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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our summer issue of *Taking it to Task!* in 2021.

This issue features an article by Heather Woodward and Laura Padfield on *Kialo Edu*, an online application that supports university students in preparing for classroom debates. The authors discuss how the application can be used to promote the top four higher cognitive skills that feature in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. There is also a tribute to Michael H. Long, who sadly passed away earlier this year, alongside a lesson plan for choosing an apartment by Charlie Bell and two reviews by Paul Leeming and Robert Remmerswaal of recently-published books on TBLT.

We hope that you enjoy reading this issue, and if any of you have a TBLT related article, lesson plan, book review or opinion piece that you would like to submit for consideration in a future issue of *Taking it to Task*, please contact us at tbltsigpublications@gmail.com

The focus of the first special issue, Winter 2021, will be TBLT and CALL.

Rick Derrah and Martin Spivey

Publication Chairs
On Tuesday 23rd February, the wider linguistics community became aware that Mike Long had sadly passed away on the 21st at the age of 76. Since 2003, he had held the position of Professor of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) at the University of Maryland in the U.S.A. He has been a major influence on the SLA field as well as one of the leading proponents of TBLT, culminating in his receiving of a Distinguished Achievement Award from the International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching in 2017.

While much of his academic career was based in the U.S.A., Mike was born in the U.K. and read Law at the University of Birmingham, followed by a Post-Graduate Certificate of Education at the University of London. He started his English language teaching career with stints in Peru, London (U.K.) and Mexico. At the University of Essex, he achieved an M.A. (with Distinction) in Linguistics and later undertook a PhD in Applied Linguistics at UCLA in Los Angeles under the supervision of the renowned SLA scholar, Evelyn Hatch. His academic career began in 1980 as an Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania and after two years there, he moved on to the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, where he reached Full Professor by 1990 and continued in the role until his departure to Maryland in 2003.

Over his entire career, Mike was a prolific writer of academic books and journal articles and to date his work has been cited over 50,000 times. In SLA research, his Interaction Hypothesis theory (Long, 1983b; 1996) has been very influential. The theory attempted to explain how language learning is facilitated by the negotiation of meaning during interaction and it has spawned many studies by scholars in our field (Ellis & Shintani, 2014).

As for TBLT, Mike was a strong advocate from its early days and made a substantial contribution to its development as a legitimate pedagogical approach. He argued for the efficacy of focus on form as a key methodological principle in task-based language teaching which involves focusing on grammatical forms only as a result of problems occurring through interaction in meaning-based tasks. Drawing students’ attention to language in this way is seen as more effective for acquisition than pre-determining which particular linguistic forms will be focused on prior to class (Long, 2000). He also advocated for the importance of a thorough needs analysis to be conducted pre-course in
order to ensure that students were learning the language that was most relevant to their current or future needs.

Right up until his illness, Mike was still heavily involved in writing about and promoting SLA and TBLT. He wrote *Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching* (2015) along with several articles, including *In Defense of Tasks and TBLT: Nonissues and Real Issues* (2016). Among his final pieces of work were a co-authored book chapter on a task-based needs analysis for U.S. Foreign Service Officers needing to give formal speeches in Japanese (Hillman & Long, 2020) and joint editorship of *The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching* (Ahmadian & Long, forthcoming). He also appeared on The SLB Podcast in 2019 where he looked back on his life and career, and produced a ‘soccer team’ of his highly-rated scholars in SLA with a great amount of enthusiasm. Reading the comments and memories from various scholars, it becomes apparent how respected and admired Mike was on both a professional and personal level. His scholarly work will be an influence on the SLA and TBLT fields for many years to come and he will be sorely missed.

References


ARTICLE

Using Kialo Edu for EFL Debate Preparation
By Heather Woodward and Laura Padfield

ABSTRACT

A contributing writer for The Japan Times wrote an article in 2019 advising forgoing debate tactics in Japanese workplaces because most students in Japan are not taught debate (Kopp, 2019). Additionally, in Japanese culture, debate tactics are viewed as overly aggressive (Kopp, 2019). Kopp suggested that foreign workers present a written report or slideshow to let the data do the work in convincing Japanese co-workers (Kopp, 2019). In 2020, Rikkyo University implemented a debate course for all first-year university students in hopes that if students were to work at an international company either in Japan or abroad, they could cope with these cultural differences in the workplace. In addition, debates can be used in TBLT. In this paper, we describe the stages of debate based on Rikkyo University’s debate textbook, ‘Up for Debate’, then explain features of Kialo Edu, an online computer program designed for rational debate. After reviewing Bloom’s taxonomy, we describe the ways in which students use the higher cognitive levels of the taxonomy to complete tasks with Kialo Edu.

INTRODUCTION

Debate Course

As of 2020, Rikkyo University in Japan runs a mandatory debate course for all first-year students as part of its English language programme. This course is designed to prepare students for working life in an intercultural environment either at home or overseas. The debate course handbook explains that the aims are to enhance students’ (a) research skills, (b) critical thinking abilities, (c) team-building skills, and (d) acquired knowledge of subject matter (Debate Committee, 2020). Students are expected to develop research skills by searching for and examining sources of information, develop critical thinking skills by creating and examining arguments and topics from different viewpoints,
improve team-building skills by working with debate teammates, and build knowledge of the subject matter by preparing for and participating in debates (Debate Committee, 2020). Thus, through the process of conducting a debate, students should acquire the four main aims of the course.

There are five core stages to a typical debate lesson, which typically take place over more than one class session: (a) proposition choice, (b) research, (c) assignment, (d) preparation, and (e) the in-class debate. During (a) proposition choice, students choose a statement they would like to debate, such as: “Face-to-face classes are better than online classes”, or “university students should work part-time.” Next, in teams of two or three, students (b) research positions both for and against the proposition. After this research stage, the instructor (c) assigns teams to a position. Teams (d) prepare for the debate by choosing their strongest arguments and formulating their cross-examination questions. Finally, students enter into the (e) in-class debate, for which the course uses the same formal structure each time (Table 1).

Table 1
Debate Format Used at Rikkyo University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Debate Tasks</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round One</td>
<td>1 The Affirmative Team (AFF) give arguments defending the proposition.</td>
<td>3 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 The Negative Team (NEG) ask AFF cross-examination questions, e.g., to clarify or challenge.</td>
<td>2 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 NEG give arguments against the proposition.</td>
<td>3 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 AFF ask NEG cross-examination questions.</td>
<td>2 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Teams utilise the break to consider the weak points of their opponents’ arguments and prepare summaries of their own positions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round Two</td>
<td>5 NEG state the weak points of AFF’s arguments, i.e., refutes, and AFF replies i.e., rebuts.</td>
<td>4 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 AFF state the weak points of NEG’s arguments, i.e., refutes, and NEG replies, i.e., rebuts.</td>
<td>4 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 NEG give a summary of their position.</td>
<td>2 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 AFF give a summary of their position.</td>
<td>2 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Students discuss and evaluate their performance. They also discuss their own opinions on the proposition, which may be different to the opinions they presented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kialo Edu**

To further help students prepare for debate, the primary author used a free, online application called Kialo Edu. The application provides a means for students to organize information to prepare for debate while also communicating with teammates using a chat box. The main feature of the app is the debate tree (Figure 1), which is a visual representation of the arguments for and against the thesis, i.e., proposition.

**Figure 1**

*A Single-Thesis Argument Tree on Kialo Edu*

The graphic shows an overview of the argument tree, its main pro and con branches, and their cards. It also shows how the thesis card is expanded. Each card can be expanded to form a subsidiary tree with its own pro and con branches. Kialo (2020)

The two main branches of the debate tree are the pro and con columns, where students insert claims to support or oppose the thesis. Each card or bubble on the branch represents a unique claim. By clicking on a claim represented by a card, students can expand it to add more specific evidence and examples. By expanding a claim in the con column, they can add cross-examination questions and refutations.

Another representation is a circle (Figure 2). Each slice of the circle represents a reason or evidence for or against the proposition.
Other features of Kialo Edu are impact ratings and perspectives. Students can vote on how persuasive a given pro or con is to generate impact ratings. They can also rate the claims from different points of view with the perspectives feature (Figure 3). Instructors can add different perspectives and ask students to rate claims according to them. For example, if the proposition is, “The death penalty should be banned.” Instructors could add “police,” “convicted criminals,” or “victims” as perspectives and students can rate claims from what they imagine would be the point of view of a police officer etc. In this way, students can think of the extent to which claims would be persuasive to different groups.
Another feature is to add an online link to webpages with information sources. If students find a research study online, they can link the webpage to the Kialo Edu page (Figure 4).

Instructors can give students viewer, writer, editor, or administrator roles. Viewers can see the argument tree but cannot change it. Writers can write the claims, and editors can additionally edit any written claims. Administrators have access to give feedback as a teacher, create viewpoints, delete the Kialo Edu tree, and set the privacy, among other functions.
Additionally, features for instructors include a list of who participated, how many claims each student made and how many votes each student made (Figure 5). In terms of security, argument trees can be made private and for only people who have the link. Students do not need to create their own Kialo Edu account. However, there is another option which requires students to sign up for Kialo Edu with a free account using their email addresses, but they can use nicknames if they prefer not using their real name.

Figure 5
A View of Contributions per Individual

![Contributions per Individual](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Claims</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HeatherWoodward</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura-ap</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Kialo (2020)

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Debates can be an effective way to develop critical thinking skills (Kennedy, 2006). Different components of critical thinking skills are a) the ability to think objectively, b) identify both sides of the argument, c) evaluate arguments’ strengths, d) determine arguments’ weaknesses, e) recognize the implications, and f) build evidence (SkillsYouNeed, 2020). Kennedy (2006) writes that the “benefits of using in-class debates as an instructional strategy also include mastery of the content and the development of critical thinking skills, empathy, and oral communication skills.”
Critical thinking skills have been shown to be valuable to learners both in and out of the classroom (Piscitelli, 2016). These transferrable skills can be applied in a range of contexts and life-stages, including, personal, social, academic, and professional, and even global. For example, Davidson (2016) writes, “companies have automated or outsourced many routine tasks, and the jobs that remain often require workers to take on broader responsibilities that demand critical thinking, empathy, or other abilities that computers can’t easily simulate.”

Strass (2017) finds that Google regards the expertise in STEM as less important than other qualities: effective communication and listening skills, being a good mentor, showing empathy toward coworkers, valuing other viewpoints, connecting complex concepts, and possessing problem-solving and critical thinking skills. A 2018 survey by the Japanese business federation, Kaidanren, show that companies desire employees who are independent, able to get things done, can solve problems, work in a team, have the ability to think logically and creatively. They cited these characteristics as more important than foreign language abilities (Kaidanren, 2018).

The incorporation of critical thinking skills into English language learning is invaluable as these abilities are foundational to many processes required in language learning. The Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) recognizes the need for critical skills in English education in Japan, specifying that critical thinking skills including the ability to understand different perspectives and communicate one’s own perspective in a clear and reasoned way with people from other cultures are a key part of improving education in Japan (MEXT, 2011). Mineshima (2015) notes that this recognition of the need to specify critical thinking objectives came at a time when students in Japan ranked low for critical thinking skills against a group of other nations, and there was a demonstrable lack of critical thinking content in school textbooks.

MEXT (2011) also promote the integration of more debate and discussion focused tasks to increase the amount of real communication students engage in as well as developing the skills necessary to be able to hold discussions and debates with people from other cultures and nations. To fulfill MEXT’s objective, they recommend that teachers who believe that questions can help students develop critical thinking should ask follow-up questions to analyze the topic from multiple viewpoints with examples, evidence, and rationale (Mineshima & Chino, 2013).

**DISCUSSION**

In this section, we review Bloom’s taxonomy, which maps the levels of higher order thinking skills. The tiers of taxonomy are remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). We show how Kialo Edu can develop the four higher cognitive skills of applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (Figure 6)
consists of a model used to classify objectives for educational purposes by their complexity (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

**Figure 6**

*Bloom's Revised Taxonomy*

![Bloom's Revised Taxonomy](image)

*Note.* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Stobaugh (2020) separates each level of the higher order thinking skills into subcategories. Application is separated into two subcategories of execution and implementation. To execute, students encounter a new problem and determine a procedure to help them solve the problem; however, for implementation, students encounter a problem involves more than one variable and therefore the problem can have more than one solution (Stobaugh, 2020). This type of problem is more challenging because the procedure might not be immediately clear to students.

In Kialo Edu, students apply different aspects of debate to the argument trees. For example, after students do research, they add and apply the information to the correct position on the tree. This task would be considered ‘execution’ as there are not more than one variable or procedure to implement. In other words, the positions of where each piece of information has a well-defined placement on the Kialo Edu tree. If a piece of information supports another idea, that information would be placed under the information in the pro column (Figure 7).
In addition to applying information to the Kialo Edu site, students must apply the information on the site to in-class debates. This task is also considered to be ‘execute’ rather than ‘implement’ as most of the information fits only in certain debate stages and there are not many ways to apply the information on Kialo Edu creatively to the in-class debates.

At the fourth tier of Bloom’s taxonomy, there is analysis (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Stobaugh (2020) writes that there are three cognitive processes at the analysis level: (a) differentiation, (b) organization, and (c) attribution. With differentiation, students grapple with distinguishing the source of information as either relevant or irrelevant to the overall problem (Stobaugh, 2020). For organizing, students “examine interactions and sequences of events to identify connections among relevant information” (Stobaugh, 2020). “They must then design a new arrangement or structure for the information that depicts these relationships.” For example, charts, outlines, or diagrams. The third subcategory of analysis is attribution, which “involves students identifying biases, assumptions, or points of view in information.”

In terms of how Kialo Edu helps students with analysis, when researching information for their debate, students determine relevant information and write about it on the argument tree. They use the argument tree structure that has been provided to arrange information to depict relationships between the information. Lastly, while researching information to prepare for debate, they can identify biases, assumptions, or viewpoints, and then in the ‘cons’ section, explicitly identify these as weaknesses in the overall argument (Figure 8).
At the fifth level of Bloom’s taxonomy is evaluate (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). At this level, “Students examine information sources to assess quality and then make decisions based on specific criteria” (Stobaugh, 2020). Stobaugh (2020) categories evaluate into two subcategories: (a) checking and (b) critiquing. For checking, students examine information for inconsistencies or fallacies (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). For example, students might determine whether the author is qualified to make such statements and decide whether the evidence given is sufficient, valid, and reliable (Stobaugh, 2013). For critiquing, students use a set of criteria for the purpose of evaluating different options (Stobaugh, 2020). In doing so, students determine whether given information meets the set of criteria to identify the best choice.

In terms of Kialo Edu, teachers can assign a task for students to review the claims they have written on the argument tree to check for any inconsistencies or fallacies. Additionally, teachers can also give students a set of questions to help students critique each claim. Rikkyo University’s ‘Up for Debate’ features a list in the 2020 textbook (Yamamoto, Arthurson, Beck, et al., 2020):

- Are the points correct? Is the information true?
- Are the points completely true or only partially true?
- Is what the other team said relevant?
- Is that the other team said important?
For the sixth level, create, students must complete three subcategories: (a) generate, (b) plan, and (c) produce (Stobaugh, 2020). This level requires students to use the cognitive processes of understanding, analyzing, and evaluating. Students must engage in a task that allows them to brainstorm new ideas, choose the best one, plan, and then create something that nobody else has (Stobaugh, 2020).

For (a) generate, students discover solutions or ideas for the purpose of solving a not well-specified problem (Johnson, 2010). Students’ ideas should be based on thorough research and understanding of the problem while also unique, specific, and diverse (Stobaugh, 2020). For (b) plan, students evaluate their ideas, then choose the best idea to implement their plan. For (c) produce, students execute the plan to create the product (Stobaugh, 2020). Treffinger et al. (2013) recommends using the following three criteria to evaluate creativity: (a) novelty of outcome or process, (b) resolution, and (c) synthesis and elaboration into a novel product.

In terms of Kialo Edu, teachers can encourage students to choose propositions that are broadly defined so that students can create or synthesize novel ideas for their argumentation. For example, students can debate the best way to solve climate change, which allows students to generate ideas about more up-to-date topics and emerging technologies such as geothermal and fusion energy, which might not be in a textbook. Students can choose propositions that are based on their area of specialization in topics that are currently controversial or up-and-coming so that they have the opportunity to create or synthesize new ideas and then defend those new ideas in debate. To foster creative thinking, instructors can encourage students to synthesize and elaborate their ideas. Instructors can foster creativity by having students create novel arguments by having students think of different viewpoints.

Reeves (2015) states that there are eight components of creative thought. Students must:

- Use research to support their ideas
- Consider multidisciplinary viewpoints
- Utilize different source materials that build on previous thoughts
- Receive clear guidelines from rubric
- Create a product
- Document their thinking throughout the process
- Collaborate with other students
- Go through the process of trial and error to receive feedback to improve on the next iteration

Insofar as creating a product, in-class debate is a performance task rather than a product, but the questions and summaries students create could be considered products and instructors can use Kialo Edu argument tree as a product of the work students accomplished to prepare for the debate.
Instructors can give feedback on the argument tree and evaluate it in terms of the argument’s novelty, resolution, and synthesis.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, debate can be one way to improve critical thinking skills while also helping Japanese students cope with the cultural differences of an international workplace. They can also be used in relation to TBLT. In this paper, we explained the stages of debate based on Rikkyo University’s mandatory debate course, then described features of an online computer program designed for debate preparation called Kialo Edu. After we reviewed Bloom’s revised taxonomy, we explained the ways in which students use the higher cognitive levels of the taxonomy to complete tasks with Kialo Edu. We believe that using Kialo Edu can help students prepare more effectively for debate and gives a product in addition to students’ in-class debate performance that represents their creative thought processes and collaboration with their teammates.

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LESSON PLAN:

Choosing an Apartment

Charlie Bell, University of Occupational and Environmental Health Japan

Keywords: advantages & disadvantages, living arrangements
Level: Lower-intermediate and above
Age: High School, University
Lesson time: 60-90mins
Materials: Print-outs (see appendices)

Introduction

In this task students are required to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various apartments, and decide which is the best (and/or worst apartment). This topic has proven pretty popular in the past, probably due to the similarities between the theme of the task and the popular Japanese TV show ‘Bombi girl’ which focuses on young girls searching for a Tokyo apartment on a budget. The topic is relatively straightforward, and will no doubt elicit the use of vocabulary relating to living arrangements, locations, and adjectives that most high school students and university students should be familiar with. Their familiarity with a lot of the language should leave the students with some extra brain power to focus on the communication of their ideas and opinions in English.

Pre-task (appendix 1)

I like to start this particular lesson by building some interest in the topic. I show the students some pictures of an old apartment I lived in. I describe some of the good things and bad things about the apartment. All the students are expected to do is listen. The students are always interested to see what kind of a place their teacher lives in. It also introduces the students to a large amount of useful vocabulary.

Next I will ask the student to work in pairs. I give them about 5 minutes to make a mind maps of the important things to consider when renting an apartment. I will give them an example from my own apartment to help them understand exactly what is required of them. After about 5 minutes I select a few pairs to share their ideas and write them up on the board. They should at least be able to regurgitate some of the things I mentioned just minutes before. They can talk in Japanese, but they should be making notes in English.
Alternatively, with lower level students, I might start with a simple picture matching task, or matching opposite adjectives (cheap -> expensive, near -> far). Either way, the purpose of this first task is to activate that part of the brain that stores all the English vocabulary relating to apartments, locations, and living arrangements. As mentioned before, this should help free up some extra brain power for communicating their ideas in the following tasks.

**Pre-task 2 (appendixes 2 and 3)**

This is a prelude to the main task and it has two parts. First, draw the students’ attention to the picture of a girl (appendix 2). Explain that this girl (Karen) is an exchange student studying in Canada. She is having some problems with her current apartment. Ask the students to look at the picture and discuss with a partner what those problems might be. This should only take a couple of minutes.

Next, get the students to read the information about Karen’s apartment (appendix 3). Tell them to circle all of the bad things about the apartment, and underline all of the good things. This will give them a chance to check whether their previous guesses were correct, but more importantly get them thinking more about the good points and bad points about the apartment. After about five minutes, I ask the students for their answers. No need to write them on the board this time.

**Main task (appendix 4)**

This is an opinion-gap task using shared information. From my experience shared information limits the amount of unpredictable language that might occur, which should make it easier for the students to understand one another. This task is separated into three parts; a verbal planning stage; a main speaking task, and a final presentation of results. Before setting the students to work, explain that Karen (the girl from before) is looking for a new apartment, but she needs some help. Direct the students attention to the apartment information (appendix 4).

In pairs the students will have to take note of the good points and bad points of each apartment. This can be done verbally or with a pen and paper. Personally I prefer no pen and paper, but it might benefit lower level students to have notes to refer to later. Before the students get to work, elicit an advantage and disadvantage for the first apartment and write it on the board. This should make it very clear what is expected of the students. This first part of the main task takes some time (usually between 10-15 minutes). Encourage the students to express their ideas in English even if it’s not perfect. There is nothing wrong with “good points are apartment is big” or “disadvantage is
expensive”. After the allotted time is up, I then ask the students individually to make a note of which apartment they think is best and which apartment they think is worst for Karen.

With a new partner they will have to express their opinions and come to an agreement about which apartment is best and/or worst. This usually takes about five minutes. The reason I switch partners like this is to avoid students taking shortcuts to the eventual conclusion. It can be really frustrating when students do all the discussions in Japanese and focus all their attention on a script for the short presentation. Having already discussed all the points in English should give the students confidence to express these opinions in English to their new partner.

Finally, I choose a couple of groups to present their ideas to the class. Generally I prefer not to tell them they will have to present because I find their attention is focused on writing a script rather than talking to their partner. I also like to take a poll of everyone’s ideas (raise hands) so that all of the students feel like their discussion had some purpose or value.

**Post-task (appendix 5)**

I will provide a few examples of the type of post-task activity I have used before, but however you decide to focus the students’ attention should be based on the goals of your own course, or on resolving language issue that arose during the previous tasks.

One of the features that I encourage the students to focus on, both because it is useful, and I have seen them struggling, is the use of the conjunctions ‘and’ and ‘but’. Appendix 5 shows an example conversation I made up to draw attention to some of these target language features. It is not authentic, but I think it serves a good demonstrative purpose. The text shows a conversation between Karen and a realtor. Sometimes I ask the students to find all of the sentences using ‘but’ and ‘and’ write them on a piece of paper, and come up with rules for their usage. You would be surprised how taxing this can be for the students. Other times I highlight particular phrases and ask students how to say them in Japanese, or ask for an alternative word or phrase in English. I like to ensure that the students are aware that we often use ‘yes, and..’ and ‘yes, but…’ as interjections in conversation, to either add a supporting point, or add a contrasting point. I also like to draw attention to the use of phrases like ‘in addition’ ‘moreover’ and ‘however’, which students use far too often, but we seldom use in everyday conversation.

Another post-task activity I sometimes set for homework is writing a conversation script between themselves and Karen based on their conversations in class. This will require them to think of the phrases and vocabulary that they have used or picked-up in the class. Making a personal vocabulary
list of words that the students didn’t know at the start of the class is another useful activity. It all depends on your own teaching goals, and the needs of the students,

**Conclusion**

In my experience students always have a lot to say on this topic, especially university students who are often living away from home for the first time. It also provides opportunities to practice the four basic language skills, as well as vocabulary and grammar.

**About the author**

Charlie works full-time at a small university in northern Kyushu. He has a Masters degree in TESOL from the University of Birmingham. His academic interests include: TBLT; the motivating potential of peer modelling; and the use of authentic listening texts for language analysis activities.

If you have any feedback or questions about this lesson plan feel free to get in touch by email. (charliebell@med.uoeh-u.ac.jp)
Karen is an exchange student at Maple University, Canada. Look at the picture. What do you think are the problems with her current apartment?
Appendix 3: Pre-task 3

Read Karen’s description of her current apartment. Circle the bad things about her current apartment, and underline the good things. Did you guess the problems with her apartment correctly?

Hi, My name is Karen. I’m currently studying English at Maple University, in Canada. I really like my school, but I don’t like my apartment (X). The building is quite old, so it is really hot in the summer and super cold in the winter. My rent is cheap, which is great, but the heating and air-conditioning bills can be very expensive. My apartment is also fairly big, so I have lots of space to relax. However, it can be difficult to clean, and sometimes it gets a bit dirty. The best thing about my apartment is that it is near the university, but it is also next to a busy train line, so it can get quite noisy at times. I really want to move house!
Karen has decided to move house, and she wants your help choosing a new apartment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apartment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Bath/toilet</th>
<th>Floor</th>
<th>Size (m²)</th>
<th>Built Year</th>
<th>Rent ($/month)</th>
<th>Station Access</th>
<th>Parking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Station Square</strong></td>
<td>1K</td>
<td>combined</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>2 minute walk</td>
<td>available ($100/month)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breezy Place</strong></td>
<td>2LDK</td>
<td>separate</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>10 minutes by bus</td>
<td>available (free)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Halls</strong></td>
<td>1 room</td>
<td>shared</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>$260</td>
<td>10 minute walk</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newton Apartments</strong></td>
<td>1LDK</td>
<td>separate</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>15 mins (walk) 5 mins (bus)</td>
<td>unavailable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5: Post-task

Salesman So, this is the first of our apartments. What do you think?
Karen It looks nice. There’s lots of space, and it’s not too expensive either. It looks like it’s in a quiet area too, but I think it might be too far from the university. That could be a bit of a problem.
Salesman That’s true, but it does have parking, and it doesn’t cost any extra.
Karen Yeah, but I don’t have a car.
Salesman Ahh, I see. Okay, well how about this apartment? It’s much closer to the university.
Karen Wow! Only $260! That’s super cheap!
Salesman Yes, and it’s less than a five minute walk to the convenience store.
Karen But look! It’s really old, and it’s much smaller than the first apartment. And what’s this? A shared bathroom? No thank you!
Salesman Right, okay. Well this next one isn’t far from the university either.
Karen Okay, this looks better. It’s new, and it has two rooms. The bath and toilet are separate too. How much does it cost?
Salesman Well, this one is a bit more expensive that the others. The rent is $800 a month.
Karen Hmmm…I see. That is quite a lot.
Salesman Yes, but it is very modern, and very clean. It even has a dishwasher.
BOOK REVIEW:


Reviewed by Paul Leeming Kindai University

Task-Based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice is a comprehensive text covering all the major areas related to Task-based language teaching (TBLT). The book is split into five sections beginning with a general introduction to TBLT, and then covering both the theoretical and pedagogical backgrounds to TBLT, before considering studies that have attempted to investigate the efficacy of TBLT programmes. The final section deals with some of the common criticisms of TBLT, and finishes with questions and challenges that TBLT must face in order to move forward as an effective approach to language teaching.

The authors’ preface outlines the three major aims of the book which are to provide a “state-of-the art account” of TBLT, to compare TBLT with other more traditional approaches, and to deal with criticisms of TBLT. It is important for readers to note that the book is intended for a broad audience including researchers, postgraduates, students, and teachers, but that it is not a “how-to-do-it” book. The book should be considered an up-to-date review and description of the theory and practice of TBLT, but will not provide teachers with information on how to effectively implement TBLT in their own classroom, and is not full of examples of tasks that teachers can adapt and use [for this kind of book Willis and Willis (2007) is still an invaluable resource].

The first chapter of the book provides an up-to-date review of how TBLT started, and how it is used today, and forms a comprehensive introduction to TBLT in its own right. The next five chapters of the book are theoretical, and provide various perspectives on how TBLT can result in successful language acquisition. Chapter 2 covers the cognitive interactionist perspective, explaining how the focus on meaning during tasks allows incidental acquisition of language, but also how interaction can enable students to “notice the gap” between the language they know, and the language they need for the task. This noticing is a central element of TBLT. Chapter 3 deals with psycholinguistic perspectives and focuses primarily on two theories that have been used to account for task-based performance; the Limited Attentional Capacity approach proposed by Peter Skehan, and the Cognition Hypothesis proposed by Peter Robinson. Issues relating to the influence of task factors on performance are covered, and a framework for analysing language, (Complexity, Accuracy, Lexical Complexity, and Fluency) is also introduced and discussed in this section. Chapter 4 introduces sociocultural perspectives on TBLT, based on the work of Vygotsky. Concepts central
to sociocultural theory such as the zone of proximal development, private speech, languaging, and dynamic assessment are discussed in relation to TBLT. The next chapter, Chapter 5, considers psychological perspectives and is concerned with individual differences (ID) (both affective and cognitive) and TBLT. Cognitive IDs such as language aptitude and working memory are discussed, before covering affective variables such as motivation and anxiety. The authors claim that the amount of research in this area is limited, and suggest much more is needed, particularly in understanding how motivation may relate to TBLT. The final chapter in this section deals with educational perspectives, and discusses how TBLT relates to the general principles in education of learning by doing, and personal investment.

Part 3 of the book considers the pedagogy of TBLT, but is still very much focused on theory. Chapter 7 introduces task-based syllabus design, and presents syllabus design ideas from Mike Long, Peter Robinson, and Rod Ellis. Ellis argues for a modular syllabus that incorporates both tasks and more traditional grammar exercises, while Long and Robinson could be considered more purist from a TBLT perspective. The next chapter deals with methodology, and considers TBLT at the level of a lesson (or group of lessons), beginning with an explanation of the various options for pre-tasks, including planning and language focus, and then moving on to describe the main task and post task, and the potential for explicit focus on language during these stages. An example lesson including materials and lesson plan is provided at the end of this chapter, which may be useful for those less familiar with the approach. The final chapter in this section deals with perhaps the most difficult aspect of TBLT, assessment. It begins with a general introduction to testing, and then introduces Ability for Use as a concept by which to explore assessment in TBLT. After considering the issues with testing including task conditions, and interaction, it introduces a project from Hawai’i as a practical example of assessment within a TBLT framework.

The next section of the book deals with comparisons between TBLT and more traditional approaches to teaching. Chapter 10 looks at experimental studies that have tried to compare TBLT with other approaches, beginning by outlining how comparison studies should be designed. The authors conclude that studies comparing TBLT at the programme level are very limited, but argue that generally the research supports the use of TBLT over other approaches. The next chapter continues to evaluate TBLT, but using a more descriptive approach. TBLT implementation in places such as Hong Kong is considered, before a focus on micro-evaluations at the classroom level. The authors argue that evaluation studies provide useful information on what is effective in the implementation of TBLT, and also help teacher development.

The final section of the book, Moving Forward, is comparatively short. Chapter 12 focuses on a response to the common criticisms of TBLT, arguing that some show a misunderstanding of TBLT, while others are of more genuine concern. Real issues include what to include in a task-based course, and teachers’ and students’ negative views on TBLT. The final chapter of the book begins by
returning to questions presented in Chapter 1 about TBLT, and attempts to provide answers. It then moves on to challenges related to theory, research, and pedagogy that TBLT must overcome if it is to progress as a viable approach that is accepted by teachers.

There are many books available on TBLT from various experts in the field. Although all of these books have something to offer, if you are interested in an up-to-date, comprehensive review of all the major issues in TBLT, then this book is for you. While it may not provide guidance for specific classroom practice, it will certainly answer your questions about TBLT, and the comprehensive scope of the book means that it covers all the major areas. The book is written in a reasonably accessible style, and will be useful for anyone who has an interest in TBLT. Overall, an excellent addition to the literature.

References

BOOK REVIEW:

Using Tasks in Second Language Teaching: Practice in Diverse Contexts.
Lambert, C., Oliver, D. R. (2020)

Reviewed by Robert Remmerswaal Sojo University

This book is a collection of papers discussing the practice of Task-Based Learning Teaching (TBLT) in second language (L2) learner classrooms. It provides considerations and theoretical rationale for the choices made in numerous teaching contexts. This collaboration of 25 authors from around the globe was combined and edited by Lambert and Oliver. Craig Lambert is a well-established Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Curtin University, Australia. He has many high-level publications connected to linguistics and task-based learning. Rhonda Oliver is Head of the School of Education at Curtin University, is also widely published, and known for her work with young language learners. The stated purpose of the book is to capture the diversity of tasks by looking at issues, approaches, and observations on how tasks are used in teaching and research. Within the book, a task is defined as a “meaning-focused pedagogic tool that requires learners to employ their own resources to fill gaps in knowledge and arrive at communicative outcomes” (as quoted from Ellis et al., 2020).

The book is divided into three main parts: Issues in Using Tasks, Approaches to Using Tasks, and Research on Using Tasks. The references and research are current and represent a variety of teaching contexts that are often relevant to educators in Japan. The introduction provides a great description of TBLT and presents the history and rationale for using TBLT with language learners. Each section addresses different aspects of applying TBLT in the classroom and is informative for people new to the subject and those with experience.

The first section is made up of six chapters which introduce important considerations for teachers applying TBLT within an existing curriculum. Each chapter tackles a particular issue by providing an overview of the current literature and the choices the author(s) made in their teaching context. This begins with various frameworks that are typically utilized with TBLT. It continues by addressing the belief that tasks cannot be used with low proficiency learners, defining scales to classify these learners, and introducing guidelines for creating relevant tasks. The proceeding two chapters discuss guidelines for designing interactive tasks in the Asian EFL context and for teaching remotely. The last two chapters look at how to position tasks in the confines of neoliberal education environments and when tasks do not confine to cultural expectations of learning.

The second section is made up of five chapters that are focused on designing a curriculum around TBLT. Chapters discuss how to run a needs analysis, address institutional problems or resistance, and develop authentic tasks. Situations range from the American military, vocational
training, Ukrainian state schools, Brazilian elementary students, and a teacher training course in Mexico. Suggestions and feedback are gathered in different chapters, providing recommendations for teachers in similar situations.

Section three contains chapters focused on the effects of TBLT within various contexts. These include self-regulated learning, various forms of collaborating while communicating with L1, L2, or L3, perceptions of learning, the best way of choosing partners, and the ability of a teacher to create appropriate tasks. Of particular interest to educators in Japan may be task-based interactions and student perceptions in a Japanese EFL classroom. This chapter looks at how tasks can be used to facilitate interaction between Japanese and foreign university students.

Earlier chapters in this book tend to be applicable to a wider range of educators. Often the chapter will conclude with a particular situation and its outcome but begins with a very broad overview of considerations that are applicable to a wide range of teaching contexts. Many of the classroom contexts in these chapters were not directly relatable to my classroom of Japanese university students. However, the theory and rationale presented inspired ideas for my classroom and provided a great foundation from which I could expand those ideas.

The later chapters that make up the third section are much more focused on contexts. The relevance of each chapter is based on the interests and teaching environment of each individual reader. I found a few of them, such as partner selection, relevant for my classroom, whereas L3 learners was not of interest. The inclusion of this section is in line with the purpose of the book, as it includes observations of TBLT, but it is not necessarily a reason to purchase the book. Each chapter can act as a bonus if the reader relates to the context of that chapter.

For anyone with a research budget, I would highly recommend this book. It can be used for ideas, inspiration, and even defense or rationale of TBLT in your classroom. Even without a research budget, this book is a great foundation from which to begin introducing tasks in the classroom or to build on what you already use. It is important to note that the history and rationale of TBLT are explained in many other articles that can be freely accessed. Similarly, many of the ideas in this book are also published by these authors in various journals, though the specific context and amount of detail differs. While there are alternatives, having this book collates a wide range of TBLT literature and includes a vast number of references, making it a valuable resource.

This book meets its intended purpose of introducing issues, approaches, and observations on how tasks are used in teaching and research. However, this is a vast topic that continues to be explored by many educators, making the book far from complete. This book does a great job at giving a current snapshot of TBLT. For anyone planning to implement TBLT into their classroom, especially in a research-based way, this will save you time and effort when initially organizing your thoughts all the way to task implementation.