

Adapting your Text Book for Task-based Teaching

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Even if your text-book doesn't contain many task-like activities, it is often possible to 'taskify' text-book materials and to 'tweak' instructions to promote opportunities for meaning-focused interaction. In this session we shall explore ways this can be done, taking into account time available, class size and students' needs.

Workshop summary

Task-based teaching is about creating opportunities for **meaningful language use**, in other words learners are not simply speaking or reading to practise a structure or a new set of lexis, or writing to display control of certain language items, but to communicate something worthwhile to others.

It involves making learners want to

- understand something they hear or read so that they can satisfy their curiosity or act on that information;
- interact (in spoken or written form) in order to achieve a specific goal.

It also involves enabling and encouraging them to use as much English as possible during this time.

Most text book units have some things in common: topics or themes; pictures, texts, grammar sections, practice exercises, lists of useful words, 'skill-building' sections.

Workshop participants, first as individuals and then in pairs, will be asked to think of a text-book unit they know and assess its 'communicative potential', i.e. which activities promote interaction that focuses primarily on meaning, (e.g. 'warm-up' questions introducing a topic or text) – these are the ones that could quite easily be 'taskified'; and which activities focus on form, practising specified language patterns or functions. And which are in between (e.g. role-plays?) that could be adapted and 'taskified'.

To illustrate some of these kinds of activities, sample pages from text books from a range of publishers will be shown. Together we will explore how:

- by simply adding a methodological stage, a 'warm-up' question can be made into a more effective task,
- by changing the order of text-book activities, a testing exercise can become a task-based activity,

- by 'tweaking' instructions for a speaking or writing task and making them more specific can enhance and enrich subsequent interaction, and take specific learner needs into account.

We will examine ways in which topics, pictures, texts, recordings, word lists etc can be used as a basis for tasks, and participants will discuss which text-book activities are best done more quickly, or prepared for homework, in order to make time for doing tasks in class.

By the end of the session, we shall have explored how activities in text-book units can be re-weighted to give a balance of meaning-focused and form-focused activities that is more akin to task-based teaching and more conducive to effective language learning.

Many of the suggestions in this workshop come from the teachers from around the world who contributed to '*Doing Task-based Teaching*' (Dave Willis and Jane Willis, OUP 2006.)