

## IATEFL Conference Harrogate 2006

### Adapting your Text Book for Task-based Teaching

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‘Few textbooks present material in a TBL cycle, but often it only takes a little tweaking (e.g. adding a goal, or changing the order of activities) to produce a TBL lesson. You don't have to create from scratch, nor do you have to look for ready-made TBL packages.’ James Hobbs (Japan).

#### Identifying tasks: not ‘Is this a task?’ but ‘How task-like is it?’

‘We can determine how task-like a given activity is by asking the following questions. The more confidently we can answer *yes* to each of these questions the more task-like the activity.

- a) Does the activity engage learners’ interest?
- b) Is there a primary focus on meaning?
- c) Is there an outcome?
- d) Is success judged in terms of outcome? Is completion a priority?
- e) Does the activity relate to real world activities?’

These criteria do not constitute ‘a watertight *definition* of what constitutes a task, but they will provide us with *guidelines for the design of activities* which are task-like in that they involve *real language use*.’ (Dave Willis & Jane Willis (in press, 2006) *Doing Task-based Teaching* OUP)

#### Seven types of task:

**do your text books have any of these types? Or similar activities?**

Listing, Ordering & Sorting (sequencing, ranking, classifying), Matching, Comparing, Problem solving, Sharing personal experiences, Projects and creative tasks?

#### Making time for tasks in class

Use **class time** for experience of **real language in use** that learners might not get outside class, especially **spontaneous spoken interaction**.

**Out of class:** some **text book activities** are best done at **learner’s own pace** – set these for homework, to be checked quickly at start of next lesson. Get learners to:

- prepare topic and task related vocabulary at home prior to the task
- do form-focused exercises (grammar, vocabulary) for homework
- do the listening / reading and follow up activities in their own time

Encourage **independent vocabulary learning**.

## **Adapt activities - four parameters you can adjust:**

### **1. Goal / outcome**

Make sure the **final goal / outcome** is clear to students; break it down into **stages** (with opportunities for exposure and output) so learners know (precisely) how to achieve it. Put in extra steps for a lower level class.

### **2. Pre-task preparation time**

Individual learners can think ahead how to do the task (strategic planning) and plan the language they need. This helps to stimulate engagement.

But sometimes let them do a task without preparation, spontaneously (different skills).

**3. Interaction patterns:** individuals, pairs, groups, whole class. Plus or minus **roles:** chairperson, spokesperson, secretary, editor, language advisor.

### **4. Post-task activities**

- planning and giving a report of the task
- reflecting & repeating the task with other partners
- comparing recordings of task done by others
- form focused study, noting useful words, phrases and patterns
- learners recording themselves summarising or repeating the task
- reflecting and evaluating on the process.

## **Task-based teaching with a text-book: some principles**

- Aim at richer interactions in class
- Use your text-books flexibly: bend them, 'taskify' them
- Explore what happens when you do this: get learner feed-back
- Collaborate with your colleagues.

For more on task-based learning see our website [www.daveandjane.demon.co.uk/ELT/](http://www.daveandjane.demon.co.uk/ELT/)

And finally - suggest a theme for my 2007 IATEFL session - on a slip of paper now - or by email to [janewillis@daveandjane.demon.co.uk](mailto:janewillis@daveandjane.demon.co.uk) Thank you! Jane Willis April 2006

**The text-books used to illustrate my talk were:** *Face2Face* Pre-intermediate, Chris Redston and Gillie Cunningham. 2005 CUP; *Natural English* Intermediate, Ruth Gairns and Stuart Redman. 2002 OUP; *Face2Face* Elementary, Chris Redston and Gillie Cunningham. 2005 CUP; *New Headway English Course* Beginners. Liz and John Soars. 2000 OUP; *Inside Out* Intermediate, Sue Kay and Vaughan Jones. 2000 Heinemann Macmillan; *New Cutting Edge* Elementary, Sarah Cunningham and Peter Moore with Frances Eales. 2005 Longman.

## **Further Reading on TBL and References**

### On how people learn languages (in and out of classrooms):

- Lightbown, P. and Spada N. (2004) *How Languages are Learned* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, J. (1995). Focus on form in communicative language teaching: Research Findings and the classroom teacher. *TESOL Journal*, 4(4),12-16.

### On applying and researching a TBL approach, designing tasks, making recordings, and exploring task-based interaction:

- Edwards, C. & J. Willis (eds) 2005. *Teachers Exploring Tasks in ELT*. Palgrave MacMillan. Prize winner - British Council ELT Innovations Awards 2006
- Willis, D. and Willis, J. (due Nov. 2006) *Doing Task-based Teaching* OUP
- Willis, J., & Willis, D. (1996). (Eds.). *Challenge and change in language teaching*. Oxford: Heinemann ELT.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Harlow, U.K. Longman Addison- Wesley.

## **Some books and articles about Task-based Learning**

- Bygate M. P. Skehan and M. Swain (eds) 2001. *Researching Pedagogic Tasks: Second language learning, teaching and testing*
- Ellis R. 2003. *Task-based Language Teaching and Learning*. Oxford, OUP
- Estaire S. and J. Zanon, 1994. *Planning Classwork: a task-based approach*. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann
- Foster P. 1996. 'Doing the task better: how planning time influences students' performance'. In Jane Willis & Dave Willis (eds) *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Heinemann pp17-30
- Leaver B.L. & J. Willis, (eds) 2004. *Task-based Instruction in Foreign Language Education: practices and programs*. Washington DC, Georgetown University Press. (See Chapter 1 for an overview of TBL perspectives and practices).
- Littlewood, 2004. 'The task-based approach: some questions and suggestions' in *ELT Journal Volume 58/4:319-326*. O U P
- Prabhu N.S. 1997 *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford University Press
- Ribe R.1997. *Tramas creativas y aprendizaje de lenguas: prototipos de tareas de tercera generacion* Universitat de Barcelona
- Skehan P. 1996. 'Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction'. In Jane Willis & Dave Willis (eds) *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Heinemann pp17-30
2002. 'A non-marginal role for tasks' in *ELT Journal Volume 56/3:289-295*Oxford University Press
- Willis D. 2003. *Rules, Patterns and Words: Grammar and Lexis in English Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press