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36 Guidelines for contributions.
JALTのTask-based Learning（以下TBL）研究会とそのジャーナル「OnTask」の目的の1つは英語を学びめる小学校から上級者の成人学習者が通うプライベートな語学スクールいった様々な場面で、教師によるTBLの実践を応援することです。今回の第2号では全く異なった2つの状況下でのTBLの実践報告を掲載しています。1つは京都の街角といった本当に実在する場所、そしてもう1つはオンライン上のバーチャルな世界のことです。どちらの状況もTBLの信条であるAuthenticity（真正性）に要となるものを提供しています。

最近C A L Lの環境でAuthenticity（真正性）を取り入れようとTBL-informedアプローチを使用した方法が注目を集めています。例えば、去年Michal Thomas氏、Hayo Reinders氏によって編集されたTask-based language learning and teaching with technologyという本も出版されています。今回の特集記事では、その流れに伴いJean Paul DuQuette氏がセカンドライフ、いわゆるインターネット上のバーチャルな世界の学生やオンラインでゲームを楽しむ人を対象とした研究を取り上げています。このような状況がオーセンティックなタスクや現実を真似たシミュレーション、そしてform-focusedのアクティビティをうみ出すのに優れていると彼は主張しています。

日本で支持を得ているTBLの考え方方はWillis氏のTask-cycleが中心となっています。一連の授業や全学期でさえもプロセスとして捉えたTBLの考え方方はそれほど注目されていなかった。2つ目の記事では、Michi Saki氏が彼女の教える高等学校の学生が考案し、京都を訪れた英語話者の観光客について調査を実施した長期間に渡るTask-basedプロジェクトを紹介しています。

また今回3つの実践的なレッスンプランも掲載しています。Nick Domjancic氏は20世紀の歴史的な出来事を用いてどのようにTBLを行っているのかを解説しています。またWes Lang氏は大学生のポストカードを使用したラーニングのクラスを紹介しています。最後はColin Thompson氏とNeil Millington氏は世界中の環境問題やその解決方法などに対して生徒の注意関心を喚起するアクティビティを説明しています。

今年はこのジャーナルの発行、研究会のメンバーの多大なるサポート、そして4月に行われた大阪での初めての学会を開くなど、素晴らしい1年となりました。2011年度のJALTのイベントはまだ盛りだくさんで、「TBL in Asia: How I do it」とテーマとしたTBL研究会のフォーラムを開催する予定でおります。是非、フォーラムにご参加して頂き、他のメンバーと意見を交換しインスピレーションを感じて頂ければと思います。以下に予定です。

TBL研究会フォーラム
日時：11月19日（土曜日）305号室
(15時50分から17時20分まで)

TBL研究会 AGM会議
日時：11月19日（土曜日）305号室
(16時45分から19時45分まで)

2012年は、素晴らしい記事をOnTaskで提供し、JALT TBL研究会を更に良いものにするために邁進していきたいと思います。（詳細はこの号の最後のカバーページを見てください）

次号もどうぞ期待下さい。
One of the goals of the JALT Task-based Learning SIG and its journal, OnTask, is to encourage teachers to explore TBL in various contexts, from beginners in elementary schools to advanced adult learners in private language schools. In our second issue, we offer feature articles which address the use of TBL in two very different contexts: One, in the real world, on the streets of Kyoto; the other, in the virtual world of online environments. Yet both of these contexts offer something key to the tenets of TBL: authenticity.

There is growing interest in using TBL-informed approaches to add authenticity to CALL environments. Last year, for example, saw the publication of *Task-based language learning and teaching with technology*, an anthology of papers edited by Michael Thomas and Hayo Reinders. In our feature article, Jean Paul DuQuette adds to this growing literature, outlining some of the work he has been doing with students in *Second Life*, a virtual world on the Internet and also with Multi-player online games. He argues that such settings are excellent for creating authentic tasks, simulations and form-focused activities.

In Japan, it seems that popular conception of TBL tends to center on the Willis’s idea of the task-cycle. The idea of TBL as a process that can occur over a series of lessons or even a whole term, has arguably received less than its fair share of attention. In our second article, Michi Saki introduces a term-long task-based project in which her high school students designed and implemented a survey to find out more about English-speaking tourists visiting Kyoto.

There are three practical lesson ideas in this issue. Nick Domjancic explains how he uses TBL in content classes with a lesson plan on 20th Century historical figures. Wes Lang introduces a postcard writing class that he implements with university students. Finally, Colin Thompson and Neil Millington summarize an activity that could be used to raise awareness about environmental problems (and solutions to these problems) around the world.

This year has been a good one for the SIG, with the start of this journal, a growing and supportive membership and our first conference in April in Osaka. We look forward to many TBL events at JALT2011 including the SIG forum which this year has the theme: “TBL in Asia: How I do it”. If you are coming to the conference, please join us at the forum for conversation and inspiration and to meet some of the members:

**TBLSIG Forum, room 305, Saturday, November 19, 3:50pm to 5:20pm.**

Our AGM also takes place on the Saturday:

**TBLSIG AGM, room 305, Saturday November 19, 6:45 to 7:45pm.**

For 2012, we look forward to a continuation of great articles in OnTask and a bigger, better, JALT TBLSIG conference (see the back cover of this issue for details).

Until the next issue, we hope you enjoy the read.
Task-based learning and teaching in online virtual worlds and games

Jean-Paul DuQuette

Virtual online environments have the potential to introduce elements of authenticity into language learner tasks. In this article, I outline task-types in virtual worlds such as Second Life. I also provide a guide to selecting prospective online games for use in EFL self-study or class projects, and demonstrate how I went about selecting an online game for my own classroom projects in a Japanese university. I conclude by noting some of the obstacles EFL instructors will face in using virtual worlds in their classes and the ultimate benefits these environments may have for language learners.

Salvaging authenticity online

It was 6:30 AM, and my DJ Chat event had apparently been invaded by a native speaker. It’s not that non-EFL learners are discouraged from participating at Cypris Village, the English learning community I contribute to in Second Life. But this individual was speaking quickly, using slang, making snide comments – even the advanced learners in my group were having a hard time keeping up with the conversation. I was about to recommend that he leave, when Feronymous, another volunteer tutor, asked him where he was from. “Sweden,” he replied. I was a bit taken aback. I’d heard that many Swedish were bilingual, but he sounded entirely American. “Wow, your English is fantastic,” I said slowly. Perhaps sensing my skepticism, he continued, “All of my friends at school sound like this.” He switched to a stilted Swedish accent, “Hello! It is very nice to meet you.” “But I sound like this,” he said shifting back, “because I play online games.”

Though several different definitions of language learning tasks have been proposed in the last 20 years or so (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998), an early one from Long (1985) remains both simple to conceptualize and difficult to realize in the classroom. In his words, a task is simply “a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward…thus by ‘task’ is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between” (p. 89). Long’s focus here is neither explicitly linguistic nor pedagogical. His definition focuses on task...
A task is authentic when it is not specifically designed only to test language learning. A bank account opened. Health complaints explained to a doctor. An order for pizza delivery successfully completed. It is hard to imagine a more valid and psychologically satisfying measure of one's ability to interact with the world in a second language than the completion of a real-world task.

Unfortunately, integrating authentic tasks of this nature into the traditional language classroom can prove difficult for teachers, especially in EFL contexts (you do not need English to order a pizza in Japan). Besides the paucity of available real-world tasks, there are host of other obstacles, ranging from problems in interlocutor reliability to incompatibility with long-established curriculum goals and objectives; if obtaining a certain score on a university entrance exam or the TOEIC is the only reason to study English, why the need to practice in authentic contexts? Some critics of task-based EFL instruction have even suggested, at least in some Asian contexts, that the very notion of teaching with tasks is problematized by irreconcilable differences between Western and Asian classroom culture (Sato, 2010).

Although I am utilizing Long's assumptions about authenticity, I am not going to argue one way or another on Long's definition of tasks, nor the applicability of such tasks in EFL classrooms. However, there are online English environments in which instructors may develop more authentic language tasks and in which independent learners (with a little guidance) may engage in self-study through authentic language use - online games and virtual worlds. It may seem counterintuitive to equate authenticity with virtual worlds. However, be it cooperating with dozens of players in a massive space battle or successfully marketing one's own line of virtual fashion, virtual environments provide opportunities for goal-oriented interactions between language learners and both computer-controlled interlocutors and users from around the world. With the additional bonus of providing free (or low-cost) language practice at practically any time of the day or night to anyone with a home computer and Internet access (Ballou, 2010), and it is clear that these online 'spaces' hold potential as learning environments (Svensson, 2003).

Not all online environments are created equal, especially from the perspective of task-based learning and teaching. There are significant differences between so-called virtual worlds and massively multiplayer online games (MMOs); though the two environments seem deceptively similar, virtual worlds, such as Linden Lab's popular Second Life, often allow users to create content, while MMOs do not. On the other hand, MMOs provide readymade tasks, while virtual worlds often do not. Correspondingly, my discussion of tasks in virtual worlds will focus on pedagogical design, while my look at MMOs will focus on vocabulary, task quality and other aspects of these games. Although much of the following will be applicable to high school EFL contexts, it is aimed primarily at university instructors.

**Virtual Worlds: What is Second Life?**

Second Life (SL) is a user-created synchronous computer-mediated communication, a multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) interface created in 2003 (Au, 2008). After downloading software from the SL website (www.secondlife.com), users (or residents) are provided with a doll-like representation of themselves, an avatar, which they can then customize and navigate through an interconnected three-dimensional virtual world (Appendix 1). Once in-world, residents may use their avatars to communicate with others, as well as use built-in design tools to create their own virtual items (everything from clothes to cars to body parts), which they can then share or sell to other users. Because of the ease in
which virtual objects and environments can be created, SL remains the most popular virtual world for educators.

SL residents communicate by typing messages into a chatbox or using microphone-based voice communication. At any moment, tens of thousands of individuals are engaged in conversation in Second Life; it follows that second language learners have countless opportunities to converse with other residents from around the world, to role-play and engage in real life (RL) networking, prototyping everything from software to high fashion and a host of other actions and applications.

Given a few days of exploration and experimentation with the SL interface, most instructors will be able to acquire the basic mechanics of SL use with little difficulty. That said, preparing students for study in SL is still best done in a university computer lab, where assistance can readily be provided (Aldrich, 2009). Should this prove impractical, detailed instructions regarding start-up procedures and basic movements and interactions must be provided to students.

Although there are many ways to categorize tasks in SL, I have used authenticity as a yardstick (DuQuette & Hann, 2010), splitting task-types into three groups: authentic tasks, simulations and form-focused activities.

Authentic tasks

Authentic tasks involve interaction with other residents; getting a job in SL, shopping for a gift or attending a class unrelated to language learning are all examples of authentic tasks in SL. Again, the focus is on completing a task that has consequences independent of its use as a language learning exercise. For example, a yearlong, project-based authentic task in SL could involve the creation of a small business. Simply designing and marketing a virtual t-shirt would involve Internet research (the how-to’s of virtual tailoring in Photoshop or Gimp, the location of free templates), conversations in SL (discussions with successful designers, tips on marketing) and effective use of English in advertising (for posting ads both in-world and on the world wide web). Final presentations could be as simple as a traditional class paper, scrapbook or Powerpoint presentation, or could involve the creation of a group video project charting the challenges the groups faced as they mastered each skill they would need.

A key element in authentic tasks is interaction with real individuals or organizations; whether or not they be native or non-native interlocutors, they are not playing the ‘game’ of EFL education and accordingly provide a true test of your students’ language ability and communication strategies. Virtual worlds can provide the authentic interactions. It is up to the instructor, however, to choose tasks also applicable to a wide variety of RL situations. Starting a small business in SL has many corollaries to starting an RL business. For example, working on an in-world newsletter (Figure 1), provided experiences with software applicable to other publishing contexts. Getting a job being a silent virtual bouncer in an SL dance club is probably less useful. Perhaps the greatest challenge in using authentic tasks is that student projects based in online environments require the confidence, flexibility and familiarity with English that only more advanced EFL students usually possess.

Simulations

The second type of task in virtual worlds is the simulation. These are teacher-directed tasks with actual RL or SL corollaries; though they lack authenticity, they still retain an advantage over texts, pictures and videos in that they do not simply represent, but also model the complexities, nuances and actions required to navigate a system (Frasca, 2001), in our case, a task. In DuQuette & Hann (2010), for example, learner pairs, cooperating in-world from different cities in Japan, participated in a directions-giving task
Starting at Point A (a virtual bar in the futuristic SL city of Insilico), one learner was guided by the instructor to Point B (the Seven Seas Restaurant, several blocks away), scribbling down the route and appropriate landmarks as she went. Then, utilizing private voice chat, the first learner guided her partner from Point A to Point B. Locations were then changed, and roles switched. This activity simulated the sort of direction-giving and guidance commonplace among cellular phone users (although the ease of teleportation in SL means this is a rare occurrence in-world). This task takes only minutes to prepare, is suitable for all but the lowest English levels, and could easily act as the centerpiece of a 90-minute computer lab lesson in SL.
The third type of task corresponds with Doughty and Williams’ taxonomy of tasks (1985), in which various form-focused activities, including dictogloss and consciousness-raising may be conceived of as tasks. These also include familiar classroom activities such as information gap, jigsaw and other problem solving tasks (Pica, Kanagy & Falodun, 1993). An example of this type of task may also be found in DuQuette & Hann (2010). In this paired activity, the instructor first placed furniture in an SL room in two arrangements and took two snapshots (SL screen captures). Then, all furniture was placed outside the room. Next, a copy of one snapshot was given to the first learner. The first learner was responsible for describing the picture to the second learner; using the instructions from the first learner as a guide, the second then arranged the furniture exactly as the snapshot showed (Figure 3). Once the task was performed to the satisfaction of the first learner, the furniture was returned outside. Then the second learner received the snapshot of the second arrangement, and the task was repeated.

“A key element in authentic tasks is interaction with real individuals or organizations; whether or not they be native or non-native interlocutors, they are not playing the ‘game’ of EFL education and accordingly provide a true test of your students’ language ability and communication strategies”
One final note on simulations and form-focused activities: Though it is easy to recreate many such tasks in virtual worlds, there really is no point to doing in SL what one can already do in the classroom. Your students will definitely not appreciate having to learn the intricacies of the Second Life browser only to use it to do the same thing they could do with a pen and paper in class. In the two examples given, attempts were made to improve on existing activities, to do what could not be done in a classroom. One can simulate the giving of directions using a 2D map in a classroom task, but the use of SL more accurately simulates the experience by providing learners a 3-D street-level perspective. One can also practice furniture placement through use of a 2D sketching activity in the classroom, but the inclusion of more complicated spatial relationships (especially depth) and the ease with which objects can be placed and re-placed in SL provides for a rich exchange of language. Virtual world environments are only as useful as the innovations EFL instructors are willing to make.

**MMOs as potential learning environments**

MMOs are persistent online graphical game environments. They share many of the characteristics of virtual worlds like SL: avatar use, the ability to communicate in text or voice with other users, and an immersive graphical environment. However, there are two major differences. First, most MMOs do not allow users to create their own content. This precludes the creation of simulations or form-focused tasks. Second, most MMOs are focused on completing quests provided by non-player characters (NPCs) in the game itself. The player may be assigned the task of delivering an important document, exploring an unknown territory or slaying a certain monster (see Appendix B). These may initially be completed alone, but later, more difficult quests may require cooperation between two or
more individuals to accomplish successfully.

For the language learner, these quests are tasks. As Ballou (2009) notes in his study of Japanese EFL learners in Blizzard's popular World of Warcraft:

(1) Interaction with the game environment generally (follows) a task-based model...in effect, the players had to comprehend the language presented for each quest accurately in order to progress in the game, and better understanding resulted in quicker and easier advancement through the game levels (p.67-68).

Additionally, as the learner levels up his/her character and becomes more familiar with the interface, play mechanics and language of the game, many MMOs pressure players to initiate communication with each other and cooperate to complete tasks that are otherwise impossible. In this way, a normally reticent language learner may be slowly exposed to conversation in text and voice by games that “encourage social interaction by enacting stories through collaborative tasks as well as chatting” (Ang & Zaphiris, 2008, p. 22). Making friends (or at least allies) in the game becomes not only possible, but a necessary condition of participation (McGonigal, 2010), and the only way to make these friends is through successful language use. The anonymity of the interface, and the tendency to interact with others with a confidence in line with the strength represented by one’s avatar, the Proteus Effect (Yee and Bailenson, 2007), are other ways in which the game itself encourages taking chances with language.

MMOs may have other advantages for language learners as well. Task completion requires not only language ability, but also active, critical learning (Gee, 2007); learners must often make use of reflection, interaction with other players and experimentation to complete quests (Schweinho 2008), linking reading comprehension, effective communication and critical thinking skills. Also, as MMOs are theme-based, vocabulary and grammatical structures are recycled, providing repeated exposure (Ballou, 2009). Assuming interest in the game and sufficient language ability, these tasks give MMOs an advantage over books, videos and other methods of EFL self-study.

**Recommend MMOs for EFL**

I thought I can try hard because this work is (a) game. If I get (the) same amount of sentences and just read it, I will give up and think, ‘English is not interesting.’ I can complete this work because I enjoy this game. To read the conversation is hard but the game is interesting. I think this balance between study and play is important. If (we) only play, we cannot learn things. But if (we) only study, we (will) be tired of study and cannot continue it.

A female Japanese university student

Introducing a student to English practice through gaming can be rewarding for everyone involved, but it can be difficult to find appropriate MMOs for language learning. A good MMO for EFL should be free, require minimal computing resources and space, have an adequate tutorial and have a compelling storyline and setting. Most importantly, it should contain generalizable, level-appropriate vocabulary and high quality tasks that focus on reading comprehension and critical thinking, not simple button-pushing.

Will the MMO be an appealing learning environment, especially for those who may be unfamiliar with gaming? This includes ease of installation, usefulness of online tutorials, visual appeal, interface intuitiveness, quality of the game’s back story, and character customizability; each characteristic represents a possible obstacle to a learner’s enjoyment of the game. Online reviews at sites like mmohuts.com are useful in assessing a game’s overall appeal.
Accurately estimating the difficulty and desirability of text provided both by the game and by other users, on the other hand, is problematic. Will learners be able to comprehend enough of the game text to successfully complete tasks? Is task completion truly dependent on text comprehension? Is there a glut of site-specific or fantasy/science-fiction vocabulary that is overly game-centric? Does interplayer communication basically follow colloquial conventions or is it riddled with gaming jargon? A holistic evaluation based on a few weeks of game play is perhaps unavoidable.

Perhaps the most important factor is task quality. From the perspective of an EFL learner, a high-quality MMO task is story-driven and meaningful. It requires both reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. On the other hand, tasks involving *grinding*, repetitive quests that require little thought to complete, are less desirable. The same goes for those that require an inordinate familiarity with MMO conventions or lightning fast reflexes. A mix of online reviews and personal demoing are necessary to judge task quality, and this is essentially the responsibility of the instructor.

**Using an MMO in class**

In 2008-2010, I had students at a university in the Kansai area of Japan evaluate Sony Online Entertainment’s Free Realms environment (Figure 4). Despite Free Realms’ option to oversimplify tasks and the arcade-style action of some of its mini-games, the ease of installation, tutorial and overall language level seemed the most appropriate for my students; it was also free to join (at least initially). During the summers of 2008 and 2009, five student volunteers participated in an informal pilot study. After completing 40 quests in the game, they were required to fill out a brief Likert scaled survey and write two paragraphs detailing the good and bad points of

![Figure 4. Screen shot from a task in Free Realms (Sony Online Entertainment, 2008)](image-url)
using the game for language practice (Appendix C). Though some felt the game aimed at too young an audience, and none reported having conversations with other users, all agreed that Free Realms was useful for English practice. In spring 2010, I assigned Free Realms projects to groups of 7-8 advanced students in two advanced media English courses. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and it provided students an opportunity to participate in primary, experiential research that they had heretofore been unable to perform in a university context.

Conclusions and Caveats

In a discussion of task-based learning, virtual worlds and MMOs provide two very different environments. Virtual worlds like Second Life are a playground for language educators, where any task, be it entirely authentic, a simulation or form-focused exercise can be developed. MMOs, when carefully selected, are a playground for independent language learners, an unending series of tasks that reward the learner with the satisfaction of recognition and feedback for every language task successfully completed, as well as a chance to compete and collaborate with people around the world as they play. Svensson (2003) outlines the potential for teaching and learning in virtual environments:

We have only started to explore the possibilities of virtual worlds in advanced language learning, and while there obviously is a long way to go, it seems clear they have a great deal to offer. Language learning is about language, immersion in other cultures, communication, media, intercultural meetings and role-play, and virtual arenas supply us with a place where all these can come together...we need to be open to exploring these worlds as well as letting students do much of the exploration themselves. (p. 140)

Granted, there are obstacles to utilizing these virtual spaces for language learning. University administrators are often fearful of lowering firewalls to let SL and MMOs into computer labs. Skeptical curriculum designers may be unable to see the utility of virtual environments. Even enthusiastic language students themselves may be reluctant to learn an unfamiliar software interface or participate in an environment socially stigmatized as “nerdy”; as Ballou (2009) states, “charging after a half-man, half-pig warlord with a group of adventurers from Australia, China and Canada may be an ideal way to use and improve language skill for some, but certainly not for everyone” (p. 63). But by introducing students to tasks in virtual worlds and MMOs, we provide them with opportunities for authentic interactions in environments they can take advantage of long after classes have ended.

“By introducing students to tasks in virtual worlds and MMOs, we provide them with opportunities for authentic interactions in environments they can take advantage of long after classes have ended”
References


About the author

Jean-Paul DuQuette received his M.A. in ESL from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and is currently a doctoral student in education at Temple University, Japan. He has taught over 300 hours of classes in virtual worlds and is a volunteer mentor and instructor at Cypris Village in Second Life. He is an assistant professor at Kansai Gaidai University.
Appendix A – How to create an account in Second Life


2. Choose a starter avatar; you can change your appearance later.

3. Choose a name and enter your email, date of birth and password.

4. Click on Download Second Life to receive the browser.

5. Click on the Second Life icon on your desktop, enter your Username and Password and select Advanced mode (this will enable headset use). Then Log In.

Appendix B - Sample quest from Sony Online Entertainment's Free Realms

NPC #1: Caitlyn Gravefog needs someone to fight a wraith at the graveyard! You look like you can handle it. If you’re brave enough, find Caitlyn to the north.

Caitlyn Gravefog: Whoa! Don’t sneak up on people like that! I almost mistook you for some kind of graveyard ghost…

Caitlyn Gravefog: Hey, want to fight a wraith for me? It’s in the graveyard behind me. It’s really creepy, so please get rid of it!

Interface: Cursed Graveyard!

Something sinister is moving about the graveyard. Venture in and defeat the ominous presence!

Goals
Defeat the graveyard wraith!
Don’t get knocked out 3 times!
You received one 13 coins.
You received one Spunky Scrapper.
You win!

Caitlyn Gravefog: Thanks for getting rid of that wraith. I may be a gravedigger, that that thing was just scary!

Interface: You receive one amateur brawler pants.
Appendix C – Pilot Study Student Survey

Free Realms - Extra Credit assignment
Name: __________________________

I’m interested in using Sony’s new Free Realms online gaming world as English practice. If you want a little extra-credit for next semester. (20 points) http://www.freerealms.com/

I. Make an account, download and start playing Free Realms (in English, of course).
II. Complete at least 50 quests and Print out a copy of the screen you see on the first page
   a. To do this in Windows, press the PrntScrn button, open up Paint, then go to the Edit menu and Paste (also CTRL + V).
III. Write two short paragraphs at the bottom of this paper. One should be about the good points of Free Realms for English learning. The second should be about the bad, or useless, points of Free Realms when used as English Practice. Turn it in with this paper (along with your PrntScrn) on the first day of class next semester.

IV. Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Circle your answer on a scale of 1-6
   (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree,4=slightly agree,5=agree,6=strongly agree)

   1. The vocabulary I learned while playing Free Realms was useful. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   2. It was easy to understand what I had to do for each quest. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   3. I talked with other players in the game using text chat. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   4. I made friends with other players in the game. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   5. I think this was a good way to practice my English. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   6. I had fun playing the quests/mini-games. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   7. Moving my avatar around between quests was easy. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   8. The English in the game wasn’t too difficult. 1—2—3—4—5—6
   9. Signing up for the account wasn’t too difficult for me. 1—2—3—4—5—6
  10. The quests and activities didn’t seem too childish. 1—2—3—4—5—6

Paragraphs: ___________________________________________________________________________
Learning by doing: A task-based learning project.

Michi Saki
Kyoto Sangyo University

Introduction
Learning a language is learning how to communicate. Success in learning how to communicate in an L2 is traditionally understood to require the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking. These skills have been taught successfully by many teachers through task-based language (TBL) teaching. Aficionados of the older Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) approach, however, argue that TBL strays too far from conventional methods of language teaching to the extent that grammar and form are neglected, to the extent that it is considerably less effective for the systematic teaching of new language (Swan, 2005; Schefler, 2008). Although PPP maintains that grammar rules and vocabulary play an essential role in learning a language, it can also be argued that TBL’s focus on skills such as interaction, expression, and creative thinking are also tools that are as just as important to acquire, if not more so in learning how to communicate in L2.

I have found that by introducing TBL methods into my own classes, my students are more motivated to use English, and appear to make more progress in terms of fluency and vocabulary acquisition.

The purpose of this article is to explore ways in which the TBL teaching approach can contribute to developing communicative competence in EFL learners in the Japanese context. I will give a brief introduction to a comparison between the traditional grammar and form focused-based method of L2 teaching to that of the interaction-based method of TBL teaching.

Next, I discuss the implementation and adaptation of TBL teaching and learning, focusing on the EFL classroom in Japan by explaining and reflecting on a TBL project done with first-year high-school students. I conclude with an evaluation of how effectively a TBL approach contributed to the communicative competence of these Japanese high school learners.

Task-based Language Learning

“...I have found that by introducing TBL methods into my own classes, my students are more motivated to use English, and appear to make more progress in terms of fluency and vocabulary acquisition.”

Edwards and Willis (2005) define a language learning task as “an activity that has a non-linguistic purpose or goal with a clear outcome and that uses any or all of the four language skills in its accomplishment by conveying meaning in a way that reflects real-world language use” (pp.18-19).

As mentioned by Feez (1998, in Richards and Rogers, 2001), in task-based
instruction there is an assumption that:

(1) The focus of the instruction is on process rather than on product.
(2) Tasks emphasize communication and meaning.
(3) Learners learn by communicative interaction while engaged in the task or tasks at hand.
(4) Tasks focus on real-life activities that learners learn in the classroom.
(5) The tasks of the task-based syllabus are prioritized according to suit the level and specific needs of the learner.

As tasks motivate learners to achieve a goal, Richards and Rogers (2001) state that task activities improve learner motivation and thus promote learning. As learners attempt to use authentic language in order to complete tasks, they usually include some sort of physical activity, partnership, or collaboration. Tasks may require the learner to utilize their language skills from past learning experiences in the classroom, and encourage students to practice what they already know.

TBL can be considered a meaning-based approach. In a meaning-based approach, the teacher provides students exposure to authentic language and opportunities for learners to attempt to use the language through real-life communication activities. This approach encourages learners to analyze their input, and therefore make new discoveries from it.

In questioning the efficacy of the PPP and TBL methodologies, some linguists raise issues with the task-based language teaching approach, in particular, questioning its lack of focus on accuracy and form. On the other hand, Ellis (1994, cited in Willis, 2009) states that, "giving beginner learners opportunities for meaningful communication in the classroom helps to develop communicative ability and also results in linguistic abilities no worse than those developed through more traditional form-focused approaches" (p. 3). In supporting Ellis, there is also the argument that the task-based approach "does not mean a complete disregard for the formal aspects of language, nor does it mean that teachers never engage in imparting their knowledge about the L2 to learners" (Edwards et al, 2009, p. 12).

Task-based instruction is known to provide more authentic activities, while conventional methods only offer ready-to-use learning materials, which are usually scripted and controlled.

**TBL in the Japanese Context**

In cultures such as Japan, in particular, a society where teaching styles are "traditionally more teacher-centered" and where they "prefer more of a transmissive style of teaching" (Willis & Willis, 2009, p. 6) the TBL method may be as difficult for native Japanese teachers to implement as it is for Japanese learners to learn under. It is argued that pedagogic priorities clearly do differ from context to context, as do various institutional arrangements and cultural expectations. Many non-L1 speaking teachers of English may lack confidence in preparing TBL based lessons (due to limited preparation time) and prefer the security of lessons based around clearly specified and limited language points, about which they can prepare explanations carefully in advance. Burrows (2008) claims that successful application of TBL in the Japanese classroom may be unrealistic due to the Japanese cognitive processing style of information, and as a result "leads to less productive lessons in a collectivist culture like Japan" (p. 18).

If and when students have an opportunity to learn under TBL instruction, they find difficulty learning under this method, since the skills needed to engage in task-based activities (such as social interaction, negotiation, creative input, imagination, analytical thinking, etc.) are often not required when studying English for tests and also due to "social-cultural differences" (Burrows, 2008). In spite of these so-called weaknesses in the TBL
methodology, Willis (2009) refutes the above statements, arguing that the existing approaches in the traditional English language classrooms are not producing the desired results, as "the great majority of Japanese learners leave school as remedial beginners, without a usable competence in English. Since the current approaches have been shown not to work, it is necessary to try some sort of innovation" (p. 6).

**Refining the Task-based Lesson to meet Japanese Learners' Needs**

Depending on the learners' level and learning styles, teachers need to adjust the parameters of the tasks to enable the learner to engage in tasks which fit their level of comprehension and linguistic strengths. Willis & Willis (2007) argue that clear instructions, interim goals, a precise completion point with some sort of outcome can increase learners' confidence in doing the task, stimulate a deeper use of English, and increase students' participation in their responses. Refining the task parameters can also help teachers with the grading of a task. As for low level or less motivated learners, the task cycle must be carefully organized and structured in order for learners to grasp a clearer understanding of what is required of them. By introducing a series of pre-tasks, this can lead learners slowly, but surely, towards the goal of completing the target task. The TBL approach can be further refined, for example by implementing some concepts from task-supported language teaching (Ellis, 2003), an approach that "utilizes tasks to provide free practice in the use of a specific linguistic feature that has been previously presented and practiced in exercises" (p. 351).

Below is a brief explanation of the phases of a task cycle (based on Willis's 2006 Task-cycle) which I have used in my classroom of Japanese high school students.

**Pre-task:** Providing students with a starting point, which can include teacher-led brainstorming, introduction of vocabulary, phrases, visuals, such as pictures on the topic, written texts, recordings, video clips, model examples of discourse, previous work of students, or a short pre-task activity for students in order to prepare them for doing the main task. I find that brainstorming is a very positive way to guide Japanese learners in learning how to independently think of new ideas and topics.

**Student Planning and Preparation:** I usually give students 10 to 15 minutes to prepare for doing the main task. For lower level or less motivated students, I have used what Willis (2006) refers to teacher-guided planning, giving students suggestions for ideas and providing additional guidance. As for students who are more competent in their English and more confident in their skills required for task-based language learning, I use free, learner-led planning (Willis, 2006), where the learner negotiates with fellow learners in the group.

**Main Task:** The main task is either done in pairs or in groups. I usually give them a time or word limit. By setting a time limit for a task, whether for a role-play dialogue or conversation, or a word limit for a written piece of work, it tends to motivate the students to focus on completing the goal of the task within the given limit.

**Post-Task:** Student reporting (in the form of presentation in front of the class), or reflection done by both teacher and students. The teacher provides students with suggestions, corrections and further guidance for clarification and deeper understanding.

**Description and Reflection of a Task-Based Language Learning Activity**

I did a task-based learning language activity with my first-year high school students in the summer of 2008. This was the first time both the students and I had done a task-based language activity. As first year students with a relatively low level in English, there was
some expectation that a task-based learning project such as this, with so many challenging tasks to be completed, would be quite difficult. The goals of this project were: 1) to teach the students how to brainstorm ideas; 2) to help students gain confidence in their English communication skills; 3) to provide students with an opportunity to socially interact with people from different countries and cultural backgrounds; and 4) to expose students to different English accents and communication styles.

Pre-Task
The students first completed a basic and simple questionnaire in which they were given the following tasks:

1) Choose a target group to focus the questionnaire on
2) Choose a topic of interest (using brainstorming skills)
3) Create five questions and four most likely responses for each question
4) Conduct the questionnaire within their class
5) Tally up the data
6) Reflect the results of the data in simple pie-charts.

I instructed the students with easy-to-understand English, and took them through each step of the tasks several times, but did not give them too much assistance in terms of helping them think of a topic and content of the questions. Through doing this simple questionnaire exercise, the students understood the main task at hand and what specific tasks needed to be done.

Task-Cycle

Main Task
I introduced to the students the topic of our public questionnaire. The topic was ‘Foreign Visitors in Kyoto City’. The reason I chose this topic was because it gave an opportunity for students to become more aware of their society and encourage them to think more about who visits Kyoto and why Kyoto City is such as popular destination. Over a period of seven weeks, I had the students do a series of tasks such as planning (brainstorming, creating a questionnaire), action (fieldwork, tallying up data, creating pie charts, analyzing data), and post task (reporting, individual feedback about the project).

Plan
1) Brainstorm 10 questions with 5 likely answers for each question.
   Brainstorming using mind maps worked unexpectedly well with the first-year students who are very shy to speak in front of others and far from being confident in their English speaking ability.
2) Create a questionnaire - A4 size paper, double sided (See Appendix 1.)

Action
3) Fieldwork
   Students and teachers conducted the survey outside of school time. We did this during summer vacation with the cooperation of other teachers and staff. With the teacher acting as a guide and mediator throughout the project, students negotiated with each other in class as to where in the city they should conduct the survey. During the actual fieldwork, students were at first hesitant to approach a total stranger, a foreigner, and to ask them to cooperate in their student questionnaire in English. For first-year high school students, this is a challenging task for them to attempt. After much encouragement and a ‘push on the back’ from their supportive teachers who observed their every move, students became more relaxed about communicating in English, even excited to approach foreign visitors, with some students even going further as to making the casual chit-chat with the international guests (Figure 1).
4) Tally up the Data
   Students took longer than expected in doing this task, as they wanted to be precise about the numbers, and stayed
after class hours to recount and double check their calculations (Figure 2). At this stage of the task-cycle, I felt that students were becoming really motivated to work towards accomplishing the goal of the target task.

5) Create pie-charts to reflect the collected data (calculating percentages and creating a pie graph to reflect the questionnaire results).

6) Analyze the collected data by writing down comments about what each pie-chart reflects.
This task involved process writing, involving collaboration of ideas of the entire class.

**Post-Task**

7) Report
The students created a poster presentation and presented in front of their peers (Figure 3 and 4). In groups, the students reported on their findings from the survey, and explained their experiences in doing the fieldwork and difficulties they had with the project.

8) Student Feedback
The students filled out a student feedback questionnaire on the project. All students agreed that they felt that their ability to communicate in English improved. Most students agreed that the instructions in the pre-task and task-cycle were easy to follow, with the limited assistance that was provided from the teacher, and most students felt the time limits given to complete each task were sufficient. All students agreed that they would like to do another task-based language activity in future lessons.
(Fig. 2: Students working together to tally up the data from the collected questionnaires)

(Fig. 3: Poster presentation on the results of the survey)

(Figure 4: Pie Charts reflecting results if the survey with comments)
Teacher Reflection and Evaluation

Through this activity, the students developed their skills in communication, social interaction, negotiation and critical and analytical thinking. Task activities motivated students to complete each task, one task in connection with the following one in order to achieve the final end product. As a result of all their efforts, the students finished the project with a sense of individual and group achievement as well as personal satisfaction. Through this task-based project, the students learned how to organize random data and express it through graphs. They also learned how to analyze data by thinking about its meanings and expressing their own opinions about it. As for evaluation, the students were graded on their level of participation, attitude and progress in class and during fieldwork, as well as on their individual input, and ability to express themselves both verbally and non-verbally.

Through this project, I realized that regardless of their communicative levels, students can learn to communicate language more effectively through task-based learning activities. By giving them target tasks, they are more motivated to find out how to complete the actual task by making efforts to understand and comprehend. Since students are making practical use of their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, they are more driven to learn. Both teacher and students learned much more than they could ever have imagined from doing this challenging, but worthwhile project.

Conclusion

In examining this teaching approach through discussion of its various definitions and characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, ideas for implementation and refinement, as well as reflection on a task-based language learning project, I have made the following conclusions:

1. In my experience, learners can develop all four skills of second language acquisition from task-based language learning more effectively than from other conventional methods, while at the same time, acquiring additional skills (social interaction, negotiation, critical thinking and analytical skills) to become communicatively competent in a second language. Under task-based language instruction, learners become motivated to develop these skills to complete tasks in order to achieve an individual or group goal.
2. Task-based learning instruction can be adapted and refined in order to accommodate the lowest level of language learner, and to motivate and enable them to practice the same tasks outside the classroom.
3. In order to truly assess students' competence in language communication, teachers need to evaluate students not only by their abilities in grammatical structure, but by their social interaction and by their ability to understand and demonstrate how and why meaningful language is used.

As discussed with the example of this project, though the students' current language level was considered to be insufficient to successfully complete the various tasks, their enthusiasm and motivation to engage in the tasks made them more eager to learn and develop their skills. It is my sincere hope that this task-based learning project may be seen as an example that justifies the effectiveness of TBL methodology and practice.

About the author

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References


Introduction

I use the procedure outlined below for a course that introduces 20th century historical figures, looking at the profiles of people like John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Gandhi. Each lesson is based on a magazine or newspaper article. This means that, in theory, the procedure could be used for any type of content-based learning based on such materials. The procedure is based around a main, summarising task and a follow-up discussion activity. The focus is on listening, reading, vocabulary, and discussion.

Part One: Pre-task (10-15 minutes)

This is where the person featured in the article/lecture of the class is introduced. First, students answer some questions about the person to be discussed that class. The questions in the warm up section are quite general. I usually put questions similar to these below on the blackboard for the class to answer in small groups:

- Where is the person from?
- Why do you think this person is well known?
- Where in the world did this person carry out his/her actions/activities?
- What other things do you know about this person?
For answering the questions for the warm-up, students shouldn’t use their dictionaries or look at prints from previous classes. However, if the class level is low, the dictionaries-use may be necessary, and it may also be necessary to provide the students with some historical information that is useful for answering the questions. After the groups have finished answering the questions, I ask each group to share their answers for each question with the rest of the class.

Main Task (20-30 minutes)

This is a listening and summarising task. Students listen to the teacher reading the article for that class. The article should be read as if it were a lecture, from start to finish with no stopping. For higher level classes, I tell the class to listen only and not look at the article while I am reading it, and for lower level classes I have the students read the text and follow along as I read. For this part of the class, the article should be read twice.

After reading the article for the first time, students talk with the other members in their group and recall the main points, people, places, events, and dates from article/lecture. The students should not look at the article on the print, but for lower level classes this a bit of a challenge. For the lower students, I often write some simple questions on the blackboard to point them in the right direction:

- What happened to the person?
- What are some events from the article?
- Who were some of the people mentioned?
- Can you remember any dates mentioned?
- Where did the events take place?

Planning and Report (15 minutes)

After the students have finished answering the questions/making their lists of what they recall from the lecture, each group is asked to share their answers with the class. The first time this procedure is used, the students give short answers (or no answer at all!), but as the semester continues, the students (both low and high-levels) get used to this task and will start to give longer and more detailed answers.

Language Focus (20-30 minutes)

Students look for any words in the article they are unfamiliar with and make a note of them for later. Then, the teacher reads through the article again. This time, students read along. After finishing reading the article, the students should work with their groups to make a list of words and phrases they couldn’t understand from the lecture/article. When they have finished making lists of the new words/phrases, one person from each group should write their list on the blackboard. When all of the groups have put their lists on the blackboard, I go through the lists with the class and explain the unknown words/phrases. In my experience, this can become the longest part of the lesson. Because there is still the speaking section of the lesson (see below) left to go through, the students can sometimes use their dictionaries to save time.

Follow up activity (20 minutes)

The last part of this lesson is a speaking activity. Students work in a group and make a very short speech/presentation. Since the articles/lectures in the course introduce a lot of new
vocabulary and information about the person we are studying, I keep the topic and questions for this part of the lesson very general. For example, in this part of the lesson the students are asked to talk about one of the following questions/topics:

- What do you think was the most important event in today’s lecture?
- What do you think was the most surprising part from today’s lecture?
- What do you think will happen to this person next and why?

When answering the questions for the speaking part of the class, I ask the students to use as many new words and phrases as they can from the previous part of the lesson (Part 3) in their responses. For the higher-level classes I try and challenge the students, telling them not to read from their notes when giving their response for this section.

**Conclusion**

Although this lesson can be challenging for students unused to the demands it presents, I find that as the semester continues, the students not only complete the tasks in a shorter amount of time, but their answers improve in length and detail. This style of lesson also lends itself to homework assignments that can provide some background information for the next class, where students can look up some of the events leading up to the material that will be studied in the next class. I hope this can be a useful lesson to anyone teaching any type of content-based learning class, and some of the tasks mentioned above would be at home in a general class also – at the start of a class, the pre-task mentioned in Part One could easily be used to introduce a person or topic that is connected to a particular lesson/text. Also, for a general class using a text, the students reading skills could be enhanced by the tasks outlined in the Language Focus section of this lesson plan.
Lesson Plan 2
Travel postcard writing

Wes Lang
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- Key words: pair work, writing, grammatical competence.
- Level: false beginner to lower intermediate
- Age: junior high school and up
- Preparation time: 30 minutes to collect all materials
- Activity time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Materials: real postcards as examples, blank postcards, travel agency brochures, glue, scissors

Introduction
Writing a travel postcard may seem like a simple task, but can prove quite challenging for second-language learners. This fun and creative activity has been designed to give learners a chance to design and write a postcard as if they are on holiday in a foreign country. While this could be done individually, doing it in groups allows the students to not only exchange ideas, but also to assist each other with language usage. At the end of the task you will end up with some impressive looking postcards that the learners can be proud of making. This may encourage them to use the postcard writing skill in their future travels.

Preparation
Before class, visit your nearest 100 yen shop and purchase some blank postcards. Each pair or group will need one blank postcard, and the cards are usually sold in packs of 50. In addition, go to any travel agency and pick up some free A4-size travel brochures for various travel destinations throughout the world. If you have received any postcards from someone traveling abroad, then bring them to class to show the students. If you don’t have any, then quickly make some or ask a friend or relative to send some from abroad. Ideally you should have one example postcard for each pair in your class. Thus, if you have 20 students then you should aim for 10 real (or semi-real) postcards.
Pre-task

Step 1: Have students make pairs or groups of 3. Hold up an actual postcard you’ve received from someone who was traveling in another country. Show the postcard to your students and read the message on the back out loud. After reading the postcard, ask the students some simple comprehension questions about what you just read (i.e. Where is the person? What did they do yesterday? What are they doing now?) You could create a game out of this by awarding points for the quickest or most accurate answers.

Step 2: Distribute a real travel postcard to each group. Groups should read the postcards and try to comprehend the language. Again, some simple comprehension questions would help students stay focused. As time and interest allow, have groups exchange postcards several times so they have a chance to see a number of different examples. This will help them become exposed to the written language in the task.

Step 3: Tell the students that travel postcards generally tend to follow a structure with several different parts. Write the numbers one through seven on the board and have groups look at an example postcard and try to figure out the structure. You could elicit the first step as a group and write the word ‘Greeting’ on the board. Students should work together and try to guess the steps. Monitor the students and give help wherever necessary. After brainstorming together, you board should look something like this:

Structure
1. Greeting
2. Current location
3. Current weather
4. What we did yesterday
5. What we are doing now
6. Our plan for tomorrow
7. Closing

Please see figure 1 for an example postcard I used for my students:

![Example Postcard Image]

Figure 1: Example Postcard
Task

Step 1: Inform the learners that they are going to make a travel postcard in class today that is similar to the ones you have shown them. Each group should choose one travel destination based on the brochures you have brought to class. Spread the travel brochures across some empty tables in the classroom and tell the students to come up and look through the brochures. Once they decide a destination, they should take the travel brochure, go back to their seats, and start looking for a picture they’d like to put on the front of their postcard. You might want to set some guidelines such as no two groups can have the same destination. One way to ensure this is to only bring in one travel brochure per destination and have groups choose on a first-come-first-served basis.

Step 2: Hand out one blank postcard to each group and tell the students that they are going to make a postcard to send to their teacher or other classmates. Distribute the scissors and glue to each pair (alternatively you could ask students to bring in their own the week before you do the activity). Groups should look through their brochure, cutting out a picture or series of pictures to put on the front of their postcard. You can also have the students cut out a small picture to use as a postage stamp on their postcard. Set a time limit for designing the front of the postcards so students don’t spend too much time making it perfect. Ideally students finish designing and making the front of the postcard in 15-20 minutes.

Step 3: After groups finish the front of their postcard, tell them to start working on the message using the structure that was brainstormed during the pre-task. You could put the example postcards on the overhead projector for students to reference, but the main focus should be on allowing the students to work out the structure themselves using the language they are comfortable with. While students are working, on the board write the actual address of the school in which you work or a fictional address of your choice. Learners should copy this down as a final step for completing the postcard. As each pair is likely to work at different speeds, have an extra activity ready for the groups who finish before the others. I recommend having students write down the structure in their notebooks or on a sheet of loose-leaf paper for future reference.

Option for higher-level learners: If you have higher-level students, try assigning some additional
guidelines to make it more challenging. One idea would be for students to imagine they are on the 'vacation from hell' or 'the most unbelievable holiday' when they write their message. You could turn the activity into a class contest where groups compete to write the funniest, scariest, most embarrassing, or best experience.

Report

When all groups have finished, group members should do janken (rock-paper-scissors) to decide who will report to the class. I usually have all of the janken losers come to the front of the class with their completed postcards. One by one, have each representative read their postcard to the class. It might be helpful if you have each student put their postcard on the OHP while reading it so that other classmates can see it. As the students read their postcards, takes notes about common grammar or vocabulary errors that you hear. A selection of the most common errors should be written on the board for students to discuss during the Language focus.

Language focus

Once all the postcards have been read, students should sit down with their groups and look at the errors, trying to correct them. This activity allows students to learn important language for writing a postcard in English, as well as practice using past, present continuous, and future tense verbs in a relatively authentic setting. Additionally, weather vocabulary can be recycled if taught in previous lessons. If you have lower-level learners, then can do a gap-fill activity with the students to help reinforce the language they practiced while making their postcards. Put the following on the OHP or make copies for the students to complete individually. I recommend having the students work in different pairs and write a message to their new partner using the template below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing a postcard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good morning _______. How’s it going?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guess what? I am in _________. The weather is _____ and ______. Yesterday I ________ and _______. It was so _______. Now I am _________. Tomorrow I’m going to ___________. I look forward to seeing you again soon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your friend, _________.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher-level learners may not need the template but may still benefit from some additional written practice.

Follow up

This task dovetails nicely with a unit about traveling. This task could either precede or follow an activity about summer vacation plans or travel destinations. Postcards should be kept to be used as examples for other classes in the future. You should also encourage students to send you or the class a real postcard from a place they may travel to during the spring or summer holidays.

About the author

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Lesson Plan 3
Discussing environmental problems

Colin Thompson
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Neil Millington
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• Key words: pair work; questioning; reasoning
• Level: Intermediate and above.
• Learner maturity: University level
• Preparation time: 20 minutes
• Activity time: 90 minutes.
• Materials: Internet access or print outs of environmental causes, effects and solutions from the ThinkQuest website (www.thinkquest.org); print outs of the worksheets (see appendix).

Introduction
This lesson encourages students to learn and think about various environmental issues and to discuss their causes, effects and solutions. Protecting the environment is a topic that should be familiar with all university level students and is therefore useful for eliciting discussion. The following task allows students to voice their opinions regarding environmental issues as well as facilitating a variety of language that can be developed such as question formations, giving opinions with reason, and using cause and effect connectors.

Preparation
Step 1: If no internet access, print off copies of the following website which describes environmental problems, causes, effects and solutions: http://library.thinkquest.org/26026/Environmental_Problems/environmental_problems_article.html
(Please note this article presumes the reader has internet access in class).

Step 2: Print off copies of the worksheets (see appendix). Worksheets A and B are used in one task, whilst C and D can be used in another. Students will work in pairs and therefore student A will have worksheet A (project 1 and 2) and student B will have worksheet B (project 1 and 2).
Pre-task

Step 1: Direct the students to the following URL (the table below provides an outline):
http://library.thinkquest.org/26026/Environmental_Problems/environmental_problems_article.html
Allocate each student one environmental problem from the website e.g. air pollution.
Instruct each student to make notes about the causes, effects and solutions of their chosen
problem. This step could also be done for homework, prior to the lesson.

Step 2: When they have finished, write on the blackboard the headings from the table below
and elicit from the class different environmental problems (see the table below for
suggestions. For further information see the website).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Problems</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acid rain</td>
<td>Industrial chemical gases</td>
<td>Marine life dying</td>
<td>Environmentally friendly fuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution</td>
<td>Fossil fuel burning power plants</td>
<td>Lung and heart disease</td>
<td>Renewable forms of energy production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Warming</td>
<td>Gas emissions from cars</td>
<td>Rising sea levels</td>
<td>Planting more trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous Waste</td>
<td>Industries creating landfills to store waste</td>
<td>Chemical waste found in rivers</td>
<td>Government laws to limit waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozone Depletion</td>
<td>Production of CFC gases</td>
<td>Increase in skin cancer</td>
<td>Government laws to restrict CFC gases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smog</td>
<td>Production of leaded gasoline</td>
<td>Lung Disease</td>
<td>Use of unleaded petrol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Pollution</td>
<td>Toxic chemicals dumped into water</td>
<td>Dead fish, birds etc.</td>
<td>Government laws to prevent industries dumping waste into the water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Repeat this step for causes, effects and solutions. In pairs students can discuss further
eamples and write them on the blackboard. If students struggle for solutions, draw their
attention to the cause of the problem in order to find a solution e.g. the production of
dangerous gases (cause) – introduce government laws to limit production (solution).

Step 3: Put students in pairs and provide each pair with one set of worksheets: either A and B,
or C and D e.g. one student will have worksheet A and the other student will have worksheet
B. Allocate 15 minutes planning time in which the students must examine their worksheet
individually to think of questions to ask to find out their missing information. Students must also
think of different solutions for Project 2 ‘Green Gold’ which deals with the environmental
effects of Gold production. Students can make notes on the worksheet.

Task

Students must ask their partner questions in order to fill in the blanks on their worksheet. Then
they have to decide on the best solution for Project 2. Encourage the students to give
reasons why their partner’s solutions may not be suitable.
Report

Each pair then returns to their desks and together they write up Project 2’s solution on paper. Encourage them to explain how their solution will help prevent the causes of the problem. When they have finished, match pairs of students together into groups of four. Each pair then presents their cause, effect and solution to the other pair. The listening pair can make notes about the solution or provide their opinions.

Language Focus

Learners’ attention can be drawn to a variety of language used in the task or in the report.

1. Task language;
   Question formation: “Could you tell me where…?” “how many…?”, “what is…?”, “when did…?”
   (Optional) to practice question formations write a sentence on the blackboard e.g. 
   Paul went to the forest on Saturday to cut down two trees to make charcoal.
   Remove an underlined word and elicit the question that would be asked to find the answer
   and write it on the blackboard e.g. who went to...?, where did Paul…?, when did Paul…?,
   how many trees…?, what did Paul…?) Then in pairs, students can practice writing the
   questions for the worksheets.
   Turn taking: “can I go first?”, “may I go next?”, “sure go ahead.”;
   Giving opinions with reason: “I think the best solution is to……because…..”;
   Agreeing, disagreeing: e.g. “I disagree with you because…..”

2. Report language;
   Discussing the environment allows the use of ‘cause and effect’ connectors e.g. due to;
   consequently; as a result of; therefore; thus; hence; because.
   Giving opinions: “In our opinion we think/believe the best solution is…”
   The following links provide useful information about various environmental problems, causes,
   effects and solutions. Ideally, teachers should adapt material as they see fit for their
   students.
   http://library.thinkquest.org/26026/Environmental_Problems/environmental_problems_article.html

About the authors

Colin Thompson is a full-time PhD student at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. He has been teaching in Japan for approximately five years and his teaching interests are oral second language pedagogy, in particular the use of tasks.

Neil Millington is a lecturer at APU Ritsumeikan University. He has been teaching in Japan for nine years and his teaching interests include developing spoken language proficiency through the use of tasks and learner motivation.
Appendix

Worksheet A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project 1 – Recycling for Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collecting unwanted phones and using them again</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cause:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are _____ million mobile phones thrown away every year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mobile phones and their batteries are just dumped in the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Too much waste and too many _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heavy metals like _______ are leaking into rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These metals can cause cancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recycling for Africa collects unwanted phones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The donated phones are sold in Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The profits go to _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This will save millions of phones being wasted and help reduce waste.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project 2 - Green Gold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gold that’s produced without harming the environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cause:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rainforests in Columbia are being destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Under the forest there is a lot of _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most mining companies destroy the trees and don’t care about the animals that are dying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humans have destroyed and changed animal habitats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More species are being threatened with extinction than ever before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over _______ species face extinction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recycling for Africa collects unwanted phones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The donated phones are sold in _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The profits go to charity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This will save millions of phones being wasted and help reduce waste.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worksheet B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project 1 – Recycling for Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collecting unwanted phones and using them again</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cause:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are 950 million mobile phones thrown away every year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mobile phones and their batteries are just dumped in the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Too much waste and too many landfills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heavy metals like mercury and lead are leaking into rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These metals can cause ______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recycling for Africa collects unwanted phones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The donated phones are sold in _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The profits go to charity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This will save millions of phones being wasted and help reduce _______.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project 2 - Green Gold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gold that’s produced without harming the environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cause:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rainforests in _______ are being destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Under the forest there is a lot of gold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most _______ companies destroy the trees and don’t care about the animals that are dying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effect:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humans have destroyed and changed _______ _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More species are being threatened with extinction than ever before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Over 15,000 species face extinction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recycling for Africa collects unwanted phones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The donated phones are sold in _______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The profits go to charity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This will save millions of phones being wasted and help reduce _______.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Worksheet C**

**Project 1 Desertification in Africa**

A campaign to teach local people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause:</th>
<th>Effect:</th>
<th>Solution:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Parts of coastal Africa have _______ problems because forests are being cut down.</td>
<td>• Land is being turned into desert.</td>
<td>• The company CSI is trying to teach people about desertification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local people are cutting down trees to make charcoal.</td>
<td>• Soil in some areas is so bad that it is useless for growing plants or trees.</td>
<td>• They talk to local people and help them find other ways to cook and ______.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They use the charcoal for cooking.</td>
<td>• 35% of the earth's land is at risk.</td>
<td>• They want to meet many people and help stop desertification in many areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effect:**

• Land is being turned into desert.
• Soil in some areas is so bad that it is useless for growing plants or trees.
• 35% of the earth's land is at risk.
• ______ million people are affected.

**Solution:**

• The company CSI is trying to teach people about desertification.
• They talk to local people and help them find other ways to cook and ______.
• They want to meet many people and help stop desertification in many areas.

**Worksheet D**

**Project 2 - Green Gold**

Gold that's produced without harming the environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause:</th>
<th>Effect:</th>
<th>Solution:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Rainforests in Columbia are being destroyed</td>
<td>• Humans have destroyed and changed animal habitats.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Under the forest there is a lot of _____.</td>
<td>• More species are being threatened with _______ than ever before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most mining companies destroy the trees and don’t care about the animals that are dying.</td>
<td>• Over ______ species face extinction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effect:**

• Humans have destroyed and changed animal habitats.
• More species are being threatened with _______ than ever before.
• Over ______ species face extinction.

**Solution:**

• The company _______ is trying to teach people about desertification.
• They talk to local people and help them find other ways to cook and build houses.
• They want to meet many people and help stop desertification in many areas.
OnTask welcomes submissions of articles concerning TBL, particularly with reference to the Japanese context.

Contributors are asked to follow the guidelines set in the sixth edition of American Psychological Association (APA).

Research or theory-based articles should be 3000 words or less. Lesson/activity plans should be 1000 or less. The editors reserve the right to edit articles for length, style, and clarity.

Email submissions along with biodata (50 words or less) to: julianpigott@gmail.com.

Deadlines for submission are as follows:


JALT TBL SIG Team:

Co-ordinator/OnTask co-editor: Justin Harris, tbi@jalt.org
Publications officer/OnTask co-editor: Julian Pigott, julianpigott@gmail.com
Membership Chair: Andrew Atkins
Program Chair: Paul Leeming
Treasurer: Mark Donnellan
PR Chair: Colin Thompson
Japanese editor: Asami Yamaguchi

实际情况
テーマは、日本においてのTask-Based Learningとする。

刊行日程
本紀要は年2回発行する。発行までの日程は原則として次のとおりとする。
秋号：7月31日（必着）投稿原稿締め切り
春号：1月31日（必着）投稿原稿締め切り

体裁・分量・使用言語・
体裁
引用書式・参考文献書式等はAPA（第6版）に準じるものとする。
分量・使用言語
研究論文：3000字以内（英語）
実践論文（授業プラン）：1000字以内
提出されたものにつきましては編集者に一任のこととする。

投稿方法
投稿論文は500字以内内でまとめられた経歴等を添えて julianpigott@gmail.com宛に電子メールで送信すること。
The JALT task-based learning SIG in association with The University of Central Lancashire, UK and Osaka Shoin Women’s University, Japan present:

Task-based learning and teaching in Asia: Challenges and Opportunities

David Carless
Featured Speaker

David Carless is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong and is a well-known researcher and writer in the fields of task-based learning as well as assessment and the management of education change.

Call for papers
The aim of this international event is to enable language educators and researchers from across Asia to share ideas and discuss various aspects relating to the theory and/or practice of task-based learning and teaching in Asia.

We would like to invite those with an interest in this field to submit an abstract for a presentation, workshop or poster session (25 or 40 mins).

Areas of interest include but are not limited to:
- the compatibility of TBLT in Asia
- language teacher professional development and TBLT
- the evaluation of TBLT in classroom contexts
- TBLT and technology
- the reliance on learners’ L1 in TBLT contexts
- learners’ L2 development and TBLT
- learner identity and TBLT
- teacher perspectives on challenges and opportunities
- institutional and classroom challenges
- future directions for TBLT in Asia

Please note abstracts must not exceed 300 words. Submission deadline: 31st January 2012. Following peer review, presenters will be notified of acceptance by: 31st February 2012.

Please email your abstracts as Microsoft word attachments to: tbltinaia@gmail.com. For any enquires email: tbltinaia@gmail.com

May 19 and 20, 2012
Osaka Shoin Women’s University
Osaka, Japan
www.jalt.org/tbl