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正分会としての初年度

編集委員 ハリス・ジャスティン、トンプソン・コリン & 豊田順子

今号でSIGが創設されて3年が経ちます。この3年間の初年度には、SIG分会の組織化を行い、翌年JALTよりこの組織が「準分会」として、そして昨年の中旬には正式に「正分会」として承認されました。

TBLアジア大会運営、OnTask SIG設立ならびにジャーナルの出版にあたっては、多くの方々にご尽力・ご支援いただきましたことに心より感謝申し上げます。

私達の分会にご協力いただける方、TBL授業実践に関する投稿（論文・報告書・授業プランなど）や2014年のTBLアジア大会において研究発表をご希望の方は、tbl@jalt.orgまで是非ご連絡ください。

OnTask第3巻1号では、逸されたTBLに関する論文と授業プラン実践を紹介しています。今号の１つ目の特集は、Peter Gobel氏の教室内で学習者の異文化間コミュニケーションを養うためのデジタルストーリーフレームワーク授業実践方法です。デジタルストーリーを創るタスクを通して、どのように学習者が個々の個人的な体験を共有できるのかをステップごとに解説されています。また、授業を通して学習者の異文化間コミュニケーションの理解が養成できることも報告されています。

2つ目の特集は、SIG会員であり、昨年5月に開催された「the TBL in Asia Conference (TBLアジア大会)」の発表者であるNatsuko Shintani氏の日本の初級英語学習者のためのTBL授業実践報告です。伝統的な言語教授方法の1つであるPPP型からTBLへの移行の経緯が解説されています。

3つ目の特集では3つの授業プランが紹介されています。1つ目の授業プランでは、Travis Henry氏が自分でデザインしたパックを投資家に売り込むという楽しいタスクを紹介しています。Martin Mullen氏は、彼の授業を通じて、学習者の自立性を育成できるTBL授業アプローチの可能性を探求しています。彼の授業プランでは、学習者が組みの学習者のために効率的な学習自己管理方法を見つけ出すタスク遂行します。最後の授業プランでは、Nick Domjancic氏が学習者が時事問題に関してテーマベースドディスカッションとインタラクションを行うタスクを紹介しています。

OnTaskに投稿を希望される方は、tbltinasia@gmail.comまで是非ご連絡ください。
The volume number of this edition bespeaks the fact that our SIG is now three years old. In that time we have gone through the process of becoming first a forming SIG, then associate SIG, and finally at the mid-year JALT Executive Board Meeting last year, a full SIG. During that time a lot of hard work has been put in by a lot of people to build our membership base, run the “TBL in Asia” conference and publish OnTask. If you’d like to help out with SIG we would welcome your input and ideas for future publications and for our next TBL in Asia conference in 2014. Contact us at tbl@jalt.org

As for Volume 3, Issue 1, we have another good selection of articles and lesson plans. In our first feature article, Peter Gobel describes the benefits of using a digital story framework to promote intercultural communication in the classroom. The article provides step-by-step instructions on how to lead learners through the process of creating digital stories that allow them to share their personal experiences with each other. This in turn helps them understand concepts related to intercultural communication.

The second feature of this issue comes from Natsuko Shintani, who some SIG members may remember from her well-attended and well-received talk at the “TBL in Asia” conference last May. Her article provides an account of using TBLT with beginner learners in Japan and how her previous experience with traditional approaches of instruction such as PPP led to her move to TBLT.

The three lesson plans that are included in this issue begin with Travis Henry who outlines a fun lesson plan which involves designing fashion bags and “selling” the bag to potential investors. Martin Mullen’s lesson plan investigates the potential of a TBLT approach for developing student autonomy. The lesson allows learners to identify appropriate learning strategies for fictitious learners who have study management issues. Finally Nick Domjancic introduces tasks that are based around interaction and theme-based discussion on current issues.

As always, if you would like to contribute to OnTask, please contact us at tbltinasia@gmail.com
Capturing Experience and Creating Community through Digital Storytelling

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Introduction

One of the courses I teach focuses on comparative cultural studies and basic theories in intercultural communication. We work through a number of ideas, from Hall’s (1976) high and low context cultures, to Hofstede’s (2010) 5-D model. I have compiled a large list of readings for my students, as well as many anecdotes and examples to illustrate the basic concepts we cover in class, but my students always have trouble grasping these concepts. In all fairness, the concepts tend to be abstract, and difficult to understand, even for native speakers of English. To make matters worse, many of the examples and anecdotes I have revolve around workplace communication, immigration, marriage, and social communication. These are all things my students have little experience with.

One student expressed her frustration, saying, “How am I expected to get this, when I’ve never lived in a foreign country? I’ve just never had this kind of experience.” Other students nodded in agreement, noting that they had never worked in an office or been required to financially support themselves. I responded by reminding them that, in some sense this may be true, but that they all had had experiences travelling abroad, or experiencing cultural differences firsthand. These personal experiences, I ventured, could be used as gateways into the concepts we were supposed to be studying. I suggested that we back up, and start with what they knew – telling their own stories.

I am a big fan of narrative and using narrative in the classroom. After all, telling stories is an integral part of all cultures, and has been used as a powerful teaching tool, not just in elementary or L1 education, but in teaching a second language as well (Tsou, Wang & Tseng, 2006; Wan, 2005). Through the process of storytelling, the narrator begins to think carefully about the topic, and also considers the audience’s perspective. These were things that I felt the students would benefit from in this instance. I have at my disposal a large number of storytelling activities and exercises to help students create coherent stories, all of which have been used in the past to good effect.1

Having plenty of experience with storytelling in language classrooms, and being aware of the many pitfalls when having students relate their own experiences (e.g., lack of coherence in narrative structure, very little awareness of audience, and a lack of confidence in their own ability to communicate), a number of years ago I came up with a digital story project framework. I have used the framework in a number of different ways, and so decided to use

1 A number of these exercises involve making students aware of the parts of the story, as proposed by Labov (1972) and explained in Gobel (1999, 2001). I have found that if I can get the students to understand that every story has an abstract, orientation, complication, resolution, and coda, they tend to produce more coherent narratives in English. I start with getting them to identify the parts of stories in folktales, then organize mixed-up stories using this framework, and finally have them create notes for their own stories using this framework.
it in the context of exploring intercultural communication. It was the first time for me to use the framework in this way, and it helped me to understand a number of points regarding how the students processed information, dealt with their own experiences, and related their experiences to others.

Once we started creating our digital stories, I realized that the students had, until that point, not really reflected on their personal experience, nor had they really told anyone else about what they experienced. Sure, they reported their experiences but that is just what they often were – reports. There was little detail or discussion regarding the experiences. Most of the learners had been abroad for anywhere from two weeks to a year, and all of them had non-Japanese teachers in university. It seemed as if they had experienced things, taken these experiences at face value, and then filed them away. For example, I found that many students had similar homestay experiences, but did not realize it since they never shared what had happened to them. Through the process of creating the digital stories, the students were given a chance to reflect, compare and share experiences, empathize with each other, and create a social network of shared experiences. And this social network allowed them to better analyze and understand the material we were covering in class.

The task

The digital storytelling task
A digital story is a first-person narrative that tells a personal story (in words, music, and pictures) in one’s own voice and style (see The Center for Digital Storytelling, n.d., for more information). A digital story can be quite sophisticated, with complex audio and visual effects, or it can simply be a set of slides with corresponding narration (what my students usually produce). One of the advantages of digital stories is the added impact that pictures and sound can have on the viewer. Another advantage is that the stories are storable, transferrable, and accessible. I now have a small catalogue of previous students’ work, as well as hundreds of examples online that I can access as support for points I am trying to get across. An even greater advantage is what happens in the process of creating the digital story. Engaging students in the creation of these stories enhances their ability to express their knowledge within the confines of a coherent narrative (Orlando, 2012), which was what I was trying to do in this instance.

Although digital stories can be created in groups, the format is well suited to individual users. Students with little or no technical background are able to create digital stories using the framework provided, with little more than a computer, common software (such as iMovie, PowerPoint, Windows Media Maker, Audacity, or VoiceThread), and a microphone. If students can write a story (essentially a script), gather some pictures together and record their story, they can create digital stories. Although our students are not always great creators of digital media (most do not create blogs, podcasts, or upload to YouTube), they do share photos, send texts, and share music – all aspects of digital storytelling.

“One student expressed her frustration, saying, “How am I expected to get this, when I’ve never lived in a foreign country? I’ve just never had this kind of experience.”
In line with the characteristics of a task, as outlined by Ellis (2003) and Prabhu (1987), the digital storytelling task I created had a primary focus on pragmatic meaning (telling a story), a ‘gap’ to be filled (relating opinion and experience), and a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome (the digital story itself). The task itself had four main steps: choosing a topic, writing the story, choosing the media, and creating the final product (see Appendix 1). At each step, the stories and information were shared in small groups. According to Willis (1996), tasks promote language acquisition through the types of language and interaction they require. This was clearly the case here, where students had to create coherent and comprehensible stories based on their own experience, and the recursive nature of the steps gave opportunities for negotiation of meaning, as well as opportunities for discussion. The project itself took four weeks to complete. Most of the work was done outside of class (at home or in a computer lab), with 30 minutes of class time each week being allocated to the project.

**Pre-task: viewing previous work**

Since my students were not familiar with the concept of a digital story, I had them view the work of former students. The archive of digital stories I had compiled came in handy here, since I could choose digital stories with different themes (for those with little experience with digital storytelling, The Center for Digital Storytelling is a great resource). Luckily, the classrooms I use are equipped with projectors, and large screens, so it was simply a matter of accessing the PowerPoint files on my laptop. Of course, I could have just as easily had them view the stories on my laptop, or put them online for at-home viewing. After viewing a few of the digital stories, we talked about how the pictures and music (or sound) made the story easier to understand, and gave the message greater impact. I then introduced the digital story project to them, informing them that they would need to choose a topic and write a first draft of the story for the next week.

**Step 1 - choosing a topic**

This step was a short, but important one, where the students were asked to define an experience. They were given five minutes to plan their story, making notes and outlines if the wished. They then told their story to a partner for three minutes. When the time was up, the partner was allowed to ask questions for 3 minutes. They then changed roles and repeated the process. The students were then given time to rearrange their stories, based on the reactions from the listeners. Following this, new partners were chosen and the stories were retold in 2 minutes. The listeners were given the chance to ask questions and react to the story. This is similar to Nation’s 3/2/1 fluency exercise (Nation, 1989).

This planning, telling, and retelling of the story was essential on a number of levels. First, limiting the time for storytelling helped in the production of a concise narrative (the digital stories themselves were to be brief – around 60 seconds). Second, the Q & A session helped the students realize that they were actually telling their story to an audience. In fact, what happened was that the Q&A sessions resulted in a great amount of detail that the students initially did not feel important to relate (since it was all first-hand experience to them), but the listeners felt was necessary to the flow of the story. In this way, this first step was really like an information gap activity, where the listener interaction encouraged negotiation of meaning and output modification (Pica, Kang, & Sauro, 2006). This negotiation of meaning and output modification in the retelling helped the students create a more cohesive story for the listeners.

Following this exercise, the students took their notes home and wrote up a one-page story. It was hoped that by this time the students had identified an audience for their story (their fellow students) and had a basic grasp of narrative awareness (created by the Q&A sessions). Many students ended up totally changing their stories, based on the other stories that they
had heard, and I think that this reflected a developing awareness of an audience.

**Step 2 - dividing up the story and choosing the media**
In the second week, the students were first asked to read their story in groups of four. They were then given a storyboard worksheet, which allowed them to break up their story into pieces (see Appendix 2). This is the same kind of storyboard used when blocking films, giving them spaces to include text, pictures, music, and other features. Students were then asked to find pictures to add to their digital story. They were encouraged to use their own original work, which could take the form of photographs, hand-drawn artwork, or images that were not copyrighted (under a Creative Commons license). They were also asked to start thinking about suitable music and sound effects for the digital story.

The majority of the students used pictures from their digital cameras and phones that they had taken on their travels. Many took images from websites as well. Still others decided that the easiest thing to do was to draw cartoons on paper, and then take pictures of these drawings with their phones, creating digital images from this hand-drawn artwork. This way of doing things became quite popular, since many of them were reluctant to show pictures of themselves in the stories, and had trouble finding appropriate copyright-free images to download.

**Step 3 - putting it all together**
In the third week, the students showed their completed storyboards in small groups, telling their story and explaining to the other students exactly what the story would look or sound like. There was a lot of discussion about the relationship between the pictures and the text, and this was positive, since there was still time to rearrange both. Their homework for this week was to record their story digitally and compile all the digital media on one USB, which they would bring to class the next week. They were also asked to think about title and credit pages. Most of the students used their phones to record the story, then downloaded that file onto the USB. Very few of the students elected to use a computer and recording software (I had introduced them to Audacity as an example of free audio editing and recording software). The majority of them reported that they did not have a microphone on their home computer, or did not know how to use it.

**Step 4 - finishing the digital story**
For many students, this was the most challenging part, since they have had little experience with software such as iMovie, VoiceThread, or PowerPoint. They completed their digital stories in a computer lab, though this could also have been done at home, or after class. I actually think that having the students work together in a computer lab was the best solution, since they were able to help each other, and I could act as a technical advisor when necessary. I have used a number of different software solutions, but have found that most students can understand the basics of PowerPoint quite easily after a short demonstration. I have also used online software, such as VoiceThread, to good effect.

By the fifth week the students had not only created a story, but also discovered a message they wished to convey to the audience, and enhanced their story with image and sound. In the finished stories, there was a great deal of unexpected self-expression. Students often ended up being more candid and exploring their feelings more than they expected they would. This sort of occurrence is a documented byproduct of multiple retellings of a story (Brushwood & Granger, 2013). As one example, one student created a digital story around his inability to tell his host family about his dislike for hot peppers. Not only did he relate the events clearly, but also expressed his frustration at his inability to express something he felt should have been clearly understood through nonverbal communication.
We spent this week watching the final versions of the digital stories, commenting on them, discussing various facets of their content, and relating them to the readings on intercultural communication that we had covered thus far. In the example above, the story about the hot pepper led to a spirited discussion of Hall’s idea of high-context and low-context cultures. Many of the students related to the student’s story, having had similar experiences and frustrations of their own. I then reintroduced Hall’s categories, and asked them 1) what nonverbal communication they felt the host family should have understood, and 2) what possible explanation Hall’s theory could give to explain what had happened. By the end of the discussion, many students were suggesting that cultural differences in communication (Japanese culture being more high-context and American culture being more low-context) might have been part of the problem. This suggested to me that the students had developed a much clearer (and more personal) grasp of the material. In fact, when reviewing the material at the end of the semester, a number of students supplied examples from the digital stories as their comments on the readings (“Oh, that’s like Junko’s story”, or “That’s the same as the chili pepper thing.”)

Conclusion

According to Willis (1996), tasks promote language acquisition through the types of language and interaction they require. This was clearly the case here, where students had to create coherent and comprehensible stories based on their own experience. Other researchers (such as Yang & Wu, 2012) have pointed to increases in academic achievement, critical thinking skills and motivation, compared with traditional teaching methods. I had no such lofty goals, but certainly was satisfied with the results, as were the students.

There was no doubt that the digital story project was difficult for the students. Most of them had never completed a long project such as this, nor had they worked on the same body of text for so many weeks, and from a number of different viewpoints. At the beginning, many of them viewed the project as repetition of the same task (telling a story) over the period of a month, and were surprised when they viewed the stories as a group. A number of the students remarked that they were surprised they had created something with such impact. Certainly their peers enjoyed the stories, but there was a great deal of critical thinking going on as well, and this overlapped with the critical thinking that the cultural readings were requiring of them.

As stated earlier, I discovered that by using the digital stories as a jumping off point, students were better able to understand the textbook readings. Initially, while reading the material, the students felt that they did not have the background knowledge required to make critical comments regarding the contents. The digital story contents, and the discussions of their experiences with their peers, showed them that they actually did have reasonable background knowledge. Following the project, they more readily took a critical stance towards the readings, and spent a longer time discussing the ideas presented in class. I also had the opportunity to learn more about my students. For example, many of them had multiple experiences with foreign cultures. Through the recursive storytelling activities, I had the opportunity to hear most of these, and could plan discussion groups, readings, and comprehension questions accordingly.

But the most unexpected benefit of the project was the sense of community it fostered in the class. The students were fairly close in the beginning, since many of them had been classmates for years. But they were surprised that so many of them had had similar homestay or overseas experiences. Many of these experiences had been baffling to them, and they had simply assigned them to the ‘black box’ of cultural differences. When they found students with similar experiences and outlooks, they immediately started discussing why these
things might have happened, and how problems could have (or in some cases were) avoided. This led to a kind of bonding over these mutual experiences, which probably would not have happened under any other circumstances.

About the author

Peter Gobel is a professor in the Faculty of Cultural Studies at Kyoto Sangyo University. His research interests include the use and acquisition of language learning strategies, anxiety and motivation in language learning, and cultural factors affecting language learning. He can be reached at pgobel@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp.

References

Audacity recording and sound editing software. Audacity.sourceforge.net

Appendix 1: Directions for the Digital Story Project

In this project, we are going to explore our own experiences with cultural misunderstanding, cultural differences, and culture shock. To do this we are going to create digital stories. Digital stories are a great way to think about what you have learned and experienced, and share your information and experiences with others. They are easy to plan and fun to make.

For the digital story you will need three things:
- An experience or story from your life
- Visuals (these can be your own pictures or things from the internet)
- Music or background sound (something that matches the mood of the story)

We will create them using computer software such as IMovie. Don’t worry! It is very easy to use and we will do it as a class. Here is our time line:

Week 1 choose an experience and write a story (remember that this can be in Japanese)
Week 2 choose visuals and sound, and create a storyboard
Week 3 put the visuals and sound together on the storyboard
Week 4 put your story on IMovie

At the end of the project we will play all of our stories for the class and have a party.

Week 1 - choose an experience and write a story

1. This week we will choose an experience and write a story. To do so, choose one of the following topics and write down your answer in one word or one sentence.
   a. Many of you have lived abroad. What was the one cultural lesson you learned while living abroad?
   b. In your experience with non-Japanese, what cultural/communication problems have you had and how did you overcome them?
   c. When living abroad or traveling, what would be the one word to describe a certain country’s people/culture? How about Japan?

2. Now, you will have three minutes to tell a partner about your topic and answer. After that, your partner will ask you questions. Use those questions to make your story better (not longer, but more complete and interesting).

3. Change partners and repeat step 2, but tell the story in only two minutes. Did you get good feedback from your partners?

4. For homework, please write your story. Remember that you will include pictures and music, which will help make it easier to understand. Since your story will be short – one minute at most- please stick to one topic. Write down your story and bring it to class next week.

Week 2 - choose visuals and sound, and create a story board

This week we will create a storyboard and share it with a partner/group. For this you will need the storyboard worksheet.

1. In small groups, retell your story, as you have written it.
2. Now, using the storyboard worksheet, write out your story. You should break your story up into four or five sections.
3. Try to think about what kind of picture or image you want for each section of your story.

Week 3 - put the visuals and sound together on the storyboard

Today we will put everything on the storyboard.

1. Gather your pictures. If you have picture files, please print them out.
2. Put the pictures in order on the storyboard worksheet. Don’t worry about titles yet. We can do those later.
3. Make sure that the story part below each picture matches.
4. Share your storyboard with your partner/group. Does it make sense? Do you have any suggestions for your group members?
5. Next week, we will prepare your music and pictures digitally. Your teacher can help with this.

Week 4 - put your story on iMovie (you could substitute any software for this)
1. Open up the software and make sure that you have all of your files downloaded on the desktop (create a file for this).
2. Create a new project and put the pictures in the project in the order of your story.
3. Using your digital music file, put a music clip in the story.
4. Play the file a few times, while reading your story to yourself. How does it sound? Make any changes that you need to the story and the file. Now, record your story digitally (using the digital recorder provided by your teacher or the headset on the computer) or add your recorded sound file.
5. Play your story to check the sound and the pictures.
6. Add a title at the beginning, and credits (your name, thank you, etc.) at the end. Save everything and send a copy to your teacher.

You are done! Congratulations!

Appendix 2: Digital storyboard instructions
A storyboard is a place to plan out a visual story in two dimensions.

- The first dimension is time: what happens first, next, and last.
- The second is interaction: how does the audio information – the voiceover narrative of your story and music - interact with the images or video?
- In addition, a storyboard can be a notation of where and how visual effects - transitions, animations, compositional organization of the screen - will be used.

The important thing to remember is this: planning on paper saves enormous amount of time, energy, and money when it comes time to produce your work. Taking the time to organize your script in the context of a storyboard tells you what you need to illustrate your story. Developed from the selection of images you have in your archive, a storyboard tells you the order in which they will appear and makes your edit go quickly. But much more importantly, storyboards clarify what you do not need and save you from scanning, photographing, shooting video, designing in Photoshop, or recording things that simply have no place in this particular story.

1. Place your photos or images in the spaces provided.
2. Write your text in the area below the image.
3. Use any extra space to make notes about the music you will use and the kinds of visual effects you will use to change from one picture to another.
Appendix 3: Video Storyboard

TITLE of Project: ________________________________
Getting Started with TBL: A Personal Account

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Introduction
This article is an account of my experience of task-based language teaching (TBLT) with very young, beginner learners in a small private language school in Japan. My dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to teaching English (i.e., present-practice-produce (PPP)) led me to experiment with TBLT to see whether it could be an effective way to promote second language learning in children in a so called ‘acquisition poor’ context like Japan. In this article I would like to provide a personal account of my experience with the two approaches to show readers why I came to reject PPP and to switch to TBLT in my own teaching. My hope is that the “story” I will tell will provide a practical example of what TBLT can offer teachers.

The starting point – present, practice, produce (PPP)
I started my new career as a language teacher in a large private language institution where I taught young children aged three to eleven years. However, after a while I became somewhat disillusioned as students who had studied English at the school for several years still had very limited communicative proficiency in English (e.g., they were only able to provide brief answers to simple questions). I thought this was because the children only took lessons once or twice a week and the lessons themselves were of very short duration (i.e., 40 or 60 minutes). I believed that more frequent and longer lessons were needed to allow the learners to practice more and that this would help them to acquire communicative ability more rapidly. This made me decide to start my own school in Toyota city in Japan where I lived. The first job at my school was to design a curriculum. I decided to provide longer lessons than other language schools and so offered the students one 90 minute lesson per week.

I devised a format for lessons partly based on my teaching experience and partly based on the teacher’s guide attached to the ready-made course book I employed in my school. The course book was the Let’s Go series (Nakata, Frazier, Hoskins, & Graham, 2007), one of the bestselling books at that time. It consisted of a set of six books for children of primary school age (about 6 to 12 years old). As in many course books for young learners, the six books introduced vocabulary and grammar points roughly sequenced from easy to difficult. A typical book had eight units, each of which presented and practised some target words and one or two grammatical structures. The Teacher’s Book for this series emphasized three basic steps: (1) teach the target words first in isolation (e.g., “pencil”), (2) practise them in sentences (e.g., “It’s a pencil”), and (3) finally practise them in question-and-answer sequences (e.g., “What’s this?” → “It’s a pencil”). The course book also recommended teaching the question (“What’s this?”) and the answer (“It’s a pencil”) separately before combining them into a ‘conversation’. My teaching was based on the recommended methodology for this book but also introduced a number of innovations. I will first describe a typical 90-minute lesson in my
school and then outline the additional activities I devised.

Unit 2 in *Let’s Go Book 1* introduced 11 colour adjectives and two target sentences: “What colour is this?” and “It’s (colour)”. The lesson began with a warm-up session where I greeted the students and asked their names in English. Then I instructed the students to open the page of the textbook to the day’s lesson. The page first showed the 11 different colours on a colour palette. I modeled the oral form of each colour word followed by a production exercise requesting the students to repeat each word after the teacher. At this stage, the target words were produced in isolation. Then I introduced each target word in the first target sentence (e.g., “It’s green”), translating the sentence into Japanese. This was followed by a substitution exercise where I pointed to each colour and asked the students to make sentences such as “It’s green”. Then I introduced the other target sentence, “What colour is this?” using the pictures in the textbook which depicted a number of colour paint jars on shelves. First, the students repeated chorally after the teacher’s model (e.g., “What colour is this? It’s orange”). Then, they took part in teacher-led choral production practice of a simple two-part dialogue:

Teacher: What colour is this?  
Class: It’s green.

Finally they worked in pairs to practice the same dialogue. This part of the lesson concluded with a simple listening activity where the students listened to audio-recorded sentences, such as “What colour is this?” “It’s green”, and circled the correct colour in their book.

The additional activities I devised were intended to provide further practice of the target items and structures in the 90 minute lesson. My idea was to provide the students with an opportunity for using the target features more extensively and more communicatively. One of the activities that was popular in my school was called the “Stepping Game”. This was a competitive game that involved the students naming the objects shown in pictures or making a sentence containing the target word. I arranged colour flash cards on the floor of the classroom and then asked two students to step onto one of the cards. One student said “What colour is this?” and the other replied by naming the colour (e.g., “It’s blue”). They scored points if they could successfully complete this mini dialogue. The students competed in teams and the team that scored the most points was declared the winner. The second activity was a “Tell-and-Do task”, which I designed to provide a more communicative context for practicing the target items. The students worked in pairs. One student was given a sheet with just numbers written on it. The other student had a sheet with a colour next to each number. The latter student had to say the name of the colour next to each number so that his/her partner could draw in the colour next to the correct number on his/her sheet. I walked around the class helping out when a student was unable to name a colour correctly.

Although I did not realize it at the time, the lesson format I followed involved the traditional present-practice-produce (PPP) sequence (Byrnes, 1986; Ur, 1996). It started with the presentation of a language feature, followed by controlled practice exercises using the materials in the textbook. My additional activities then encouraged freer production of the target items and structures. By providing opportunities for the students to produce the target words and sentences in both mechanical drills and more communicative activities I hoped that the students would learn and remember what they had been taught and would develop their ability to communicate in English.

However, as time passed I became more and more doubtful about the efficacy of the approach I had adopted. As the students who had first enrolled in my school got older, I recognized the same problem I had experienced earlier. Their communicative abilities still failed to develop. I noted that although they were
able to produce the structures they had learned in the context in which they had learned them, they were still not able to use them in real communication (i.e., outside of the classroom activities). One of the typical questions I received from parents was, “When is my child going to start speaking English?” I found myself asking: “If the students could only use the structures they practice intensively and repeatedly in the lessons, how many lessons would be needed to teach sufficient structures thoroughly enough for them to be able to communicate freely?” In fact, many of the students stopped coming to the school before they had acquired any real communicative skills. In this way, I came to the conclusion that PPP was not very effective for developing communicative ability in young, beginner learners in Japan.

Moving forward - Task-based language teaching

I started to look for a radically different approach – one that was more compatible with how learners learn a second language (L2) and one that would be well-suited to my young learners. The second language acquisition (SLA) literature (Ellis, 2003; Long, 1985; Skehan, 1998) pointed me in the direction I needed to take – task-based language teaching. I was also encouraged by the work of Willis (1996) that provided a clear framework for conducting a task-based lesson.

The essential difference between PPP and TBLT lies in how language is viewed. In the case of PPP, language is dissected into bits which are then treated as ‘objects’ to be taught one at a time. In the case of TBLT, language is treated as a tool for communicating with. Such an approach accorded well with how children naturally orientate to language and how they had learned their first language (L1). I also noted that TBLT does not just aim to foster communicative skills; it also aims to assist learners to acquire linguistic features incidentally through engaging them in meaning-focused communication.

The central construct in TBLT is the ‘task’. Lessons are built around tasks. I began, therefore, by ensuring that I had a clear grasp of what a ‘task’ was. Ellis (2003) proposed a ‘task’ must satisfy four basic criteria:

1. The primary focus should be on ‘meaning’ (i.e., learners should be mainly concerned with encoding and decoding messages, not with focusing on linguistic form).
2. There should be some kind of ‘gap’ (i.e., a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
3. Learners should largely rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity. That is, learners are not ‘pre-taught’ the language they will need to perform a task although they may be able to ‘borrow’ language from the input that results from the actual performance of the task.
4. There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (i.e., the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right). Thus, when performing a task, learners are not primarily concerned with using language correctly but rather with achieving the goal stipulated by the task.

I also needed to consider how to construct a whole task-based lesson. I noted that many TBLT researchers had suggested the use of three principal phases; a pre-task phase, a main-task phase and a post-task phase (e.g., Estaire & Zanon, 1994; Willis, 1996). Ellis (2003) suggested ways in which teachers can adjust the difficulty of a task-based lesson (see Table 1). For example, the pre-task options listed in Table 1 can make the task easier while time pressure in the main task phase can make it more difficult. There were a number of options for focusing on form in all the three phases (e.g., pre-teaching language in the pre-task phase, providing contextual support in the main task, and “language work” in the post-task phase). I decided to use some of these options to make the tasks suitable for my students.
Table 1: Implementation options in the different phases of a task-based lesson (based on Ellis, 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-task phase</td>
<td>1. Modelling performance of the task</td>
<td>Students listen or watch the task being performed by ‘experts’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Pre-teaching language</td>
<td>The teacher presents language that will be useful for performing the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Schema-developing</td>
<td>The teacher elicits and extends students' knowledge of the topic of the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Strategic planning</td>
<td>The students are given time to prepare to perform the task before they actually perform it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main-task phase</td>
<td>1. Time pressure</td>
<td>Students are given only a limited amount of time to perform the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Contextual support</td>
<td>Students are allowed access the input data when they perform the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Explicit instruction</td>
<td>The teacher takes time out from the performance of the task to explicitly teach a linguistic feature that is useful for performing the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Surprise element</td>
<td>Additional information relevant to the task is provided after the students have started to perform the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-task phase</td>
<td>1. Repeat performance</td>
<td>Students are asked to repeat the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Report</td>
<td>Students are asked to report the outcome of the task to the whole class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Language work</td>
<td>Students complete language exercises related to linguistic problems that they experienced when performing the task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I first tried out TBLT with older children (aged 10 to 12) as it seemed easier to do so with students who already had some English knowledge and ability to produce some English. In one lesson I used a task called the Map Task. This involved the students working in pairs. Each member of a pair was given the same map but only one of them had a starting point, a goal and the route marked on the map. In accordance with Ellis’ definition, this task required a primary focus on meaning, there was a gap (only one student had the route marked on it), the learners had to rely on their own linguistic resources (although I did provide some help with the language needed to describe the route), and there was a clearly defined outcome (the student had to draw the route that his/her partner described on his/her map).

The lesson proceeded like this. I began by asking the students to name shops or facilities in their own neighbourhood in English. I wrote the words on the board; if the students did not know the English word, I told them it. This served as “schema-developing”. The list of words was
available to the students as they performed the task so they could refer to it anytime they needed to (i.e., it provided some linguistic support for the main task). I then performed the task with all the students, illustrating how to describe the route on the map while the students drew it in on their individual maps. I encouraged the students to ask me questions. In this way I “modelled” how to undertake the task as suggested by Prabhu (1987) and at the same time I provided the students with input containing the expressions they could use when they performed the task in pairs.

In the main task phase, the students worked on similar Map Tasks in pairs. They repeated the task twice with a different route each time. Then they performed the task a third time but this time I introduced a “surprise element”. The two maps were not identical, and therefore, the students also needed to solve the referential problems that arose as they worked on completing the task. For example, one sheet had a barber and the other a florist in the same location in the map. When the students realized there were differences in their maps, I told them that one of the maps was an older version.

For the post-task, I asked the students to make their own Map Task in pairs. I gave them two blank sheets and asked them to draw the maps making sure that there were some differences in the location of different buildings on the two maps. Finally, the students exchanged their maps with other students and performed the task again. Throughout the lesson, I helped the students by answering questions and providing feedback on the students’ production. When necessary I also provided some model sentences to help them give directions (e.g., “You can say ‘go straight and turn left at...’”). However, the students’ primary focus was always on the task outcome rather than accurate production of English. It required them to treat language as a tool, not as an object to be learned. The students had to work together to collaboratively exchange information and, as in real-life communication, deal with any communication problems that arose (e.g., when the two students were struggling to identify the route to reach the destination or when they needed to address the differences in the two maps).

What impressed me was how the students were prepared to struggle to cope with the problems the Map Task posed for them. This was particularly evident when the students realized that there were some referential problems in their maps. They did their best to use their limited English knowledge to deal with these. When making their own Map Task in pairs, they mostly used Japanese but code-switched into English at times. However, when they started to work on the Map Task created by a different pair, they only used English. I discovered a number of important points about task-based teaching from watching the students perform this task. First, the task created a context where the students felt it was comfortable and natural to use English. Second, it was not necessary to insist on the use of English all the time. Third, I recognized the benefits of asking them to perform the same kind of task several times.

The Map task – like most of the tasks discussed in the TBLT literature – requires productive ability on the part of students and thus was clearly not suited to another group of students in my school, who were complete beginners and usually younger (i.e., aged six). Thus, it was essential that I found a way of adapting tasks for such learners. I decided to use input-based tasks. These are tasks that require only a non-verbal response from students while not prohibiting any attempt at production that a student chooses to make. An example is a listen-and-do task where learners listen to the teacher’s commands and

“...the task created a context where the students felt it was comfortable and natural to use English.”
demonstrate their understanding by doing something. Input-based tasks must still satisfy the four criteria for tasks listed above. In the case of the third criterion (i.e., learners use their own resources) learners need to use both their linguistic and non-linguistic resources (i.e., context and world knowledge) to process the input they are exposed to as part of the task.

I looked first for an example of an input-based task in the SLA research literature and found one in Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki’s (1994) study. This seemed especially relevant as it also involved Japanese learners of English, albeit much older than the learners I planned to work with. This study was conducted in a whole-class context. The task – called the Kitchen Task – involved the students listening to the teacher’s commands about where to place various kitchen objects in a kitchen. The students were given numbered pictures of these objects and a matrix picture of a kitchen. To show they had understood a command they had to locate the correct picture of the object and then write its number in the correct position in the picture of the kitchen. Ellis, Tanaka and Yamazaki used this task to investigate the effects of different kinds of input on learners’ comprehension and their acquisition of new words, which were related to the kitchen objects. I was especially interested in one of the conditions they investigated – what they called “interactionally modified input” – as this also involved the students requesting clarification if they could not understand one of the teacher’s commands. I planned to allow my six-year-olds to also interact if they wanted to.

The kind of input-based task that Ellis et al. investigated was a “listen-and-do task” (i.e., the students had to listen to the teacher’s command and respond by taking the appropriate action). Listen-and-do tasks seemed ideal for young children as they created an interactional context very similar to that they must have experienced when learning their L1. For example, for one of the tasks called “Zoo and Supermarket Task” (see Shintani, 2012 for detail), I designed a number of flash cards depicting different animals and foods. I also designed a three-sided board with pictures of the “zoo” and the “supermarket” and small pockets to hold the flash cards. The task worked in the following way. I told the students that the purpose of the task was to help the zoo or the supermarket by finding the right cards and placing them in a pocket in the holder. Then I gave commands which required the students to select the correct card and hold it up. Those students who had chosen the correct card placed it in the pocket on the board. Those students who displayed the wrong card were told to put it in their individual ‘incorrect’ box. The student with the most cards in the folder was announced as the winner. Of course, as they were complete beginners the children could not initially understand the commands. This led to attempts on their part – using their L1 – to address their non-understanding and interactional work on my part to help them achieve understanding. For example, when the learners did not understand a command such as “Please take the crocodile to the zoo”, the learners responded with “wakannai” (= I don’t understand) leading the teacher to provide further assistance (e.g., “a crocodile is a big, scary animal” using gestures to indicate the meanings of “big” and “scary”).

These listen-and-do tasks resulted in interactions that were very different from those that occurred in my traditional PPP classes. They also involved fundamental differences in the students’ attitudes to learning English (i.e., a shift from seeing English as ‘study’ requiring the memorization of words and patterns, to viewing it as a tool for achieving a communicative outcome). The tasks, of course, involved the students in a constant struggle to understand the commands. I realized that this struggle was an essential element of task-based language teaching.

Readers might wonder whether this innovative approach actually results in better learning than traditional PPP. I have conducted a study comparing these two approaches for complete beginner learners. The results suggest an advantage for TBLT over
PPP in learning grammar and vocabulary. It also showed the differences in the quality of interaction that took place in the classroom. A TBLT approach led to richer and more meaningful interaction that fostered learning for the young, beginner learners. For further reading please see Shintani (2011, 2013) and Shintani and Ellis (2010).

Conclusion
In this article I have given a personal account of my experience of teaching English to Japanese children. I discovered that it was not necessary to narrowly determine which specific items were to be taught in order to plan a lesson and that an alternative approach was to select tasks that could create a context for both pedagogic and communicative work with the students. I realized the limitations of an approach that sought to present discrete language items and practice them in isolation in mechanical drills and that even when this approach was complemented with more communicative activities, it did not seem to enable the learners to use what they had been taught in real communication. This led me to experiment with a radically different approach based on tasks and to try to find ways in which I could assist my learners to perform these tasks. I observed that the learners were not flustered when they found that they did not possess the English they needed to perform a task but were prepared to work hard, using their L1 and the support I provided them, to try to achieve the outcome of the task. I saw how the children’s attitudes changed from viewing English as an object to be ‘learned’ to treating it as a tool for purposeful communication and how this created a context in which English could be acquired naturally. Finally, I understood the importance of my own role as a teacher in TBLT. I was no longer a provider of knowledge but a co-participant who could guide the learners in their struggle to complete a task.

References
Introduction

In this lesson, students work in groups of three or four to design and draw a fashionable bag which would be popular for students their age. In the pre-task phase, vocabulary is pre-taught using pictures of bags and sentence structures are elicited that enable students to talk about which bags they like. In the task phase, students work in the same groups to design their dream bag and then their designs are evaluated by their peers. I have found that this task is motivating for students who wish to express their creativity through drawing. The task is meant to elicit targeted vocabulary concerning the material and description of bags. Expressions of judgment (complements and polite refusals) can also be developed.

Preparation

Print and cut out one set of pictures and vocabulary words to be allocated to four students. Repeat this step depending on class size. Also, ensure that each group will have access to at least one large sheet of paper (A3 paper, butcher paper or some other large drawing surface) and something to draw with.

Pre-task (15 minutes)

Step 1: Vocabulary focus/pre-teaching
Put students into groups of three or four. Students should sit near each other so that they can all share the same work space.

Each group is given a set of cut-up pictures and vocabulary words of different kinds of bags and backpacks, as well as bag parts such as handle, pocket, zipper etc, which they
have to match together. During the matching phase, students may use dictionaries or online translation if they choose.

Whole-class feedback: take turns asking one member in each group to hold up a picture of a leather purse, a nylon backpack, etc. Then take turns asking one group to hold up an item whilst another group pronounces it.

Step 2: Free practice
Ask each group to decide which bag they like most and why. The teacher then monitors the language used and writes useful phrases on the board. Where possible, encourage the use of full sentences (It has a pocket with a zipper, rather than It has pocket...zipper...) or elicit the full sentence while writing on the board.

Examples of useful language may include I like this bag because... or I would choose this one because.... Reasons for choosing may include appearance (It’s pretty/fashionable), functionality (It can hold my laptop / I can wear it on my back), or another reason (It’s the cheapest).

Step 3: Personalisation
Each student should then take out their bag or folder that they came to class with. They should explain to the group why they like their bag or folder. Teacher notes additional helpful language on the board (I like my bag because my favorite color is purple or It was on sale etc.)

Task (30 minutes)
Student groups now play the part of a design team working for the “Tokyo Trendy Bag Company”, a company producing popular bags for high school or university students (teachers may modify the company name to fit their context). It is the group’s job to design a bag for their peers. Hand out the paper and drawing instruments and allocate time for the students to work with each other to design their bags. Inform them that at the end of the design stage, other students will judge each group’s bag.

Note: If you have colored chalk or markers, tell the students not to color the whole design, but only to outline, as filling in the page with color wastes both time and materials.

Evaluation (20 minutes)
After each team has finished designing their bag, split the groups in half (1-2 students per half-group).

One half of the group assumes the role of investors from the “Tokyo Trendy Bag Company”. The investors have to walk around the room, examine each design, and make comments about each bag they see. They may like it or they may not like it. In pairs, investors will then talk to each other to decide which design they would have the “Tokyo Trendy Bag Company” invest in. They cannot choose the one they helped design.

The other half of the group stays at their design and represents their team. As each investor comes by, the designers should note the features of their bag in an attempt to persuade the investors to invest in their design. Again, encourage the use of full sentences. (Our bag has a pocket for a phone. It has a zipper etc.)

During this process, the teacher walks around the room, monitors and notes three examples of positive or interesting language not previously taught. For example, students may make comments about color choice or suggest improvements for the bag. The teacher should also note down the most common language errors. Many errors may involve subject-verb agreement (switching there is/there are or has/have).
After 10 minutes, each investment team must make a decision. Votes are totaled by the teacher. At that point, investor teams and design representatives switch roles and repeat the process for 10 more minutes. At the end of the second round, all votes are tallied and the group which receives the most votes are told they will “receive investment” from the “Tokyo Trendy Bag Company”.

Alternatively, if there is another teacher willing to do the same activity at the same time, two classes may join together and evaluate each other’s designs.

**Error Correction (10 minutes)**

Write six sentences of language used during the task on the board and number them from one to six. Ask the class which sentences contain errors and what those errors are. For example, the teacher may write ‘It have a pocket,’ and elicit that have should be changed to has. Highlight examples of new or interesting language in the other three sentences. The teacher may write ‘I like the color green. It is pretty, like a tree.’ in order to praise the link of color to everyday life.

**Reflection (15 minutes)**

Students rejoin their original groups and write answers to the following questions:

1. What things about your bag did most people like? Which parts did most people dislike?
2. Which bag did you and your partner agree was best? What did you like most about it?
3. If you could change your group’s design, what would you do differently? Why?

Each group must nominate a speaker to tell the class their answers. The teacher monitors and gives feedback on language errors while students are discussing and writing. Honest opinions are encouraged, and there are no wrong answers.

**About the author**

Travis Henry has been teaching EFL for seven years. He currently teaches at RMIT International University Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City and has previously taught in China and the US. His research interests include task-based learning, student reflection, and the student’s process of journaling.
Lesson Plan 2
Study Management Task

Martin Mullen
Meisei University

- Key words: learner autonomy, group work, study management
- Level: Pre-intermediate and up
- Age: University level
- Preparation: Less than 20 minutes
- Activity time: Two 90-minute classes, extra for presentation
- Materials: Two handouts (see appendices A and B), sheets of paper, markers, sticky tape

Introduction

In addition to regular English language classes, students at Meisei University in Tokyo attend a course focusing on learner autonomy. The primary aim of the course is to equip the students with both the motivation and the tools necessary to take a more active role in the management of their learning. This consists of having students experiment with different resources, such as the university’s “Language Lounge”, which is a venue for low-pressure English communication, graded readers, language-learning websites like lang-8.com or sharedtalk.com, and lists of strategies such as the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). These resources will help them to identify the learning strategies and study habits most useful for them, as well as different projects designed to encourage the discovery of resources and strategies beneficial to learning. All students create a blog in which they post weekly reflections on their experiences with the resources and projects introduced during the course. More information on the resources introduced during the course can be found on the course website: http://meisei.wordpress.com/

This task aims to foster a ‘process whereby learning opportunities are created’ (Allwright, 1986, p. 44). The teacher presents the students with the weekly university schedule and learner profile of a fictitious student at their university (see appendices A and B). This student has learning issues such as a poor vocabulary, dislike of reading in English, lack of confidence when speaking, and a desire to get a specific IELTS score. In groups, students are asked to address these study management issues through a collaborative decision-making process, the results of which are presented to their peers through a poster presentation.

Pre-task

The teacher divides the class into groups of 3-5 students and distributes copies of the handouts to each group (see appendices A and B). After allowing approximately 5-10 minutes for the groups to digest the instructions for the task and information related to the fictitious student’s strengths, weaknesses and hobbies (appendix A), as well as the university schedule (appendix B), the teacher clarifies any outstanding points students may have, and explains that after the task, each
group will have to present on the extent to which the study plan created for the fictitious student addresses his specific goals and concerns as a learner, recommending appropriate strategies and resources, such as those they have been exposed to in class, or any other resources, for example, websites they may have discovered.

**Main Task**

**Step 1:** For the remainder of the class, the groups of students work together to identify the most appropriate ways in which the fictitious student’s study management problems can be rectified. As the class does not have an explicit English language focus, the teacher need not insist that all group work be conducted in English. There may be a concern that by requiring the students to use only English, the quality of discussion would be reduced and the final study plan might ultimately be diminished. The teacher spends much of the class time moving between groups receiving updates on their progress and answering students’ questions, such as how long Daisuke’s commute to the university takes, or where they can find a list of graded readers, as well as encouraging students to check their blogs and the course website to remind themselves of all the resources they have previously been exposed to. Consequently, there is a significant amount of meaningful use of English during the class. In the last 15 minutes of the class, groups are instructed to decide among themselves the things each member should do before the start of the following week’s class. For example, encourage each member to select one resource they find appropriate for Daisuke’s learning needs.

**Step 2:** In the second class, students reform their groups and they spend the opening few minutes reviewing the work they completed the previous week, as well as updating each other on any progress made between classes. They then move on to how the study resources selected during the week, such as websites or podcasts, can be most suitably applied to the task. After doing this, the teacher reminds each group that they will be making a poster presentation of their study plan the following week, and informs the groups to begin outlining the basic design and content of their poster. The teacher takes the opportunity to ask each group a couple of questions similar to the questions that the teacher will ask during the actual presentation. For example, ‘Which specific websites will Daisuke use to read about current affairs? How much time will he spend listening to English-language podcasts? Where can those podcasts be found?’

In doing so, the students can begin to self-evaluate the content of their study plan so far. In the final minutes of the class, the groups are reminded that presentations will begin at the start of the next class.

**Step 3:** In the third class, before the start of the presentations, the teacher instructs each group to evaluate the presentations of all other groups on three criteria:

1. Appropriateness of the resources and strategies selected to deal with Daisuke’s learner weaknesses.
2. The level of specific detail provided to address Daisuke’s study management issues.
3. The quality of the presentation itself.

Each group is also instructed to choose one aspect of the study plan explained during each presentation (for example, resources which the group presenting has selected to address Daisuke’s low vocabulary, such as the Longman 3000 list) and write at least 100 words comparing that aspect of the study plan with their own study plan. Both the peer-evaluation and the written comparison are anonymous and are handed to the respective groups after examination by the teacher. Presentations usually last around ten minutes and questions from the audience are encouraged. Once all the presentations are finished, the teacher collects the posters for further evaluation at a later time. To finish the project, the teacher follows Willis’s recommendation (1996)
and asks the students to reflect in their personal blogs about how the content of this task can be applied to their own study management as learners, such as providing new resources to help their reading practice, or different ways to improve vocabulary retention.

Conclusion

I recognize that the application of this task to other courses may be limited by the time needed and the fact that many other courses require a more explicit focus on production of the target language. Yet, as the aim of the task is to make students understand the value of taking a more active and informed role in the management of their own learning, the task meets its aims very successfully. Student satisfaction with the project is evident firstly from survey responses completed after the completion of the task, in which they rated the task in terms of both interest and usefulness, and secondly from their feedback in a standard course evaluation survey which students complete at the end of every course. The task was highly rated particularly in relation to their exposure to previously unknown resources for language learning and study management which have been discovered by other students. The feedback indicates that task-based learning activities, when made relevant to the needs of the students, can produce very positive results in terms of fostering a sense of autonomy. The students reported that completing the task and presenting the materials to each other provides welcome opportunities for the discovery of new learning resources as well as meaningful and purposeful production of English.

About the author

Martin Mullen has taught in Japan for seven years. He teaches classes in English communication and learner autonomy, and his research interests include vocabulary acquisition, facilitating learner autonomy, and using technology in task-based learning.

References


Appendix A: Project Handout (double-sided)

Project – Daisuke Suzuki

This is a group project. You can use the same groups as the last project on language learning histories, or you can make new groups of 3-5 students.

The aim of this project is to create an English language study plan for a student.

Please look at the student’s schedule (appendix B) and read the information on his strong and weak points in English. Then create a plan for Daisuke which will help him fix the weak points in his English ability. You will have to get information about the IELTS test and use that to make your study plan. You should think about all of the websites we have looked at in the course, (please look at http://meisei.wordpress.com), as well as other ways of studying English such as the TV, radio, books, newspapers, and so on. その学生のスケジュールと英語の得意なところ、苦手なところの情報を読んでください。そしてだいすけの英語の弱点を克服するのに役立つプランを作りなさい。IELTSについて調べ、プランの中に取り入れなければなりません。テレビやラジオ新聞など利用する英語学習法の他に、授業の中でみてきたウェブサイトも使用するとよいでしょう。

In week 11, each group will present their study plan. This presentation will be a poster presentation – each group will make posters with the information on them and put the posters on the walls of the classroom. The students in other groups (and the teacher) will move around the classroom as a body and ask each group
Student Profile – Daisuke Suzuki.

Daisuke Suzuki is a student at Meisei University. He would like to study at an English University from next year, so he needs to get a good score in an IELTS test to be able to enter university.

Daisuke has some weak points in his English. He has a low vocabulary, so he doesn’t like speaking in class because he feels the other students will notice his vocabulary. He isn’t confident about giving his opinions in class. He knows that he needs to improve his speaking to get a good score in the IELTS test.

He has quite a good knowledge of grammar, and he thinks that his writing ability is quite good, but he doesn’t know much about connecting paragraphs when writing academic English. He wants to improve this. He writes a blog in Japanese, and is a member of some online discussion forums.

Daisuke doesn’t like reading books very much, and rarely reads for fun, even in Japanese. He knows this is one reason why his vocabulary is so low, but when he tries to read in English, he gets bored and gives up. He likes using the internet and is interested in reading about the news and current affairs, but these topics don’t come up in class very often.

Daisuke thinks his listening is OK. He can understand a lot of what people are saying in English, and when he doesn’t understand, the reason is because of his poor vocabulary. He likes music and sometimes listens to English-language music. He doesn’t really think this is studying though – he is listening for pleasure. He would like to build his vocabulary through listening. He often listens to podcasts while on the train to Meisei and going home.

Daisuke lives in Machida, and travels to Meisei by train every day. He has a computer and internet access at home, and uses the internet for at least 1 hour every day. He checks the news on the internet, and uses sites like Youtube and Facebook. He has a part-time job in a convenience store every Friday night and Sunday morning. He only gets a chance to meet his friends on a Saturday night.

Appendix B – Daisuke Suzuki’s weekly schedule at Meisei

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time/day</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 – wake up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:30</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Part-time job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 – 12:15</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Part-time job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15 –12:55</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Part-time job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:55 – 14:25</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Part-time job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:40 – 16:10</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:25 -17:55</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Part-time job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - bedtime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Plan 3
Theme-based discussion tasks for student interaction

Nick Domjancic
Kyoto Sangyo University

- Key words: task-based, discussion focus, vocabulary, speaking tasks, current topics in the news, introduction lesson.
- Level: lower intermediate to high intermediate
- Age: university age and above
- Preparation time: about 45 minutes
- Activity time: one 90 minute class
- Materials: students each need a copy of the lesson worksheet (see appendix) and a dictionary. The teacher will need to select about 8 to 10 current issues from the news. The issues/topics selected should cover a wide range to ensure that each student can have something to talk about. Unless the class has less than 10 students, students should be divided into groups of three/four and should carry out each task with their group members

Introduction
This is a lesson plan designed to encourage interaction and theme-based discussion between students, and also to give the teacher an idea of the speaking and listening levels of the students, their vocabulary knowledge, and their awareness of current issues from the news. The lesson has a loose format; many solutions to the tasks are possible, and there are no incorrect answers for any of the tasks. In theory, this lesson could be used with any class, but is best suited for intermediate level students. The lesson is based around discussion tasks and a follow-up discussion. The focus is on listening, reading, vocabulary, and discussion.

Preparation
Print off copies of the worksheet (one copy per student – see appendix).

Pre-task: (10-15 minutes)
Depending on the class size, students should be instructed to work in pairs or in small groups with a maximum of four students. Students’ attention should then be directed to part one of the worksheet, where current issues from the news are listed. For each topic listed on the worksheet,
the students must try to make a list of five words or short phrases that they associate with each topic. For example:

**The Titanic** – **iceberg, sunken ship, award winning movie, recent gain in popularity, disaster**

After the students have completed their lists of words and short phrases associated with the topics listed on the worksheet, they should report their lists of words to the class and write them on the whiteboard. This usually yields some interesting answers and even some vocabulary of which other students are not aware so have the class write down any new vocabulary words they see.

**Ranking task: (10-15 minutes)**

This task (part two of the worksheet) requires the students to rank the topics found in part one. Depending on the level of the class, there are two ways to go about this task. Both are listed below, for lower intermediate levels and for higher intermediate levels respectively.

1. For lower intermediate level classes, the teacher must select the ranking criteria, asking the students to rank the topics in terms of global significance or proximity of the event to them. This makes the task a little simpler for the students.

2. For higher intermediate level classes, the students can freely choose the ranking criteria. For example - recently a group of students thought to rank the topics under the category of “news worthiness”, and another group ranked the topics under the category of “truth”: which events they thought had really happened and which events they thought did not.

Regardless of their level, after the students have finished the task, instruct each group to tell the class both their category and ranking order. To finish this task, each group has to ask follow-up questions about another group’s category/ranking. For higher intermediate classes follow-up questions require little explanation, but usually lower intermediate classes need a push in the right direction, so writing some examples of follow-up questions on the blackboard proves to be helpful:

- Why did you put (topic) at the (top/bottom/middle) of the list?
- Why did you choose that category?
- Why isn’t (this topic) in (this place)?

This task can lead to a short class discussion on the relevance of each of the topics before the next two main tasks are introduced.

**Main Task One (20-30 minutes)**

Main task one (part three of the worksheet) challenges students to critically examine each topic listed during the ranking task. Students are asked to take another look at each topic from part two and think of conflicting opinions. Specifically, part three asks the students to outline two opinions about each topic – one positive and one negative. To give the students an example, the worksheet asks them to think of some misconceptions related to each of the topics; and/or if people have different ideas about what happened for each topic. For this part of the lesson, students should be encouraged to develop their own opinions about each of the topics listed on the worksheet. For example:

- **Moonlanding:** “I think man has walked on the moon.”
  “I don’t think man has walked on the moon. The story is not real.”

Usually this task takes at least ten minutes.
**Report**

After the students have outlined conflicting opinions for each topic, they report back to the class and give their answers.

**Language Focus**

As the students provide their opinions, make a list of errors that are produced, then write some common mistakes on the whiteboard and elicit corrections from the class.

**Main Task Two (20-30 minutes)**

Main task two of the lesson (part four of the worksheet) requires the students to make each topic personal; giving their opinion about five of the topics listed in part one. Advanced classes can give their opinion for each of the topics, but a typical 90 minute class usually does not allow enough time for this. The worksheet asks students to try to prepare two ‘personal’ things to say about each topic based on their own opinion of the topic and the events surrounding it. For example, students are given the examples that ask them what they think about the event and the effects of the event - is it/are they positive or negative, important or irrelevant, newsworthy or not. For example:

“I think the Titanic is not important news. This ship sank over one hundred years ago so it is not important now. There are more relevant things that we need to watch on the news, for example, helping the environment.”

**Report**

When reporting their opinions to the class, the follow-up questions using ‘why’ introduced during the ranking task are useful for generating discussion among the class.

**Language Focus**

Instruct each group to swap their notes with another group, read the other groups’ opinions and check for mistakes. Have the students return their original notes, they can re-write certain parts if necessary then select certain groups to present their opinions while the teacher writes them on the whiteboard and then elicits from the class any potential corrections needed.

**Follow-up Activity**

As a follow-up for main task two, the students could expand upon part 4 of the worksheet, asking each group of students from the class to give short presentations (under 2 minutes) at the beginning of the following class.

For the theme of the presentation, the students have to expand upon their answers from Part 4 of the worksheet, so that they have to talk for a couple minutes about their personal opinion of the topic. For example, the students can talk about how they feel about the sequence of events that created the news event, a particular effect of the event, or even what they think the future outcome of the event will be. Also, the students should ask the class a couple questions related to the theme of their presentations, asking the class if they agree with the groups ideas about the future outcome of events, or if they agree with the groups opinion of the event and so on.
About the author

Nick Domjancic has taught in Japan for 10 years. He currently teaches at Kyoto Sangyo University, and his research interests include task-based learning, technology and teaching, student motivation, and language study strategies.

Appendix: Worksheet

Today we will have an introductory class, focusing on the topics listed on this page and your opinions and associations about the topics. There are no correct answers for any of the parts listed below, so use your imagination and have something unique to say in your answers below!

Part One:

Have a look at the topics listed below with your partner. Try to think of about five words that you associate with each topic. Any word is ok!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Titanic</th>
<th>Foreign travel</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Moon Landing</td>
<td>Recent events (public/personal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Olympics</td>
<td>Whitney Houston</td>
<td>Radioactive Waste Disposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part Two:

Take a look at the group of topics listed in Part One. Try to think of a way to rank the topics. You are free to choose the category that you will use to rank the topics, for example you could rank the importance of each event, the significance that each event has had for the economy/politics/media etc.

Part Three:

With your partner, take a look again at each topic and think of some conflicting opinions connected to each topic. For example, what are some common misconceptions about each of the topics? Do people have different ideas about what happened for some of the topics? Which of the topics are controversial? Try to think of two opinions (conflicting of course) for each topic listed in Part One.

For example:

Moonlanding: “I think man has walked on the moon.”
“I don’t think man has walked on the moon. The story is not real.”

Part Four:

For this part of the lesson, you and your partner have to make each topic personal! Try to have two things to say about each topic based on your own opinion for your answer to this part. For example, what do you think about the event? Is it positive or negative? Is the topic important or irrelevant? Why, why not? Provide reasons and examples. Make notes and practice your opinions.

For example:

“I think the Titanic is not important news. This ship sank over one hundred years ago so it is not important now. There are more relevant things that we need to watch on the news, for example, helping the environment.”
Guidelines for contributions

OnTask welcomes submissions of articles concerning TBLT, 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 words 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: Colin Thompson at tbltinasia@gmail.com.

Deadlines for submission are as follows:

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