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 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):


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

Willis, D. and Willis, J. (due Nov. 2006) Doing Task-based Teaching OUP

Some books and articles about Task-based Learning
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
Ribe R.1997. Tramas creativas y aprendizaje de lenguas: prototipos de tareas de tecera 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
Willis D. 2003. Rules, Patterns and Words: Grammar and Lexis in English Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press