Part 1: A Task-based Approach: Online Resources for Teachers

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Introduction

Current Teaching as a Foreign Language (TEFL) theory and practice recognises that:

i. individual student beliefs and perceptions determine what is learnt in the language classroom; and

ii. students need to be fully involved in what happens there (so that beliefs and perceptions can be positively modified by experience).

Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) has grown out of a need to address these two facts, and aims to involve the learners at every level of the educational process, as they pass through comprehension, decision-making, implementation, preparation, rehearsal, performance and reflection. If carried out in the target language (English), these stages have the advantage of promoting authenticity and meaning, as students ‘use the language to learn the language.’ But even when students use the L1 (mother tongue), TBLL can be beneficial in encouraging learners to examine their learning needs, assess themselves, and become self-directed (autonomous). Through fostering confidence, motivation, and independence, TBLL offers a suitable format for the promotion of life-long learning skills.

As Willis (2004) points out, a number of crucial research findings changed the course of EFL language teaching pedagogy in the 20th century. These can be summarized as follows:

i. language learning, even in a classroom setting, seems to develop independently of instruction;

ii. learners acquire language according to their own inbuilt internal syllabus, regardless of the order in which they are exposed to particular structures and regardless of mother tongue influences;

iii. teaching does not and cannot determine the way that the learner’s language will develop (Skehan 1996);

iv. learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach (Allwright, 1984); and

v. learners do not first acquire language as a structural system and then learn how to use this system in communication, but rather actually discover the system itself in the process of learning how to communicate. (Ellis, 2003, p. 14) (Willis, 2004, pp. 5, 7)

The implications of such findings for the traditional teacher-centred classroom are no less than revolutionary, since they undermine the assumptions upon which the traditional “PPP”1 linear paradigm is based (c.f. Haberman, 2005, p. 50). In addition to these findings, psycho-linguistic and socio-linguistic research has shown that:

1 PPP: Presentation, Practice, Performance.
i. “motivation is one of the key issues in language learning and that skills to motivate learners are crucial for language teachers” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 1);
ii. collaboration is more effective than competition as a means of promoting effective learning (Kohn, 1992); and
iii. learners learn more in groups than individually, since cooperative social interaction “produces new, elaborate, advanced psychological processes that are unavailable to the organism working in isolation” (Vygotsky, 1989, p. 61).

These and other related findings gave rise, in the latter half of the 20th century, to the learner-centred approach to learning, in which (in its strong form) students discover the target language through self-directed, project-based group investigations. According to this perspective, language learning is “a process that requires opportunities for learners to participate in communication, where making meaning is primary. ‘Task’ is a tool for engaging learning in meaning-making and thereby for creating the conditions for language acquisition” (Ellis, 2003, p. 319).

Task-based learning
The task-based approach, cannot be used in a traditional, teacher-fronted context. Task-based learning is student centred, and has certain assumptions about teaching. These have been summarized by Williams & Burden (1997):

1. There is a difference between learning and education.
2. Learners learn what is meaningful to them.
3. Learners learn in ways that are meaningful to them.
4. Learners learn better if they feel in control of what they are learning.
5. Learning is closely linked to how people feel about themselves.
6. Learning takes place in a social context through interactions with other people.
7. What teachers do in the classroom will reflect their own beliefs and attitudes.
8. There is a significant role for the teacher as mediator in the language classroom.
9. Learning tasks represent an interface between teachers and learners.
10. Learning is influenced by the situation in which it occurs.

Characteristics of tasks
1. Meaning: When tasks are the means of learning, the target language takes on meaning. Students can see that the new language is a means of communication, and that they need to be able to transfer information and opinions in that language (teaching through communication: rather than for communication [c.f Prabhu, 1980, p. 164]).
2. Ownership: If students are allowed to see the task through all of its stages (task completion), without the teacher playing an interventionist role (explaining instructions that students can read for themselves and focusing on discrete learning points) they can achieve a valuable and motivating sense of fulfilment and heightened self-confidence that comes from understanding, performing, and reflecting on the activity by themselves.
3. Learning levels: Learners take in content matter (input) that is appropriate to their current stage. If everyone is taught the same thing at the same time, this content will usually be suitable for only a minority of students. If they are allowed to progress through tasks at their own rate, however, students can concentrate on aspects that are suitable for their learning level.
4. **Assessment:** Evaluation usually helps the teacher to give grades. Assessment should tell the students how they are progressing, so that their learning be informed by feedback. Tasks give students such information, focusing on outcome, showing them their learning needs, and helping them to evaluate their communicative competence.

5. **Error-correction:** Teacher-based error-correction can be harmful to motivation and self-confidence, and ineffective for the whole class of students. If students are problem-solving in groups, however, errors in communication become evident to the whole group (peer-correction), and the teacher (functioning as a language resource) can be asked to supply the necessary language, giving “the right information to the right people at the right time.”

**How can we use tasks?**
A number of writers (e.g. Skehan 1998; Skehan and Foster 1997) have commented on the need for a structured sequence of tasks in the classroom. Candlin (1987) offers a checklist of considerations:

- One-way tasks should come before two-way tasks;
- Static tasks should come before dynamic ones;
- “Present time” tasks should come before ones using the past or the future;
- Easy tasks should come before difficult tasks;
- Simple tasks (only one step) should come before complex tasks (many steps).

Table 1: Task-types and activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Types</th>
<th>Static (One-way)</th>
<th>Dynamic (Two-way)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery tasks</td>
<td>- word searches</td>
<td>- dictionary activity (pair/group)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- internet-based language puzzles</td>
<td>- language trivia games/puzzles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- matching activities</td>
<td>- group matching games (cards)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience tasks</td>
<td>- memory games</td>
<td>- brainstorming</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- review activities (one-way)</td>
<td>- review activities (two-way)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- simple lexis activities (grammar, vocabulary)</td>
<td>- basic interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- questionnaires (one-way)</td>
<td>- questionnaires (two-way)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- storytelling</td>
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<td>Guided tasks</td>
<td>- using classroom English</td>
<td>- discovery activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- structural activities (drills)</td>
<td>- group project-work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- comprehension activities</td>
<td>- dramas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- dictation activities</td>
<td>- role-plays</td>
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<td>Shared tasks</td>
<td>- pair-work (information gap, information transfer)</td>
<td>- pair-work (e.g. interviews)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- group-work (information gap, information transfer)</td>
<td>- group-work (e.g. discussions)</td>
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<td>- tasks about class members</td>
<td>- jigsaw activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- simple dialogs</td>
<td>- surveys</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- language games</td>
<td>- pyramid activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent tasks</td>
<td>- homework</td>
<td>- role-plays &amp; simulations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- self-study (books, internet)</td>
<td>- error-correction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- self-assessment</td>
<td>- peer-assessment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- independent projects</td>
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<td>- writing to an email pal</td>
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Using tasks in the lesson

Willis (1996) offers five principles for the implementation of a task-based approach. These provide input, use, and reflection on the input and use:

1. There should be exposure to worthwhile and authentic language.
2. There should be use of language.
3. Tasks should motivate learners to engage in language use.
4. There should be a focus on language at some points in a task cycle.
5. The focus on language should be more and less prominent at different times.

Skehan (1996, p. 38) also proposes five principles for task-based instruction:

1. Choose a range of target structures;
2. Choose tasks which create appropriate conditions for learning;
3. Select and sequence tasks to achieve balanced development. (i at an appropriate level of difficulty”; ii focused between fluency, accuracy, and complexity”;
4. Maximise the chances of a focus on form in the context of meaningful language use.

Method

The rest of the presentation will examine how a series of tasks can be constructed for use in the EFL classroom, using the criteria we have seen so far. These tasks will be structured in a given manner (in terms of difficulty), and will focus on form in addition to interaction.

The sequence of tasks shown in the presentation can be viewed (and downloaded) from: http://www.finchpark.com/books/. The videos shown in this presentation can be viewed at: http://www.finchpark.com/videos/.

Reflection

It is important to remember that TBLT is an approach rather than a method. It assumes that the teacher respects the students as individuals and wants them to succeed. It also acknowledges that motivation, attitudes to learning, student beliefs, language anxiety, and preferred learning styles, have more effect on learning than materials, or methods. We therefore need to take these into account in our classrooms, taking advantage of the opportunity TBLT gives us to promote a student-centred learning environment. Teacher-centred controls, threats, rewards and restrictions are not an effective means of stimulating learning, since no-one can be forced to learn.

If we can stimulate a need to learn, and a desire to learn, based on unconditional respect and mutual trust, and if we can make a facilitative learning environment, learning will take place in an enjoyable and motivational way.
Getting started

- Needs analysis (learning problems)
- Goals (How can I address the students’ needs?)
- Philosophy (What are my principles?)
- Task characteristics

i) Identify the learning problem

- Different learning styles
- Different levels of proficiency
- Different learning backgrounds
- Different beliefs and perceptions
- Different affect (anxiety, confidence, motivation attitudes to learning)
- Different multiple intelligences

Students
- Needs analyses
  - cognitive
  - affective
  - linguistic
  - Deficiency analyses
  - Self-assessment
  - ‘Can-do’ statements

Teachers
- Curriculum
- Syllabus
- Textbook
- Assessment
- Exams

Cognitive
- Problem-solving
- Critical Thinking
- Deduction, Inference
- Summarizing
- Creativity

Affective
- Confidence
- Motivation
- Attitudes
- Stress
- Low self-Esteem
- Emotional Management

Social (Interactive)
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal Responsibility
- Intrapersonal Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Sensitivity

Cultural
- Local Culture
- Target Culture
- World Cultures
- Diversity

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iii) Decide on the teaching philosophy

Philosophy
1. Teacher-centered
2. Student-centered
3. Learning-centered
4. Task-based
5. Lexical-based
6. Holistic

Method
1. Grammar translation
2. Form-focused instruction
3. Fluency first
4. Learning to learn
5. Reflection
6. Interaction

Levels of...
- communication,
- interaction,
- linguistic difficulty,
- text complexity,
- text density,
- expected outcomes,
- follow-up tasks.
Let's begin!

1: Young learners

- Comprehension of instructions
- Vocabulary
- Basic expressions
- Games
- Role plays
- Graphics
- Materials design criteria

2: Secondary learners

Teaching aims:
1. Satisfying textbook content and goals
2. Supplementing the textbook (performance activities, ongoing assessment, peer-correction, groupwork)
3. Making learning meaningful, relevant, exciting and motivating for all learners (multilevel)
4. Enhancing confidence through success
5. Providing appropriate learning opportunities at the appropriate time.

Resources
1. http://www.finchpark.com/books/
5. www.pearson.ch/LanguageTeaching/TeachersResources/

4: Problem solving


Graphics and software
1. Graphics:
   - http://images.google.com/
   - http://www.picssearch.com/
   - http://images.search.yahoo.com/
2. Image search engines: http://www.faganfinder.com/img/
5. DIY quizzes (Hot Potatoes): http://hotpot.uvic.ca/

The end
1. aef@knu.ac.kr
3. Thank you for your time!
4. Good luck with your teaching!
5. Good luck with your materials design!
References:
Part 2: Using Culture as Content in the Classroom

How would you feel?

Here are some awareness exercises. They are incidents in which you picture yourself interacting with somebody. That person’s behavior stimulates expectations within you about his or her intentions towards you, or causes you to make moral inferences about the person. Please choose a response to each situation from the lists. Then try to figure out what values guided your choice.

The Returning Athlete
You are the mayor of a small town. An athlete from your town took part in the Olympic Games. The athlete is due to return tomorrow, having obtained fourth place in an event. What sort of official welcome will you prepare for her?

1. None, because a fourth place is not worth anything. If only it had been a gold medal …
2. None. There is no protocol for officially receiving returning sports players or participants.
3. A grand one, because even if she did not win, she participated in the Olympic Games and that is a great achievement.
4. A grand one, because she is one of us and she has honored our town.
5. You will ask the city council for advice.

Train or Car?
You are a commuter. The car trip to work takes approximately one hour, the train ride approximately an hour and a half. Do you prefer to go by car or train?

1. By car, because if I travel by train, people will think I can’t afford a car.
2. By car, because it is faster.
3. By car, because it is private.
4. By car, because people in my position do not travel by public transport.
5. By train, because it is safer.
6. By train, because it allows me to get some work done when travelling.
7. By train, because I might meet interesting people.
8. By train, because it is better for the environment.
9. Either way is fine, whichever is cheaper in the long run.

A Virtual Contact
On the Web you have found the site of somebody you might want to start a business relationship with. How would you establish the first contact?

1. Write a formal, polite paper letter on your company’s letterhead.
2. Send an email, starting “Dear Mr. So-and-so” and ending “Kind regards, X”.
3. Send an email starting “My name is X and I have a proposal that might interest you” and ending with your first name.
4. Have your secretary arrange a phone call.
5. Call the person on the phone yourself.

The Shabby Guitar Player
You are in a restaurant having dinner with an acquaintance. A shabby man with a guitar comes to your table and offers to play. How do you feel about this?
1. This man is a beggar and should find a job.
2. This man is filthy and disgusting.
3. This man is to be pitied.
4. You do not know this man, and you have nothing to do with him.
5. Could be interesting. Maybe he plays well.
6. The waiter should remove this man.

A Meeting in the Street
You are walking along the street in a town that is not your own. The street is quiet. Somebody crosses the street and walks toward you. What do you think?
1. This person means to rob you.
2. This person means to ask for directions.
3. This person means to have a chat with you.
4. This person might invite you to dinner.
5. This person is going to tell you that you are not allowed to be here.
6. This person means to sell you something.

The Intruder
You are standing at a reception, engaged in conversation with another person you vaguely know. Suddenly a third person arrives and starts to talk to your conversation partner without seeming to notice you. What do you think?
1. This person must be a close friend of your conversation partner.
2. This person must be an absolute brute to push you aside in this manner.
3. Your conversation partner should ask the intruder to wait a moment.
4. This person must be a VIP (Very Important Person).
5. This person must be somebody with a very urgent matter to discuss.
6. Your conversation partner should introduce you to the newcomer.
7. Nothing.