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投稿要領について
アジアにおけるタスクベースラーニング：好機と挑戦

ジャスティン・ハリス & ジュリアン・ビゴット

今月はJALT Task-Based Learning (TBL)研究部会にとって、特別な月となりました。私達の初めの主催イベントとなるTBL in Asiaでこの文章を目にされるかもしれませんが、このイベントはセントラル・ランカシャー大学（イギリス）と大阪槇稲大学の共通で開催されます。そこには世界中から60人以上の発表者が集まり、EFL環境下にあるアジア各国でのTBLアプローチに関する好機と挑戦について発表します。そして、デイビッド・カーレス氏とマイケル・トーマス氏の著名な二人の研究者を、プレナリスピーカーとして迎えられることをとても嬉しく思っています。

TBL理論は西洋人（または、ロバート・フリップ森氏の言葉を借りれば、中央部）から提唱されていますが、その後、西洋ではないEFL環境においての適応性が疑問視されてきました。TBL in Asiaでは、ポスターバートやディスカッションを通じて、参加者の方にTBLや様々な問題について考える機会を持って頂ければと思います。もし学会に参加できなければ、私達の発刊雑誌On Taskの秋号をお見逃しなく。そこに学会のハイライトを記載する予定です。

今号では、プレナリスピーカーの一人であるデイビッド・カーレス氏の特別記事が記載されています。カーレス氏はTBLとは学生主導のアプローチであるため、儒教が浸透している環境ではTBLの使用が制限されていると懸念を示しています。彼は、そのような懸念を払拭するために、TBLアプローチを調整する方法を提案しています。それには、形式、評価の役割の見直し、TBLアプローチを用いながらリーディングやライティングのスキルを向上させる方法も含まれています。

次にスティーブン・ハーダー氏による特別記事では、どのようにPPPアプローチからTBLアプローチに移行していったか、また彼自信の教育方法の変化について書かれています。

二つの特別記事に加え、この号では3つのレッスンプランを紹介しています。一つ目はジョナサン・エンツ氏による文楽学的知識を基にしたリーディングタスク、二つ目はコリン・トンプソン氏によるリーダーシップを基にしたレッスンについてです。最後はマーク・ドンネラ氏によるイギリスの子供向けのアニメシリーズであるShaun the Sheepを利用した面白いスピーキングとライティングのアクティビティを紹介しています。

On Taskでは研究論文やレッスンプランの応募をお待ちしております。On Taskへの投稿にご興味をお持ちの方は、ジャスティン・ハリス（tbl@jalt.org）までご連絡下さい。

TBL研究部会をこれからもよろしくお願い致します。
Finding opportunities and addressing challenges with TBL in Asia

Justin Harris & Julian Pigott
Co-editors

This is a special month for the JALT TBL SIG. You may well be reading this at TBL in Asia, our first fully-fledged event. Held in conjunction with the University of Central Lancashire (UK) and Osaka Shoin Women’s University, TBL in Asia features over 60 presenters from around the world addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with a TBL approach in the Asian EFL context. We are particularly proud to host our two plenary speakers and renowned experts in the field, David Carless and Michael Thomas.

TBL theory originates from the West (or, in Robert Phillipson terms, the center), and doubts have therefore been raised about its suitability for non-Western (periphery) EFL learning contexts. At TBL in Asia we hope that the poster and paper presentations, as well as informal discussion will give attendees opportunities to engage with this and other issues. If you were unable to attend the conference, don’t miss the Autumn edition of OnTask, which will feature selected highlights of the conference.

In this issue of OnTask, our first feature article is by David Carless, one of the plenary speakers at TBL in Asia. Dr. Carless addresses the concern that the use of TBL in Confucian-heritage settings is limited due to its reliance on a student-centered approach. He suggests ways of adjusting the TBL approach to assuage such concerns. These include a greater focus on form, a consideration of the role of assessment, and the development of reading and writing skills within a TBL approach.

In our second feature article, Steven Herder gives a personal account of how he has made the transition from a PPP to a TBL approach, and how this transition has been guided by the emergence of his own set of teaching principles.

In addition to our main features, this edition includes three lesson plans. Jonathan Enns introduces a trivia-based reading task; Colin Thompson shares a lesson based around leadership; and Mark Donnellan outlines an entertaining speaking and writing activity using the British children’s animation series Shaun the Sheep.

OnTask welcomes contributions in the form of research papers, essays and lesson plans. If you are interested in contributing to OnTask, please contact Justin Harris at tbl@jalt.org.

Thanks again for your continued support of the SIG.
“...there are many variations and choices for teachers to select from when they are carrying out TBLT. This is both part of the beauty of TBLT and part of its complexity.”

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) falls within the general umbrella of communicative approaches, and can be seen as a methodological realization of the ideas behind CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). Like many innovations, TBLT is of Anglo-American origin. Its suitability for societies influenced by the tenets of Confucianism is sometimes questioned in view of the different teacher and student roles in TBLT, as opposed to those roles in conventional teaching approaches. My position is that TBLT and CLT can work well in Confucian-influenced societies but that there needs to be some adaptations based on the needs of the host context. This can be facilitated by the fact that there are many variations and choices for teachers to select from when they are carrying out TBLT. This is both part of the beauty of TBLT and part of its complexity.

The aim of this short article is to suggest some key areas in which adaptations to TBLT can occur with the hope that practitioners in Japan (and elsewhere) can use these ideas to make their own adaptations which suit their beliefs and the needs of their students. I discuss three focal areas in which these adaptations may occur: the teaching of grammar; the role of assessment; and achieving a balance between oral tasks and those developing other language skills. Although my research on TBLT has been mainly focused on elementary schools (Carless, 2002, 2004) or high schools (Carless, 2007a), I believe these aspects also carry implications for other sectors, such as universities or private language institutions.

Grammar in TBLT

One of the rationales for the introduction of TBLT in the 1980s was to build a stronger link between methodology and SLA theory (see, for example, Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998). A key insight from an early pioneer of TBLT, the Indian scholar Prabhu, was that form is best acquired when the focus is on meaning. For many teachers, this may seem somewhat paradoxical but this is basically similar to how children of all nationalities learn their mother tongue: they are exposed to language, try to communicate and gradually acquire
correct grammar. For example, to exhort an English-speaking toddler to add an -s to the third person singular of the simple present tense might seem somewhat absurd, but this sometimes does occur in EFL classrooms around the world.

In an influential variation of TBLT put forward by Jane Willis (e.g. Willis, 1996), students are required to complete a task with their pre-existing language resources. The language focus (i.e. the grammar) comes in the post-task stage. Language focus and language practice are recommended in the post-task phase as “an opportunity for explicit language instruction” (Willis, 1996, p. 101). Such TBLT strategies are likely to be suitable for those adult learners who already have substantial linguistic resources and need mainly to activate this language, but their feasibility with less proficient learners is largely unproven. A further challenge for the teacher in the Willis model is that they need the skill and flexibility to be able to organize the language focus on the basis of what has occurred in the task. This may be difficult for all but the most resourceful of teachers. It also appears somewhat paradoxical to many practitioners because it is a very different sequence to more conventional Presentation-Practice-Production (P-P-P) approaches.

P-P-P has a logic that is appealing to teachers and learners: it allows the teacher to control the content and pace of the lesson (Thornbury, 1999); and it provides a clear teacher role, so is in accordance with power relations often found in classrooms (Skehan, 2003). The approach of one chunk of grammar at a time also permits straightforward integration with published materials which is convenient for teachers in textbook-driven systems. As Peter Skehan likes to say, the main problem with P-P-P is that it does not work (see, for example, the evidence in Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1996 etc.), except with a small minority of motivated, diligent and grammar-loving students. The relative merits of TBLT and P-P-P are discussed in more detail in Carless (2009).

Another variation for learning grammar within TBLT involves focused tasks which target the use of a particular pre-determined linguistic feature whilst still maintaining a concern for message communication and student choice of linguistic resources (Ellis, 2003). Focused tasks have two objectives: 1) to stimulate communicative language use and 2) to target the use of a particular predetermined target feature (Ellis, 2003). The focused task is one way of bridging the gap between TBLT and a desire of teachers to present specific grammatical items (Carless, 2009). So, for example, students could be involved in a picture description task in which they need to use prepositions, such as ‘behind’, ‘in front of’, or ‘next to’ to describe the position of certain objects. The main focus of the task could be on the correct use of prepositions.

A further promising grammatical variation is consciousness-raising (CR) tasks in which teachers try to involve students actively in working out grammatical rules by noticing salient features of examples. Ellis (1997) defines a CR task as an activity in which learners are provided language data and carry out some analysis of it for the purpose of arriving at an explicit understanding of some properties of the target language. Such an approach does not preclude teacher input and explanation, but this usually comes after students have carried out some language analysis. This underpins the need for a variety of approaches to grammar instruction with CR tasks representing an option rather than a replacement for more deductive approaches (Mohamed, 2004). Chan (2008) presents a practical example of combining inductive and deductive approaches to teach conditional sentences to Hong Kong high school learners. The teacher provided students with an authentic text which included some examples of conditional sentences. As a preliminary, students read the text and carried out some meaning-based activities. The CR part began with students underlining those sentences in which the second conditional featured. Then students tried to answer the following questions in pairs or small groups:
1. How many actions are there in the sentences with the word ‘if’?
2. What is the relationship between the actions?
3. Are the actions immediately after the ‘if’ possible or impossible?
4. Are the sentences describing true or imagined situations?
5. Are they past, present or future actions?

Based on their responses to these questions, students were then invited to form a rule about type two conditionals by choosing one or more of the options in the following sentence:

Conditional Type Two is used to show actions that are possible/impossible to happen and their reasons/consequences. It refers to past/present/future actions.

With some support from the teacher and their peers, students might be able to work out that the ‘if’ clause denotes imagined future situations that may be possible, unlikely or impossible and the other clause indicates their imaginary consequences (see also Carless, 2007b; Chan, 2008).

Consciousness-raising tasks are well worth exploring further and adding to one’s repertoire of approaches to teaching grammar.

Assessment and TBLT

We know that in formal educational situations where certification is at stake, assessment is what most powerfully captures the minds of students. This is largely the case everywhere, but particularly so in Confucian-heritage settings (Carless, 2011) given the long history of examinations in China, dating back to the Han dynasty. A major barrier to TBLT is that in Asian settings, it often does not cohere with the needs of conventional high-stakes examinations (Littlewood, 2007). If tasks are not relevant to the needs of important assessments, they may be disregarded by students and teachers. An important finding from Deng and Carless (2010) was the impact of teacher beliefs and values on mediating between TBLT and the needs of examinations. In detailed case studies of four teachers, three were discouraged from carrying out tasks because they felt examination preparation was more important, whereas the fourth teacher perceived that tasks would help her students learn best, and that this would adequately prepare them for any test which they took (Deng & Carless, 2010).

To stimulate the implementation of CLT and TBLT, high-stakes school examinations in Hong Kong have over the last twenty years increased the weighting awarded to oral performance, and the examinations have become increasingly task-based. A recent high-profile innovation is the introduction of school-based assessment (SBA) by which students carry out oral tasks within the school which are graded by the teacher and count towards the high-stakes examination at the end of high school (Davison, 2007; Davison & Hamp-Lyons, 2010). The results of these assessments count for 15% of the English language subject grade in the public examination.

These oral tasks are either group discussions or oral presentations, in both cases responses to a print or non-print ‘text’, such as a book or movie. For example, students might be asked to choose a present for the main character in the movie Forrest Gump and explain why they think that present is suitable. Gan, Davison and Hamp-Lyons (2009) explored the discourse generated by this task and found that peer group discussion as an oral assessment format has the potential to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate ‘real-life’ spoken interactional abilities.

This SBA innovation is an explicit attempt to integrate TBLT with the needs of high stakes assessment. It seems to have a positive impact on students in that they engage with English more actively, for example, through extensive reading or viewing and then oral presentations. The main challenges are in relation to teacher workload: SBA training,
Moderation meetings, recording and storing samples, as well as the pedagogical emphases of preparing students and giving them feedback. SBA provides an example of how tasks can be integrated with the needs of assessment which is an important factor encouraging their acceptance by teachers and students. It is an important and much-discussed issue in relation to the interface between assessment and TBLT in contemporary Hong Kong.

Finding a balance between oral and other modes of task

A stereotype of CLT and TBLT is an oral pair or group work task or discussion. This stereotype has perhaps been encouraged by the fact that task-based research has predominantly focused on oral production which may have contributed to teachers’ perceptions of the primacy of oral tasks (Carless, 2007a). Whilst oral work is an important component of task-based approaches, care needs to be taken to achieve a balance in the development of different skills. For example, group work may not always function smoothly in settings (such as Japan) where students share the same mother tongue and so the temptation to fall back on Japanese may be hard to resist.

In Confucian-heritage settings, students are sometimes more comfortable with reading and writing tasks than those which require oral communication. Reticence and fear of making mistakes or losing face can impede Asian students from full participation in oral activities. Following from the discussion in the previous section on assessment, it is also worth noting that high-stakes examinations tend to privilege reading, writing and grammatical accuracy over oral production and fluency. This may make reading and writing tasks particularly relevant to students.

My proposed situated task-based approach (Carless, 2007a) suggests a need for a varied repertoire of activities, including greater attention to individual tasks. A useful strategy might be to focus more on reading and writing tasks to cohere better with examinations and contribute to a clarification of the perception that task-based approaches overemphasize speaking. Whilst the task-based literature does include discussion of other modes, for example, narrative writing (Ellis & Yuan, 2004) or extensive reading (Green, 2005), more analyses still need undertaking. Jigsaw reading, for example, is a particularly useful activity in which students can read paired texts individually and then share information with a partner about what they have read.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper supports the notion that we need context-sensitive teaching methods (Bax, 2004) or what I call a situated task-based approach in which culture, setting and teachers’ existing beliefs and practices interact with the principles of TBLT (Carless, 2007a). Task-based approaches can be more effective in diverse contexts if, for example, grammar options are strengthened and better understood; synergy between TBLT and the requirements of assessment and examinations is enhanced; and an appropriate balance can be found between oral and other task modes.

In terms of future work and an emerging research agenda on TBLT in EFL contexts, I have proposed in Carless (2013, forthcoming) the following:

- more reports from different EFL settings on progress in implementing TBLT;
- detailed qualitative accounts of what is really taking place in classrooms in which the teacher is trying to implement some version of TBLT;
- further consideration of contextual adaptations to TBLT to verify or add to what I have proposed in this article;
- continued scrutiny of the interface between assessment and TBLT; and
- searches for appropriate forms of teacher education and support for the implementation of TBLT.

Much has been achieved in relation to TBLT, and as ever there is still scope for further investigation.
About the author

David Carless is Associate Professor and Head of the Division of English Language Education, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong. He has worked in Hong Kong for the past 25 years and has taught in schools, language centers and in teacher education. His main current research interest is in how assessment can be reconfigured to stimulate productive student learning. His latest book is entitled: From testing to productive student learning: implementing formative assessment in Confucian-heritage settings published by Routledge in 2011.

References


Towards a more balanced approach in TEFL through TBL

Steven Herder
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Introduction
The classroom is a fluid environment and we all know that what is planned often does not resemble what actually happens. Even if we invest countless hours into creating the most detailed, thorough lesson plan, it is still subject to the “learners’ willing cooperation to make use of conditions that have been created” (Allwright, 1986).

One of the beauties of a task-based learning approach is that tasks result in an exciting array of unpredictable contributions by the learners. We don’t know what language learners will use to complete a task, but we do know that we have taken the first step by engaging the students. This fits in nicely with Allright’s definition of classroom instruction as “the interactive process whereby learning opportunities are created” (1986, p. 44).

In this article, I argue that besides imagining opportunities for learning when planning a lesson, more importantly, teachers need to notice opportunities for learning through interaction in the classroom. In contrast to trying to maximize control of the classroom, teachers benefit from stepping back and adopting a more student-centred approach. One of the main benefits of this is that it gives the teacher a lot more time to observe what’s actually happening in the classroom. I believe that a combination of observing classroom reality more carefully and any or all of the following will make you a happier and more successful teacher: a) develop your own principles of teaching and learning; b) enhance classroom interaction by improving your on-the-spot decision-making skills; and c) make more use of motivational and learner autonomy strategies. All of these measures can be explored in a task-based approach. By sharing the evolution of my teaching English in Japan since 1989, I hope the reader will be challenged or inspired to consider changes in their own practice.

Step one: developing principles of teaching and learning
Making the decision to examine my own principles of teaching and learning was suggested in part by my MA studies. However, perhaps the strongest impetus came through my disillusionment with the PPP method (presentation, practice and production) in the context of textbook-based lessons. Having originally learned to teach by the PPP method, I brought it with me to a Japanese junior and senior high school setting. PPP is well-liked by many teachers and trainers for obvious reasons: it is easy to learn to teach, and easy for the teacher to be in control; it is results-oriented and accountable. As my own teaching confidence grew, I began naturally to introduce other types of lessons as well—role plays, karaoke shows, simulations, project work, etc. Not theoretically differentiating between PPP and other types of lessons, I had always wondered two things:
• Why did some lessons seem to work so well and others so poorly, based on the feedback of students and my own reflection?
• Why could some students ‘produce’ a PPP dialog so well at the end of each class and yet never seem to make much improvement over time?

Having read, observed and reflected a lot, some answers to these questions have emerged. My doubts about PPP were overwhelmingly confirmed in the literature. For example:

The underlying theory for a PPP approach has now been discredited...It is not simply a matter of converting input to output (Skehan 1996, p.18).

The first two stages—presentation and practice—of a PPP methodology...are usually seen as providing a focus on accuracy. What they really focus on is conformity (Willis 1996, p. 44)

It seems...that we can do PPP until we are blue in the face, but it doesn’t necessarily result in what PPP was designed to do (Ellis cited in Willis 1996, p. 46).

Part of the reason that I had been stuck in a PPP rut was that I was used to relying on the textbook to provide a set of lessons that seemed to be active, motivational and focused on using English to learn English. The introduction to these textbooks outlined everything the students would ‘learn’ through clearly outlined goals, language samples, grammatical structures and vocabulary. I was happy, even eager, to relinquish all decisions regarding the syllabus to the textbook author, and better yet, for the textbook to become the syllabus.

My move away from PPP therefore began with the realization that before one can evaluate the efficacy of a lesson or an activity, one must have an opinion as to what students need in order to succeed at learning. It can be a daunting task for teachers to articulate or clearly identify what they think is necessary for learning to occur. It is often thought that if the teacher makes an effort, or in the case of Japan, if the teacher is ‘strict but kind’ then the students will fall in line and ‘learn’. If it were only that simple!

“...It is often thought that if the teacher makes an effort, or in the case of Japan, if the teacher is ‘strict but kind’, then the students will fall in line and learn. If it were only that simple!”

My MA studies challenged me to move beyond such simplistic notions and define my own principles of teaching and learning. At this point in time they are:

• I believe that effective educational ideology tends towards progressivism, being “concerned with ‘doing things for’ or ‘doing things with’ the learner” (White 1998, p. 25).
• It follows that a process approach to curriculum that “allows for the personal and professional autonomy of teachers and the exercise of their judgment on the spot” (ibid, p. 34) is more likely to facilitate Principle 1 than top down hierarchical control over the curriculum.
• Judgment based both on personal experience and empirical pedagogical theory is likely to be more powerful than pedagogy based on only one of these paradigms of knowledge.
• To be more effective, fluency, meaning and the memorization of chunks of language need to be prioritized over a focus on accuracy, grammar, and isolated vocabulary memorization (in line with Willis, 1996, 2000; Lewis, 1996).
• In addition, there needs to be a greater focus on the conditions under which learning can arise. Willis (1996) lists four such conditions:
  i) Exposure to rich but comprehensible input
  ii) Opportunities for real use of language
  iii) Motivation to process meaning (listening/reading) and use language (speaking/writing)
  iv) Focus on language [form] in order to... strive for improvement

Regarding grammar, I strongly identify with Ellis’s (2006) contention that it should be focused on “when learners have already begun to form their interlanguages” (p. 90). The benefits of not worrying about grammar initially are numerous. By using language to convey meaning, the most obvious benefits for students are related to motivation, a sense of achievement, increased confidence, and enjoyment of English. These far outweigh any fears of learners developing bad speaking habits at the early stages of development because of a lack of explicitly taught grammar.

And so, the culmination of defining these principles does not mean that the answer is simply to abandon PPP for TBL. In a very clear sense, I have moved “beyond methods” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), but I nevertheless feel that, of existing methods, it is perhaps TBL that holds the most fundamentally sound ideas with reference to my own practice and experience.

Now being able to express my own opinion of how languages are best learned in my context, I will address how I function as a teacher. I see my role as one of stimulating learning opportunities. Alexander (1986) argues that:

a teacher’s theory of practice should be based on different types of knowledge:
(a) speculative theory [guessing what you think will happen in a given situation] (b) the findings of empirical research [keeping up with the literature on teaching and learning], and (c) the experiential knowledge of practicing teachers [falling back on your own and others’ experience] (p. 108).

Importantly, he further suggests that each of these three parts is equally weighted. Too many teachers do not give enough credence to the value of their own experience.

The following four questions I have formulated for myself seek to go beyond what to teach to include a more global approach, which speaks to the learner’s overall experience. These tenets of my theory of practice for teaching EFL in Japan relate to what I expect from my students:

• Are activities motivating or at least not de-motivating
• Do they supply potential learning opportunities?
• Do they facilitate a sense of success?
• Are they of an appropriate level for learners and therefore likely to reward effort with the ‘success’ of tenet 3?

These questions might not apply to other contexts such as a class of adult learners in an ESL setting but for my JSHS students studying EFL in Japan they are very appropriate. Importantly, they address the Japanese defeatist attitude towards English, which acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy passed on from generation to generation.

I also came across Ellis’ (2004) ten Principles of instructed language learning,
many of which express how my beliefs manifest themselves in my practice within the classroom:

- Develop formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence
- Focus predominantly on meaning
- Also focus on form
- Develop implicit knowledge of the L2
- Take into account the learner’s ‘built-in syllabus’
- Provide extensive L2 input
- Provide opportunities for output
- Interact in the L2 to develop L2 proficiency
- Take into account individual differences in learners
- Assess proficiency by ‘free’ as well as ‘controlled’ production.

**Step two: find a balance between metalinguistic knowledge and practical ability**

Bygate (1996) describes two kinds of language proficiency: “knowledge about the language... [and] knowledge of how to use the language." In Japan, there is a rather large gap between learning about language and learning to use language (p. 136). JHS students in my school have six 45-minute English lessons per week. Five of them are basically Grammar/Translation “chalk and talk” lessons, although teachers increasingly use a little audio-lingual method or the PPP approach. Only one lesson per week is Oral Communication. This lesson has a maximum of 20 students and is taught by a native teacher (not team-teaching). As stated earlier, lessons have been a mixture of PPP and TBL type lessons. So it is really no wonder everyone—students, teachers, and the administration alike—is dissatisfied with the English program. Unfortunately, most people rationalize that Japanese are unskilled at learning languages, whereas the truth is that the system is dysfunctional. Taking steps to correct the imbalance between ‘knowledge of English’ and ‘use of English’ would improve results greatly.

**Step three: Focusing on motivation and learner autonomy**

These two concepts are at the very heart of learning—whether it be a language or anything else. So, for me, these days learning a language is more about creating learning opportunities than teaching per se, and this is supported by Skehan (1996) who says that SLA research has taught us that “teaching does not and cannot determine the way the learner’s language will develop” (Ellis cited in Skehan p.19). So, without motivation and learner autonomy, I cannot see how learning opportunities would even begin to exist especially since “the motivating process is usually a long-term one, built one grain of trust and caring at a time” (Scheidecker and Freeman cited in Dörnyei 2001, 27).

Dörnyei observes that, “given the reality of constant time pressure in many schools... the current situation is not very promising... [in that] by-and-large promoting learner motivation is nobody’s responsibility” (2001, p. 27). However, in my situation teaching Oral Communication means that my relationship with students usually lasts for six years. Therefore, it is a golden opportunity for me to get beyond rewards and punishments, “often the only tools present in the motivational arsenal of many teachers” (Dörnyei 2001, p. 25). Increasing my repertoire of motivational strategies offers one of the best ways to meaningfully ‘connect’ with students. I follow Dörnyei’s process model approach to motivational strategies (2001) outlined as follows:

1. Creating the basic motivational conditions
2. Generating initial motivation
3. Maintaining and protecting motivation
4. Encouraging positive self-evaluation
Closely connected to motivation is the concept of learner autonomy. Kumaravadivelu (2003, p. 39) lists promoting learner autonomy as one of his ten macrostrategies for teaching. He succinctly describes it as “helping learners learn how to learn, equipping them with the means necessary to self-direct and self-monitor their own learning” (ibid, p. 39). In practical terms, Ellis and Sinclair (cited in Kumaravadivelu 2003, p. 138) list a number of things a teacher can do to promote the use of learning strategies. They are summarized as:

• Encourage discussion about language and learning with learners
• Introduce a wide range of language learning strategies
• Allow learners to form their own views about language learning
• Counsel and guide individual learners when possible
• Negotiate course content and methodology with learners
• Share ideas about language and learning with learners

Step four: bringing it all together in a task-based approach

Arguably, one of the central tenets of TBL is the importance of language learning through use of the language and the exchange of meaning (Willis & Willis, 2001). There is an extensive body of literature extolling the benefits of a task-based approach (Willis, 1990a 1990b, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2007; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). For a general introduction to TBL, see Shehadeh (2006) and Ellis’s online video from the Korea TESOL conference (2006). Rather than an introduction to TBL, the purpose of this essay is to loudly proclaim the usefulness of TBL in giving students an opportunity to use English to support learning English.

In my classroom, I employ a TBL approach while taking advantage of a 1400-book graded reader library, and the growing list of ideas found within the burgeoning Extensive Reading (ER) movement here in Japan. Seeing the advantages of a focus on extensive input has led me to also pursue extensive writing as one form of output. I have been tremendously influenced by Nation’s Four Strands of a good language program (Nation, 2001) and they fit into my overall TBL approach easily and successfully.

Conclusion

Having been liberated from using textbooks and the PPP method still rampant in many EFL contexts, I look forward to continuing to find learning opportunities through a TBL approach to my lessons. As a long-term goal I work to improve learner autonomy and explore more motivational strategies. Regarding as yet unexplored territory, I am interested in finding out more about teaching ‘lexical chunks’ as described by Michael Lewis; in measuring the benefits of using word cards to study vocabulary as suggested by Paul Nation; and in pursuing further possibilities within classroom interaction within the field of Exploratory Practice that is being pioneered by Richard Allwright.

I realize that teaching in a JSHS in Japan may continue to be an uphill battle because of the weight of preparing for university entrance exams, and that innovation in Japan happens very slowly—one hanko at a time. However, that being said, the old adage rings true, the more I learn, the more I realize how much more there is to learn, and that motivates me to continue the adventure of teaching EFL in Japan.

About the author

Steven Herder has been teaching within the Japanese EFL context since 1989. Having over 20 years teaching experience at the elementary and secondary school level, he is currently an assistant professor in the International Studies department at Doshisha Women’s College of Liberal Arts.
References


Willis, J.D. (1990). The lexical syllabus. London and Glasgow: Collins COBUILD.


Introduction

One of the problems in the language classroom is finding stimulating topics to talk, write, and read about. This lesson uses an excerpt from John Lloyd and John Mitchinson’s book: The Book of General Ignorance. This book is comprised of 230 questions and answers with subject matter ranging from geography, history, science, and general trivia. The Book of General Ignorance focuses on information people think they know. For example, the tallest mountain on earth is actually Mauna Kea not Mt. Everest; the largest living thing is a mushroom not a giant redwood. Because these topics are about facts people assume to be true, it can generate discussions helping to improve speaking and reading skills.

Pre-task

Step 1: In groups of three or four discuss the questions below. With a lower level class the instructor might begin with a teacher-led discussion.

1. How much sleep do you get every night?
2. How much sleep would you like to get every night?
3. Why is it good to get lots of sleep?
4. Do you think you sleep more or less than your parents or grandparents when they were in high school or university?
5. Do you know any stories of famous people who like to sleep?
6. What animals sleep the least amount of time? The longest?
7. What do you do to help you stay awake when studying?
Task
Step 2: Ask students to elect a group leader. The leader facilitates the group in the main task, which is to discuss the questions in the table below and fill in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s name:</th>
<th>Group decision</th>
<th>Group decision</th>
<th>Group decision</th>
<th>Group decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much sleep should you have every night and why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the best way to avoid falling asleep while driving? Give reasons for your answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As they are discussing the teacher walks around, listening and helping students as required.

Report
Step 3: After the discussion, the group leaders report back to the class. The teacher writes the group’s answers on the board generating a teacher-led or a student-led discussion; depending on the level of the students or teacher preference. When all the comments are written up, students can vote on their favorite answers and give reasons.

Post-task
Step 4: Give students the text to read (see the appendix). The students at this stage will be reading with a real purpose, which is to find out if their answers are right or wrong. Again, in a teacher-led or student-centred discussion the teacher can review the answers.
Step 5: For further activities the instructor could ask students to summarize what they have read, prepare reading comprehension questions, or focus on one particular structure. For example, if the teacher wants to focus on grammar he or she could ask students to review the questions from step 1 (without looking at their handout). Write the following sentences on the board with words removed. Students then try and recall the sentences. This exercise could be prepared in advance on a separate piece of paper and done individually or in pairs. For example:

- How much \text{sleep} do you \text{get} every \text{night}?  
- Do you sleep \text{more} or \text{less} than your \text{parents} or \text{grandparents}?  

Conclusion
This activity, one of many that can be developed from the book, can help students develop academic discussion and reading skills. Many of the questions deal with facts that we often assume to be true or are obscure, making it unlikely that the correct answer will be given. I have found that this has generated active discussions engaging both teachers and students.
As a final note, this lesson could be taken in another direction. Instead of focusing on speaking and reading, the focus can be on listening. There is a British TV program called QI, which features many of the topics in the book. As homework, students could do a follow-up listening exercise and write down the responses from the actors or comedians featured on the TV program. Many of the corresponding episodes can be found on Youtube. This program is, however, intended for a native speaking audience, so listening exercises would only be appropriate for advanced students.

About the author
Jonathan Enns has been teaching at a high school in Kagoshima for over 15 years and is currently doing an MA in TEFL/TESL at the University of Birmingham. His research interests include task-based teaching and computer assisted language learning.

References

Appendix
How much sleep should you have every night? It is, apparently, dangerous to have eight hours’ sleep a night. Adults who sleep eight hours a night or more die younger than those who sleep only six to seven hours a night. A six-year study involving 1.1 million people published by Professor Daniel Kripke at the University of California in 2004 showed that a significantly larger number of people who slept eight or more hours (or less than four hours) a night died during the six-year study. The average Briton gets between six and seven hours sleep a night, which is one and a half hours less every night than our grandparents did. In 1900 a normal night’s sleep was nine hours.

There is evidence to suggest that sleep deprivation leads to short-term loss of IQ, memory, and the ability to reason. Leonardo da Vinci spent almost half his life asleep. Like Einstein, he took short naps during the day, in his case fifteen minutes every four hours. The great lexicographer Dr. Johnson rarely got up before noon. The French philosopher Pascal also spent much of his day dozing in bed.

On the other hand, the famously long-lived elephant sleeps for only two hours a day. Koalas sleep for twenty-two hours a day but only live ten years. Ants, as noted earlier, sleep for only a few minutes a day. The average person takes seven minutes to fall asleep. Normal healthy sleepers wake up between fifteen and thirty-five times every night.

There are currently eighty-four recognized sleep disorders, including insomnia, excessive snoring, narcolepsy (falling asleep during the day), apnea (ceasing to breathe while asleep), and restless leg syndrome. The United Kingdom has twenty-five sleep clinics, all of which are overwhelmed with patients. Twenty percent of all U.K. motorway accidents are caused by drivers falling asleep. The best way to stop this happening is to trap a lock of your hair in the sunroof. The second-best way is to eat an apple. This stimulates digestion and provides slow-release energy, which is more effective than the short-term hit of coffee.
Lesson Plan 2
Leadership Election

Colin Thompson
Shimonoseki City University

- Key words: group work, vocabulary use, agreeing/disagreeing.
- Level: Intermediate and above
- Age: University level
- Preparation time: 20 minutes or less
- Activity time: 90 minutes
- Materials: Printouts of profiles (see appendix)

Introduction
In this task, students are introduced to vocabulary associated with leadership and are encouraged to express their opinions about the qualities that make a good leader. The objective is for students to decide which hypothetical candidate should be elected as leader of a university English social club. The task is designed to elicit targeted vocabulary as well as speech acts that allow a discussion to take place, for example, describing, clarifying, expressing opinions, agreeing/disagreeing.

Preparation
Print off copies of the profiles (see appendix). Each student will require one copy of the example profile and profile A, B, or C. For simplicity’s sake I will assume that students are working in groups of three, each student with one profile (A, B, or C). Profiles D, E and F form another ‘set’ that may also be used. As an example: For a class of 30, you will need 30 copies of the example profile and 10 each of profiles A, B, and C.

Pre-task
Step 1: Write the following on the blackboard:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Famous Leaders</th>
<th>Leadership Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Put the students in groups of three and ask them to make a list of famous leaders and the qualities that enable them to be good leaders, such as ‘good speaker’, ‘intelligent’ etc. Write the leadership qualities on the blackboard. Ask the class what leadership qualities a student would need to be leader of an English social club at university. Most of the previously elicited qualities will likely apply. Others could include ‘English fluency’.

**Step 2:** Write the eight leadership vocabulary words from the appendix onto the blackboard. Clarify their definitions. Hand out the example profile of ‘Ayu’ to each student. Inform the class that Ayu is a student who wants to be a leader of an English social club at her university, and there are three statements that describe her leadership qualities. Instruct the class to read the statements, then in their groups, decide which leadership qualities match the statements. Elicit from the class Ayu’s leadership qualities; popular, confident, tenacious.

**Step 3:** Hand out one profile per student. Inform the students they must not show their profile to the rest of the group. The students have five minutes to read their profile and choose a leadership vocabulary word that matches each statement.

**Task**

Instruct the students to take turns describing their profile to the rest of the group. The students must also describe their candidate’s leadership qualities. The group must then decide which candidate should be voted leader of the English social club. To encourage discussion, you can create a competition between the groups by giving each group a name (or letting the students choose a name) and write them on the blackboard. Inform the class that bonus points will be awarded to the groups who:

- ask each other questions about who they think is the best candidate and why.
- express their opinions about who they think is the best leader and why.
- agree or disagree with the rest of the group using supporting reasons.

**Report**

Together each group must write one paragraph explaining who they chose as leader and why. Make sure the students use leadership vocabulary words to explain their decision. Tell the students to check the grammar of their description then pick a representative from each group to read out their description. Listen and make notes for any errors from each narration to be reviewed in the language focus.

**Language Focus**

1. Draw learners’ attention to the language required to successfully complete the task;
   - Describing information from 1st person to 3rd person: I want to create an English Circle..., Bill/he wants to create an English Circle...
   - Expressing opinions using leadership vocabulary: I think Shunsuke has tenacity because....
   - Asking questions: Why do you think Shunsuke has tenacity, What skill does Shunsuke have?, Why do you think Shunsuke should be leader?
   - Agreeing or disagreeing: I disagree with you. I think Kenta should leader because....

2. Report language: Write up common errors from the reports on the blackboard. Elicit from the class the correct use and write it on the board. Have each group check their own reports for similar errors.
About the author

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

The author would like to show his appreciation to the IE1 development team at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University for their efforts with task materials development.

Appendix

8 leadership qualities for an English social club:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Team-worker</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Popular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persuasiveness</td>
<td>Good at deal-making</td>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td>Fluent in English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example Profile

NAME: Ayu

AGE: 18

“I love singing. I go to karaoke 4 times a week with my friends, and I have hundreds of friends.”

Quality:

“Some people say singing in front of lots of people is scary, but I think it is the best feeling in the world. I have a good voice and I can sing and talk in front of anybody.”

Quality:

“I went to Australia to study English for 4 months. When I arrived, I wasn’t good at speaking English and it was very difficult for me. However, I kept practicing and finally I became good at speaking English!”

Quality:
Profile A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Kenta</th>
<th>AGE: 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I want to create an English Circle where students can study English online anytime, with their own computer and brand new computer programs.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I like speaking English. Last year I won a prize for the best English presentation in my year.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Shunsuke</th>
<th>AGE: 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am a member of the soccer club at university. We have 32 members, and we do everything together, as a team. If one of the members is in trouble, we help him or her, and they all help me.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Last year, I was chosen ‘Best Player’ in the university’s soccer team by my team-mates. This made me really happy, because two years ago I broke my leg, and the doctor said I would never play soccer again.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Takuma</th>
<th>AGE: 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I was born and raised in America, and came to Japan last year to study at university.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I watch a lot of TV, I think watching TV makes learning languages easier. I want to get giant plasma TVs in every room and on every wall of the university’s buildings, all showing English movies.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Profile D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Mika</th>
<th>AGE: 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Last year, I started a Movie Club with 5 friends, and we all share the work. When I am busy, my friends do extra work, and when they are busy, I work harder.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality:

“Last year I had a 2 hour meeting with the office staff at my University, and we made a deal to show English movies every night on campus, for free.”

Quality:

### Profile E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Tomohiro</th>
<th>AGE: 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I worked with some of my friends to open a dance club at University. Every Friday we arrange to bring DJs from a famous club to come to the University and play dance music for free.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality:

“At first, no one came to our night club, but we didn’t give up. We changed the music and added some decorations and now the club is full every Friday night!”

Quality:

### Profile F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME: Kasumi</th>
<th>AGE: 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think my English skill is very good because I have a high TOEFL score. In the future I want to be famous and appear on American TV.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality:

“During high school I tried to start an English club but my teachers wouldn’t allow it. However, every month I kept asking and asking and eventually they let me start my own English social club.”

Quality:
Lesson Plan 3
Silent Video:
Shaun the sheep narration

Mark Donnellan
Osaka Shoin Women’s University

• Key words: narration; summarizing; note-taking; video
• Level: pre-intermediate and above
• Age: all
• Preparation time: one hour or less
• Activity time: 90 minutes
• Materials:
  o Three episodes of Shaun the Sheep. I have used most of the episodes in season one, and all of them worked well for this lesson. Other videos may be used (see below).
  o A recording of a proficient speaker narrating two of the episodes or a written narration of two episodes (to be read out by the teacher).
  o A cloze task worksheet based on one of the above recordings or scripts for post-task Option 1.
  o A list of phrasal verbs based on one of the recorded/scripted narrations for post-task option 2.

Introduction
In this task, students work in pairs. One student describes, in real time, what is happening in an episode of Shaun the Sheep to her partner. Her partner, who cannot see the screen, takes notes of the details of the narration. The students then change roles watching a different episode. The students then regroup to write a collaborative report with their classmates. This lesson follows Willis and Willis’s (1996) ‘task-cycle’ format.
I have found students to be highly engaged and motivated to carry out this task. Students of pre-intermediate level or above manage to carry out the task to a high level and produce a comprehensive summary.

Preparation
Using a voice recorder, record a proficient speaker (for example the teacher) narrating the two episodes that will be used for the main task. An alternative to this would be for the teacher to narrate the episodes themselves at the post-task stage, however the teacher would still have to
prepare a rough script so that they know what phrasal verbs they use in the post-task. Prepare the three episodes in a format that can be played on the audio-visual equipment in your classroom.

Procedure

Pre-task

**Step 1:** The teacher models the task. Play the first episode and ask one student to sit with her back to the screen and take notes while you narrate. Since the purpose of this is to ensure that the students understand how to perform the task it is not necessary to narrate the full seven minute episode. Thirty seconds to one minute should be sufficient. Even after they have understood the task, the students could be allowed to watch the rest of the episode because they really enjoy it and it helps to motivate them for the task. During the remaining six or so minutes the teacher can move around the classroom checking students understanding of what they are expected to do in the main task.

**Step 2:** Put the students into pairs with one student facing the screen and the other with her back to the screen.

Task Cycle

**Main task:** Play the first of the episodes selected for the main task. One student faces the screen and narrates. The other takes notes. Depending on the level of the students, the teacher can pause the episode at various points as they see fit. This is a useful way to give lower level students more time. When the episode finishes, change roles and play the second episode.

**Planning:** Put the students into groups of three or four. All the students in the group must have watched the same episode and made notes on the same episode. Have them compare notes and write a report on the episode.

**Report:** Groups present the summaries to the class. As Willis (1996) suggests, the reporting stage of the lesson should be an expansive and interactive phase. The teacher can ask the students questions to get them to expand on their summaries, and can offer feedback.

Post-task

**Option 1:** The proficient speaker recordings/scripts invariably contain an abundance of phrasal verbs that can be used to draw attention to vocabulary. Have the students watch the episodes while carrying out a phrasal verb cloze activity on a transcript of the proficient speaker narration. A thirty second to one minute segment should be sufficient. When the activity is finished check the answers as a class.

**Option 2:** Choose one of the episodes that was used for the main task (you can do both if time allows). Prepare a list of phrasal verbs that describe various actions in the episode. Give the students time to work in groups with a learner’s dictionary to find the meanings of the phrasal verbs on the list. Then play the episode and have the teams compete to find the phrasal verb as the watch. They can shout out the verb when they see the action. For example, if students see Shaun turning off a light the first team to shout “turn off” would get a point (assuming that turn off was one of the verbs on the list).

Variations

Two screens

If your school has the facilities, allowing students more time to view and prepare the episode they will narrate in between steps 1 and 2 of the pre-task is probably a good idea. Two ways in which the teacher could do this are:
1. Using two laptop computers, one at the front of the classroom and one at the back, this is not ideal for big classes as it is difficult for all the students to see the relatively small laptop screen.

2. If the school has a nearby classroom that is available the teacher can put half the students in another classroom to prepare.

Divided into two groups, with one of the students in charge of fast-forwarding/rewinding the video, students are given 10-20 minutes to prepare for the task. During this preparation time, students can discuss what is happening in the episode and make notes on necessary vocabulary. I recommend asking students only to make notes in point form in order to avoid them reading from a “script” when they carry out the main task. During this time the teacher can go back and forth between the two groups checking notes and helping with unknown vocabulary.

**Just One Episode**

Depending on time constraints and the students’ levels, three episodes may constitute too much material. Teachers can opt to use just one episode splitting it into three sections, the first section for the teacher to model the task, the second section for the first group of students to use in the main task, and the third section for the second group of students to use in the main task.

**Alternatives to Shaun the Sheep**

This lesson could easily be used with different movies, cartoons or TV series. One that springs to mind is Mr. Bean.

**Conclusion**

When I first tried this lesson I was concerned that students would find this task too difficult to conduct in their L2, however, these fears proved to be unfounded. The task is so engaging for students that they make a huge effort to convey meaning in English, often jumping around and gesturing wildly rather than using their L1. In addition to being very enjoyable for students this lesson is great for increasing students’ self-confidence in their ability to communicate in English.

**About the author**

Mark Donnellan works as a lecturer at three universities in the Osaka area. He is an officer of the JALT Task-based learning and teaching SIG. His research interests include: Task-based learning and teaching; motivation; Computer aided language learning; teaching collocations; the use of learners’ L1 in the classroom.

**References**

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:

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

Featuring Plenary Speakers David Carless and Michael Thomas and two days of presentations and workshops from TBLT practitioners and theorists from around Asia and beyond.

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"Task-based language teaching in Confucian-heritage settings: prospects and challenges"

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 educational change.

Michael Thomas
"Tasks, Technologies and Asian Students: Beyond Digital Natives"

Michael Thomas is a senior lecturer in IDBC and Language Learning Technologies at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. He is the author of many books on technology and language learning, including “Task-based Language Learning and Teaching with Technology”.

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