intended to promote. This was especially evident when pre-task instructions overwhelmed student-led meaning-making, thereby disrupting the balance between guidance and learner agency.

Second, in lessons presented asynchronously, having no monitoring at all led to more variation in how interested students were. Some students thought carefully and worked at a critical level with the problem, but others seemed to work rapidly at a more superficial level, perhaps receiving little feedback or feeling less accountable. It is proved by the observation sheet at the 13th meeting, where the teaching and learning process was done through Whatsapp Group, the evidence shows:

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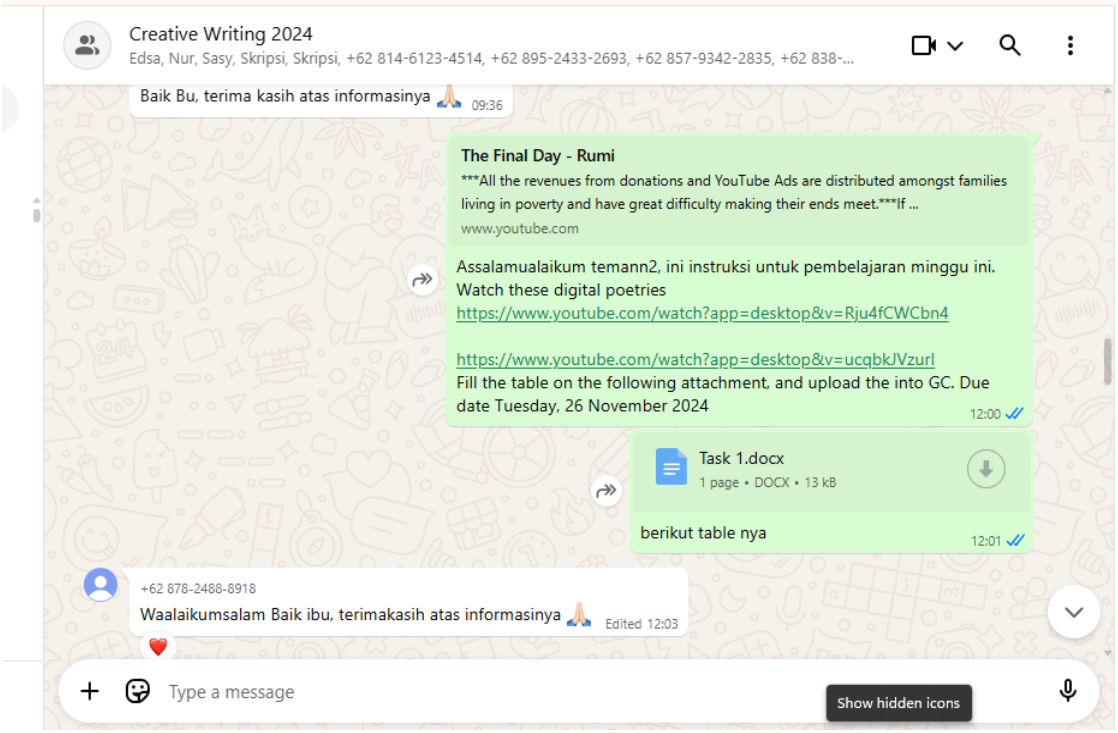


Figure 6: *Instruction through WhatsApp group*

Since the teacher and learning process were done through a simple instruction through a WhatsApp Group, there was little chance for the teacher to monitor the students' participation. Moreover, only a few students responded to the instruction, even though all of the students uploaded the task into Google Classroom.

Without synchronous interaction, the intended rules of engagement were less enforceable, resulting in inconsistencies in task interpretation and in output quality. What these results highlight is the need for instructional rules that are both well-aligned with pedagogical objectives and adaptive to diverse delivery modalities to create clarity, structure, and students' attention in both synchronous and asynchronous contexts.

Collaborative but uneven community interaction

The pre-task phase of TM-TBLT in the Creative Writing course was established to facilitate teamwork, namely through paired or group work such as collaborative poem analysis, vocabulary sharing, and collaborative meaning building. These activities were established to foster a community of learning through which students would negotiate meaning, exchange and provide feedback, and co-construct creative solutions. It is proven by the document analysis done from the lesson plan that all the activities in the pre-task are done collaboratively, such as filling in the missing line while listening to digital poetry, creating a Haiku based on the picture, or creating blackout poetry. The activities are proven in Figure 6, where the students were collaborating in doing the task:

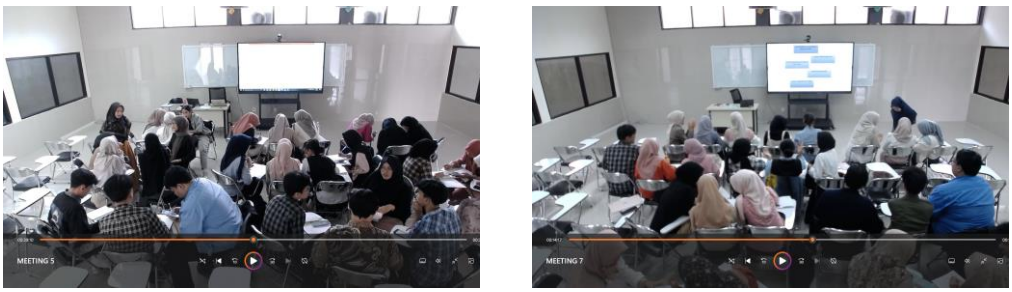


Figure 7. *Collaborative learning*

Notwithstanding this pedagogical priority on cooperation, the extent of the student interaction was dependent on the communication mode. In face-to-face or synchronous online tutorials, students were more likely to be actively engaged in cooperative exchanges where real-time communication is possible. They questioned, extended, and interpreted each other's thoughts.

Such environments allowed the teacher to monitor participation, encourage discussion, and support peer-to-peer scaffolding.

In contrast, asynchronous uses of pre-task activities, such as individual Google Form writing, had weaker community dynamics. Interaction in such environments was low, with students submitting individual responses without engaging meaningfully with others. Lack of immediacy and visibility into other minds shortened opportunities for co-construction of knowledge. As a result, the social element of TM-TBLT was lost, taking away one of the core strengths of TM-TBLT, which is learning from interaction.

Labor division and students' agency

Pre-task labour division was largely constructed to support learner-centredness, as proposed by TM-TBLT and the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) approach. Lecturers principally served in the facilitator function, such as giving instructions, choosing digital resources and tools. Their responsibility was to create an environment that favours exploration, interpretation, and innovative experience of poetry, rather than immediate transmission.

The students themselves were active in reading and sense-making positions. They had to read poems, identify literary elements such as symbolism and metaphor, select lines that had the most emotional impact, and even choose personal preference poems through online mediums such as Google Forms (source: document analysis on the lesson plan). These were all designed to promote critical thinking as well as personal response, peer interaction, and group discussion when working in groups or pairs.

Both of the roles are aligned with the data, either from the observation sheets from the 1st, 4th, and 7th meetings or video records. It was shown that the teacher was the person in charge who gave the instruction, led the discussion, acted as the time keeper, and also acted as a helper when the students needed more explanation while doing a peer task.

Despite this intentional design, classroom observation and task data revealed variation in the performance of these roles. In some groups, students were deeply engaged in the learning process, using digital tools independently and offering thoughtful, original readings of the poems. In others, students were passively engaged, awaiting teacher prompt or waiting for direct instruction before responding. It is s proven by the video records in the 4th and 7th meeting where students who represent the group are always the same person. Even though only a few students did not actively participate in the group discussion, it is proof that there was an unbalanced participation among the students.

Moreover, in these situations, the teacher's role shifted from facilitator to technical support, evidence of a quiet yet substantive contradiction between the envisioned division of labor. Rather than empowering students to act independently, unclear task expectations or insufficient scaffolding at times created dependence, which in its turn limited students' autonomy to assume responsibility for the learning process.

These findings suggest that while division of labor was theoretically sound, its ultimate success depended upon stated expectations, level of access to technology, and the building of enough scaffolding to create digital fluency. The teaching of student agency in TM-TBLT contexts means not only offloading responsibility but also giving students the skills and confidence to put it into action independently.

Technology as a mediating tool

The findings of the pre-task phase implementation in the Creative Writing course demonstrate that Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TM-TBLT) provides a strong foundation for scaffolding students' poetic literacy by preparing them cognitively, affectively, and socially before full creative production. The use of digital tools like QR codes, Google Forms, blackout poetry makers, Canva, and Google Classroom follows Ellis' (2003) notion of pre-task planning, where learners are presented with input, materials, and tasks that lower cognitive load and help them prepare for the more demanding demands of production. In this way, technology can be said to serve as mediating artifacts (Thorne & Lantolf, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) rather than simply extra URLs, while directing students' access to poetic texts and shaping their relations with others. This validates the CHAT framework's emphasis on tools as central mediators of learning activity systems.

At the same time, using technology such as Youtube video, blogs, and websites eased the students understand the context of the poetry they are listening to or reading. Pedagogical multimodal tools like AI-generated visual prompters also tapped into what Kress (2013) calls multimodal literacy, where various semiotic resources work in tandem to enrich the meaning-making process.

Cognitive and affective scaffolding

A major strength of the pre-task phase was to activate prior knowledge and provide a scaffold for literary analysis, and foster personal engagement with poetry. Annotating texts, analyzing figurative language, and interpreting ideas in text provided students with ways to develop intellectual and emotional readiness for coming up with their own creative work. It is in line with Elepano (2022), who further emphasized the effectiveness of personal-response strategies by identifying that these strategies can empower students to integrate their own experiences, feelings, and reflections with the texts they read in class. On the other hand, Levine & Horton (2013), revealed that interpretive strategies can improve students' learning opportunities to develop informed and personal interpretations of literary texts in comparison to analytical strategies with a logical base. These studies reaffirm that the infusion of affective aspects in literary learning has the potency to humanize the students' experiences in terms of adding depth to the process of learning literature.

In addition, these activities exemplified what Swain (2000) calls the output hypothesis, where learner engagement with form and meaning early on lays the groundwork for using language in a deeper and more creative manner in the future.

The role of rules and community

The data revealed that community engagement also differed in relation to modality. In synchronous events, students used real-time discussions and peer support to co-construct meaning, consistent with sociocultural perspectives of learning as a social experience (Vygotsky, 1978; Donato, 1994). In contrast, asynchronous activities often became isolated and task-focused, supporting Hampel and Stickler's (2015) point that such tools need clear structuring to promote genuine interaction. This highlights a subject vs. community contradiction, showing the need for designed peer-review or interactive platforms to maintain TM-TBLT's dialogic attitude online.

Division of labor and students' agency

Another finding related to the division of labor and student agency. Lecturers acted as facilitators, while students relied on instruction to be active interpreters and readers, which is consistent with Nunan's (2004) learner-centered TBLT model. However, many students still relied on teacher instruction for unfamiliar tools. This reflects the rules vs. division of labor contradiction, where unclear instructions reduced learner autonomy. Lantolf & Poehner (2014) suggest that agency develops when responsibility is shifted to learners and supported by proper scaffolding.

Tensions and contradictions in the implementation

Tensions emerged when rules governing technology use were not articulated clearly. Instances of students relying on AI-generated outputs rather than using AI as a stimulus reflect the contradiction between tools and rules within CHAT systems. This aligns with recent research relating to digital pedagogy (Godwin-Jones, 2018; Zhao et al., 2022), which warns that without boundaries, learners may use digital affordances in ways that prioritize the affordances over the pedagogical learning goals. It is therefore important to create an ethical and pedagogical boundary around integrating AI to ensure anyone interacting with the task engages with it authentically.

However, the instructions of the task, especially in the pre-task, need to be understood well by the students. They need to know at least the aim of the task. As Butarbutar (2021) found that the integration of technology and task in the TBLT shouldgo hand in hand with students' understanding of the meaning of the task, the aim of the task, and some rules that run. In addition, misunderstanding the task in the pre-task activity will cause further misunderstanding of the activity in the task cycle. Besides, time management is also important. Too long or too short a time of the implementation cause the negative effect for the students.

There was also an object vs. outcome tension in asynchronous tasks. The goal was reflective literary engagement, but some students only completed tasks superficially. This supports Ellis' (2017) warning that task design must balance structure with accountability. Bygate (2016) recommends adding peer review, reflection, and feedback cycles to ensure deeper engagement.

Development implications of future practice

The data revealed that community engagement also differed in relation to modality. In

In short, the pre-task phase of TM-TBLT worked best when tools, rules, and community were aligned, preparing students effectively for creative writing. Yet contradictions in technology use, online collaboration, and learner autonomy limited outcomes. Following Engeström (2001), these should be seen as developmental tensions that can guide improvement. Future practice

should focus on digital literacy training, clear AI guidelines, and structured peer interaction to fully support creativity, reflection, and learner agency.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the pre-task phase under the TM-TBLT framework for a higher education creative writing course turned out to be beneficial in preparing the students mentally, emotionally, and socially for poetry production. By employing tools such as QR codes, Google Forms, blackout poetry makers, Canva, and Google Classroom, the pre-task activities successfully activated prior knowledge, scaffolded literary analysis, and were followed by personal engagement with poetic text. From a CHAT perspective, the use of technology became a mediating mechanism by improving access to authentic resources and multimodal learning experiences. However, tensions that shape systems emerged, such as vague guidelines for using AI, inconsistency and unreliability among students when working on collaborative tasks, and less learner independence in an asynchronous environment. Such contradictions show that designing tasks must always keep a balance between technological affordances and pedagogical intentions.

In general, the study identifies that the effectiveness of TM-TBLT's pre-task stage depends on the alignment of tools, rules, community, and division of labor. Designing the pre-task phase effectively not only improves poetic literacy but also learner agency and collaboration. Mitigating the mentioned tensions with more overt instructional design, peer-supported scaffolding, and digital literacy scaffolding can optimize TM-TBLT's effectiveness in creative writing. This research contributes to the limited literature on poetry pedagogy in TM-TBLT and provides practical technology integration recommendations that preserve authenticity, creativity, and learner engagement in language learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is fully funded by the Research and Community Service Institute (LPPM) of Universitas Siliwangi, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia.

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