

LESSON 1 COMMENTARY:

YOU HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO IT

This commentary goes with the plan for TB Lesson 1: Strict Parents.

It may be useful to have a printout of the lesson plan by you as you work through the commentary.

If you are a confident class teacher with a range of teaching techniques you can use those techniques to work successfully with task-based lessons. If you are a teacher in training these are the skills you are acquiring. Here we are going to offer a few guidelines on the structure of a task-based lesson with some notes on the teaching skills to be deployed.

Very often a teaching sequence aims to introduce the students to new grammatical forms and begins with some kind of *presentation*. The new form is highlighted for learners, with some demonstration or explanation as to how it is used. Then learners go on to *practise* the form under teacher control. Finally learners are given the opportunity to *produce* the newly acquired form in some kind of communicative activity. This procedure is often known as PPP – **P**resentation, **P**ractice and **P**roduction. It begins by working on language and goes on to activities in which learners use the language for themselves.

Some people have described task-based learning and teaching (TBLT) as ‘PPP upside down’. This is partly true. Task-based approaches focus much more on activities in which learners use the language for themselves – basically that is what we mean by a task. Usually these activities come very early in the teaching cycle, to be followed later by work on the language system. But we prefer to think of TBLT as ‘PPP the right way up’. We think there are good reasons for starting with tasks and studying language later. We will look at these reasons later. All we want to do here is look at a typical TBLT cycle and the teaching techniques associated with it. We want to show you if you are an experienced teacher you have all the skills you need for successful task-based lessons. And if you are a trainee teacher you are already acquiring those skills.

Print out a copy of *TB Lesson 1: Strict Parents*. Keep it by you as you look through the table below. If you go through the lesson plan it probably be familiar to you in many ways. It probably looks very like what is often described as a *skills lesson*. The main aim of a skills lesson is not to introduce new grammatical forms but to provide learners with practice in aspect of the language skills: speaking, listening, reading or writing. *TB Lesson 1* focuses mainly on speaking and listening. Here is a summary of the stages of that lesson together with a list of the teaching skills to be deployed:

<u>LESSON STAGES:</u>	<u>TEACHING SKILLS</u>
<p>Introduction</p> <p>Class discussion led by the teacher.</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The ability to communicate with learners appropriate language. Class management skills.</p>
<p>Student questionnaire</p> <p>Group discussion.</p> <p>You may need to adjust the difficulty of the task to the level of your students.</p>	<p>Student questionnaire</p> <p>Class management skills – organising group work. Monitoring and supporting group work.</p> <p>Assessing teaching materials and making them appropriate to your learners.</p>
<p>Discussion</p> <p>Group discussion.</p>	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Class management skills – organising group work. Monitoring and supporting group work.</p>
<p>Post-discussion</p> <p>Teacher led feedback.</p> <p>Teacher summary.</p>	<p>Post-discussion</p> <p>Class management. Orchestrating discussion. Motivational skills – providing positive feedback.</p> <p>Summarising skills. The ability to adapt language to learner needs.</p>
<p>Language Focus</p> <p>Learners highlight expressions of compulsion and permission.</p> <p>Gap-filling exercise.</p> <p>Recall exercises.</p>	<p>Language Focus</p> <p>Ability to explain and demonstrate semantic features.</p> <p>Ability to highlight and demonstrate relevant features of language structure.</p> <p>Ability to control level of difficulty. Motivational skills to encourage learners to attempt a difficult task.</p>
<p>Controlled practice</p> <p>Learners produce sentences based on target patterns.</p> <p>Patterns are repeated to facilitate retention and automatisation.</p>	<p>Controlled practice</p> <p>Ability to explain and demonstrate semantic features.</p> <p>Ability to highlight and demonstrate relevant features of language structure.</p> <p>Ability to control level of difficulty.</p> <p>Ability to organise and orchestrate controlled repetition.</p>

As you will see a wide range of teaching skills are deployed here. It is impossible to give an exhaustive list and it is impossible to predict all the problems and opportunities that will occur in a given lesson. But, if you are an experienced teacher, we hope you have seen enough here to convince you that you do have the teaching skills necessary for task-based teaching. And if you are new to teaching or a teacher in training, we hope you will see how the skills you are developing can fit together to make a task-based lesson.

You may also have with a number of questions you would like to ask. Here are just two of the frequently asked questions we get from those who are new to TBT, and also from those who have some experience of the approach:

- 1 How can learners do the task if they don't have the language for it?
- 2 Why withhold language study until the end of the cycle? Wouldn't it be easier just to give them the language they need?

We will begin look at these questions in the commentary on next week's lesson: **LESSON 2 COMMENTARY: MEANING BEFORE FORM.**

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU, SO PLEASE SEND US FEEDBACK AT

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If you'd like us to give you information about future lessons.

If you would like to request a particular type of lesson, one for beginners, for example, or one based on content teaching (CLIL).

If you have found this lesson useful and would like to find out more about TBLT.

If you have questions about TBLT you would like us to consider.

If you have good ideas for a task-based lesson that you would like to share with others.