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Task-based Learning in the Asian Context

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Foreword

Task-based Learning in the Asian Context

This set of papers started off as one section of the proceedings of the *2006 Asian EFL Journal Conference* held in Pusan, Korea in March but has rapidly developed into a collection of full academic papers on Task-based Learning in Asian contexts. Teachers, curriculum developers and researchers working in Asian contexts, and some of the world's top specialists on Task-based Learning, have all contributed their insights based on extensive experience of task-based learning. It is important to emphasize that task-based learning is not presented in this collection as an ideology, or indeed a "method" except in the very broadest sense of the term. As a coherent contextualized curriculum framework, it enables us to have meaningful and useful discussions that combine insights from extensive practical teaching experience, learning theories and practice-based research. When these three are combined, improved learning almost inevitably follows. A task-based framework can also help situate consideration of key issues relevant to all language teaching. One such issue is the relationship between focus on meaning and focus on form, a central concern of many of the papers in this collection. Arguably achieving the appropriate balance in this respect is the most important factor of successful implementation of task-based learning.

Most good studies start by defining their terms, and a study of “Task-based Learning” seems to require a definition of “task” as a priority. David Nunan provides us with a very useful starting focus for our collection of papers in this respect. Nunan reminds us of the important distinction between “analytical” and “synthetic” syllabus design, suggesting that in most Asian contexts the “synthetic” approach has tended to dominate. The implication is therefore that TBL proposes a challenging alternative.

Much of Nunan's discussion focuses on the definition of a "task". After reviewing key definitions from the TBL literature, he presents us with his own:

> "A task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end."

In many of these papers, Task-based Learning is not considered in isolation. Insights from TBL are linked to a wide range of discussions on subjects such as discourse and pragmatics, holism and holistic language use, using compulsory textbooks, content-based learning, learning and communication strategies and English as an International language. This is important because "Task-based Learning" is easily misrepresented as a new theory or as a limited "named method", with fixed procedures to follow, with the implication that it is then out of focus in our so-called post-method era.

Having presented on this topic several times recently, the reactions have always been interesting. Many teachers in the audience for whom it is a "new" idea suggest that is not so different from what they already do. Models of task-based cycles and the design of task-based units seem to help these teachers rationalize their approach by providing some kind of conceptual framework, helping them to organize and reflect in a focused way on the relationship between their classroom approach and language learning. This seems very rewarding and positive for all concerned. However, it also seems to be a common assumption at conferences that presenters teach in ideal classrooms and audiences don't. The very same teachers, and even during the same discussions, sometimes say that this "theory" is a nice idea but "will not work in my class". While there is an apparent contradiction, the common point of these two views is that presentations on TBL seem to oblige listeners to reflect on their daily practice. Teachers at least consider modifying their current practice, attempting to imagine how or even if an activity being presented will work in their own context. This kind of "reflection on daily practice" is also a useful starting definition of what we often mean by "theory" in EFL discussion and is a core value of the Asian EFL Journal.

In this respect it is interesting that our key note speaker, Rod Ellis, whom we might have expected to focus on the theory of TBL in relation to SLA theory, also made it clear that discussion of task-based learning needed to be directly and immediately related to classroom practice. A significant part of his presentation involved bringing local students on stage to perform a task and the performance of this task became the focus of the "theoretical" discussion. Ellis's paper, while firmly rooted in SLA theory, is eminently practical. The need to situate the use of tasks in some kind of coherent framework is a recurrent theme of the paper. It outlines a framework for planning "task-based" lessons. Teachers must first design the basic structure of the lesson, and then "the specific option(s) to be included in each phase of the lesson can be considered."

The issues raised in these papers often relate to notions of SLA that are significant and will need to be addressed in any language learning context regardless of the approach being used. One keynote speaker, Francis Mangubhai, did not directly address task-based learning at all, but every one of the eleven insights he discusses is also relevant to teachers who are critically examining TBL in order to improve classroom practice and to develop professionally as teachers and to set up conditions for improved classroom learning. It is also interesting that none of these papers about task-based learning is exclusively about task-based learning. Designing and using activities that we can define as "tasks" will never be a sufficient condition in itself to foster language learning, but the way activities are designed and used in particular contexts in relation to other pedagogical considerations will always be significant.

My own contribution on "Designing Holistic Units For Task-Based Learning" also attempts to situate the use of tasks within a broader conceptual context, the notion of "holism" being particularly appropriate to both task-based activities and to the way language is used from a discourse and pragmatic perspective. The paper illustrates how tasks can be integrated into larger units and beyond lesson boundaries, proposing and illustrating a "task-based unit" that extends over several lessons. This paper does not just reflect a temporary interest in TBL as the trend of the moment or as a passing conference theme interest. It is based on a long-term and large scales curriculum project developed with a team at Kochi University in Japan.

Another member of the Kochi team, Darren Lingley addresses the issue of "content-based" teaching in relation to TBL further underlining the fact that TBL is not to be used as an impervious "method" in a traditional sense. It is rather a resource that can cross-fertilize with other areas providing useful SLA concepts for curriculum decisions, a framework for course planning and useful techniques for delivering different types of activities. Again the issue of how and when to focus on form is addressed, this time in a content-based course dealing with different aspects of Canadian culture taught to intermediate-level university students. Having observed the course personally, I can add that this is another example of TBL theory being applied (with great success) to a highly practical course.

Dr. Meena Lochana and Dr. Gitoshree Deb of the Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University, in Oman return us to Bangalore in India, one of the homes of task-based language learning, where the medium of instruction is Kannada. Their research project is based on their concept of "whole language", a concept they outline in detail. They begin with the hypothesis that "task based teaching enhances the language proficiency of learners". As all teachers must, Lochana and Deb have to adapt to the realities of their situation, which in their case includes having to adapt to that traditional enemy of reflective teaching, the mandatory school textbook. The detailed report on their project implementation provides useful insights for other teachers attempting to apply principles of task-based learning in relation to notions of SLA such as input and focus on form. Lochana and Deb, in their textbook oriented system make it clear that they favour a major focus on meaning for the activities they describe.

In his report of preliminary research, "Researching the Influence of Target Language on Learner Task performance", Theron Muller considers the relationship between focus on meaning and focus on form from a slightly different perspective. He directly addresses the issue of supplying students with language before or during a pre-task: "suggested phrases from the textbook were introduced before the task, but students were encouraged to also use their own ideas in task completion." Muller's preliminary results seem to suggest that there can be some value in supplying language, but that the way this is done needs careful consideration, a result supported by several other papers in this collection

In his thought-provoking position paper, "Models, Norms and Goals for English as an International Language Pedagogy and Task based Language Teaching and Learning", Ahmet Acar, from Turkey, provides us with another reminder, from a more global viewpoint, that conceptualizing learning in relation to tasks is only one perspective that requires consideration in curriculum planning. His paper examines the theoretical assumptions and practices of task based language teaching and learning within the framework of English as an international language. He argues in favour of taking EIL competence and learners' purpose in learning the language as a point of reference. For Acar, while tasks are "valuable pedagogical tools", they need to be re-conceptualized within this broad global curriculum framework.

In his AEJ conference contribution, already published in our March issue, "EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching: With a Focus on Korean Secondary Classroom Practice", Jeon In-Jae addressed the important issue of EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching in a Korean secondary school context. His research findings indicate "that there exist some negative views on implementing TBLT with regard to its classroom practice". His paper makes useful suggestions aimed at helping teachers implement a TBLT curriculum more effectively.

We are also very pleased to be able to present a paper by Rebecca Oxford who was unable to attend our conference for personal reasons, but has set down her thinking on what would have been a keynote speech in great detail. She provides us with a very useful and comprehensive review of the field in her paper, "Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning: An Overview". One of the many highlights in this paper is the original and stimulating discussion of *possible* definitions of "task". This underlines the importance of the different focuses and meanings that can be assigned to "task", such as "a general activity or exercise for L2 learners", "an outcome-oriented L2 instructional segment", "a behavioral framework for research", or "a behavioral framework for classroom learning". The definition of "task" is a daunting task in itself and one that Oxford addresses with skill and vigour throughout her whole piece. She ends with a very useful checklist that addresses key issues such as "goals", "student diversity", criteria for sequencing tasks, focus on form, needs of "ordinary teachers", "global applications and cultural background. It will, of course, be no surprise to readers that Oxford also addresses the relationship between learning strategies and tasks in relation to the different roles that teachers and learners adopt at different stages of task-based instruction.

The Asian EFL Journal aims to publish papers from a wide range of cultural, geographical and educational perspectives. Our aim is not only to publish high-quality research but also to encourage different cultural "voices" and different styles of writing. We have often been fortunate to receive papers from leading international scholars but we also do our best to encourage and support younger scholars publishing for the first time in an International Journal and some of these have now become well-known names in Asia and beyond. Authors who publish online in AEJ have become used to receiving feedback from all over the globe. We would welcome responses to any of these papers and would be happy to review them for inclusion in future issues of the Asian EFL Journal.

Roger Nunn
Senior Associate Editor
Asian EFL Journal

Foreword to EFL-related articles (Articles 9-13)

The Pusan Asian EFL Journal conference in 2006 also offered the opportunity to several presenters from the region to introduce their recent work on Asian EFL-related themes which did not focus primarily on Task-based Learning. The following five articles represent a selection of such papers presented.

The first three papers have the common theme of writing at Japanese universities. The first of them by Mariko Eguchi and Keiichi Eguchi is a highly reflective account of the effect of an English newspaper project upon Japanese university students. A case study approach using questionnaires and classroom observation of the students 'on project' reveals how motivating such activities can be, yet also how the project was not perceived as having a strong influence upon their English language learning itself.

Dr. Benedict Lin's paper addresses the introduction of a genre-based approach to a writing program in a Japanese university. Based on Vygotsky's learning theories, the concept of a "Curriculum Cycle" is put forward as a means to implement such a program. The reflections by Lin give valuable insights into the issues surrounding not just writing programs, but also teaching EFL in a wider context.

Dr. Neil Heffernan's paper also looks at an academic writing program for Japanese university students with the purpose of preparation before overseas study. This program embraced the practicalities of teaching students how to structure assignments, conduct small-scale research and give oral presentations based on their completed work. Heffernan's paper offers some important advice to teachers in similar contexts wishing to introduce writing programs which have a long-term effect upon student writing strategies.

The next paper comes from Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson who puts forward a proposal for gaining a more macro picture of English teaching in Japan. This paper suggests that teacher knowledge can be effectively enhanced by tracing the Japanese history of ELT by interlinking it with non-ELT events both nationally and internationally. Globalization in its economic, political and philosophical forms is shown to have had an impact upon the status of English in various ways from the opening of Japan in the Meiji Era to the present day. Fujimoto-Adamson's tabulated representations of these influences can serve as useful reflective tools for Japan-based teachers.

Finally, Todd Vercoe offers advice from cognitive psychology to teachers in the wider Asian sphere about "the way Westerners and North-East Asians perceive and think about the world." This paper investigates L1 interference in L2 learning and can inform EFL practitioners about more effective ways to teach Asian students. Vercoe's study puts forward practical implications for teaching methodology by applying the work of Nisbett to Asian EFL.

Also, in our recently introduced Book Review section, Kevin Landry offers a positive recommendation of *Top Notch 1: English for Today's World*, the second of the Longman-Pearson six-level ELT course book series.

We hope you enjoy reading these Asian EFL-related papers from the Pusan conference.

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2006 Conference Proceedings Editor
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Task-based Language Teaching in the Asia Context: Defining 'Task'

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Professor David Nunan is Director of the English Centre and Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong. He has worked as an ESL/EFL teacher, researcher, curriculum developer, and materials writer in many parts of the world, including Australia, Oman, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and the UK.

Professor Nunan has published books on language teaching curriculum development, discourse analysis, second language teacher education, language teaching methodology, and research methods in applied linguistics.

Dr. Nunan is on the Advisory Board of the *Asian EFL Journal*

In this short paper, I would like to set out some basic principles of task-based language teaching in the Asia context. In 1976, the British applied linguist David Wilkins suggested a basic distinction between what he called 'synthetic approaches' to syllabus design and 'analytical' approaches. All syllabuses, he suggested, fitted one or other of these approaches.

In 'synthetic' approaches,

> Different parts of the language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up. (Wilkins, 1976, p. 2)

Such approaches represent the 'traditional' way of organizing the syllabus, and reflect the common-sense belief that the central role of instruction is to simplify the learning challenge for the student. One way to simplify learning is to break the content down into its constituent parts, and introduce each part separately and step-by-step. A related concept that was popular in the 1960s was that of mastery learning. Having broken the subject matter down and sequenced it from easy to difficult, each item of content was introduced to the learner in a serial fashion, and a new item was not supposed to be introduced until the current item had been thoroughly mastered (thus the label 'mastery learning').

The dominant approach to language teaching in Asia (and, indeed, most of the rest of the world), has been, and remains, a synthetic one. Teachers who have learned their own languages through a synthetic approach, and see this as the normal and logical way of learning language.

In his book *Notional Syllabuses*, however, Wilkins offered an alternative to synthetic approaches. These are known as 'analytical' approaches because the learner is presented with holistic 'chunks' of language and is required to analyze them, or break them down into their constituent parts.

> Prior analysis of the total language system into a set of discrete pieces of language that is a necessary precondition for the adoption of a synthetic approach is largely superfluous. … [Such approaches] are organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language that are necessary to meet these purposes. (Wilkins, 1976, p. 13)

All syllabus proposals that do not depend on a prior analysis of the language belong to this second category. In addition to task-based syllabuses, we have project-based, content-based, thematic, and text-based syllabuses. Despite their differences, they all have one thing in common – they do not rely on prior analysis of the language into its discrete points. Task-based language teaching, then, grew out of this alternative approach to language pedagogy.

Since then, the concept of 'task' has become an important element in syllabus design, classroom teaching and learner assessment, although teachers brought up in tradition methods still struggle with the concept. It underpins several significant research agendas, and it has influenced educational policy-making in both ESL and EFL settings.

Pedagogically, task-based language teaching has strengthened the following principles and practices.

- A needs-based approach to content selection
- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself.
- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
- The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom.

Tasks have been defined in various ways. Nunan (2004) draws a basic distinction between real-world or target tasks, and pedagogical tasks. Target tasks, as the name implies, refer to uses of language in the world beyond the classroom. Pedagogical tasks are those that occur in the classroom.

Long (1985, p. 89) frames his approach to task-based language teaching in terms of target tasks, arguing that a task is

> a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, talking a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between.

The first thing to notice about this definition is that it is non-technical and non-linguistic. It describes the sorts of things that the person-in-the-street would say if asked what they were doing. (In the same way as learners, if asked why they are attending a Spanish course, are more likely to say, "So I can make hotel reservations and buy food when I'm in Mexico", than "So I can master the subjunctive.") Related to this is the notion that in contrast with most classroom language exercises, tasks have a non-linguistic outcome. Non-linguistic outcomes from Long's list above might include a painted fence, possession, however temporary, of a book, a driver's licence, a room in a hotel etc. Another thing to notice is that some of the examples provided may not involve language use at all (it is possible to paint a fence without talking). Finally, individual tasks may be part of a larger sequence of tasks, for example, the task of weighing a patient may be a sub-component of the task 'giving a medical examination'.

When they are transformed from the real world to the classroom, tasks become pedagogical in nature. Here is a definition of a pedagogical task.

> …an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command may be referred to as tasks. Tasks may or may not involve the production of language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative … since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake. (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1986, p. 289).

In this definition, we can see that the authors take a pedagogical perspective. Tasks are defined in terms of what the learners will do in class rather than in the world outside the classroom. They also emphasize the importance of having a non-language outcome.

Here is another definition of a pedagogical task.

> …any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a

> range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of workplans which have the overall purposes of facilitating language learning – from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making. (Breen, 1987, p. 23)

This definition is very broad, implying as it does, that just about anything the learner does in the classroom qualifies as a task. It could, in fact, be used to justify any procedure at all as 'task-based', and, as such, is not particularly helpful. More circumscribed is the following from Willis (1996), cited in Willis and Willis (2001). A classroom undertaking "…where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome". Here the notion of meaning is subsumed in 'outcome'. Language in a communicative task is seen as bringing about an outcome through the exchange of meanings. (p. 173).

Skehan (1998), drawing on a number of other writers, puts forward five key characteristics of a task.

- meaning is primary
- learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate
- there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities
- task completion has some priority
- the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.

(See, also, Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001, who argue that the way we define a task will depend to a certain extent on the purposes to which task are used.)

Finally, in a recent book that looks at 'task' more from a language acquisition perspective than a pedagogical one (although it does also deal with aspects of pedagogy), Ellis (2003, p. 16) defines task in the following way:

> A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the

> design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills and also various cognitive processes.

My own definition is that a task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end.

While these definitions vary somewhat, they all emphasize the fact that tasks involve communicative language use in which the user's attention is focused on meaning rather than grammatical form. This does not mean that form is not important. My own definition refers to the deployment of grammatical knowledge to express meaning, highlighting the fact that meaning and form are highly interrelated, and that grammar exists to enable the language user to express different communicative meanings. However, as Willis and Willis (2001) point out, tasks differ from grammatical exercises in that learners are free to use a range of language structures to achieve task outcomes – the forms are not specified in advance.

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The Methodology of Task-Based Teaching

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to consider methodological procedures for teaching tasks. These are of two basic kinds. Firstly, there are those procedures relating to how the tasks specified in a task-based syllabus can be converted into actual lessons. Secondly, there are procedures relating to how the teacher and learners are to participate in the lessons. This paper will address only the first of these.

The design of a task-based lesson involves consideration of the stages or components of a lesson that has a task as its principal component. Various designs have been proposed (e.g. Estaire and Zanon, 1994; Lee 2000; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). However they all have in common three principal phases, which are shown in Figure 1. These phases reflect the chronology of a task-based lesson. Thus, the first phase is 'pre-task' and concerns the various activities that teachers and students can undertake before they start the task, such as whether students are given time to plan the performance of the task. The second phase, the 'during task' phase, centres around the task itself and affords various instructional options, including whether students are required to operate under time-pressure or not. The final phase is 'post-task' and involves procedures for following-up on the task performance. Only the 'during task' phase is obligatory in task-based teaching. Thus, minimally, a task-based lesson consists of the students just performing a task. Options selected from the 'pre-task' or 'post-task' phases are non-obligatory but, as we will see, can serve a crucial role in ensuring that the task performance is maximally effective for language development.

Phase	Examples of options
A. Pre-task	* Framing the activity (e.g. establishing the outcome of the task) * Planning time * Doing a similar task
B. During task	* Time pressure * Number of participants
C. Post-task	* Learner report * Consciousness-raising * Repeat task

Figure 1: A framework for designing task-based lessons

Access to a clear framework for a task-based lesson is of obvious advantage to both teachers and learners. Richards (1996) shows how many experienced teachers adhere to a maxim of planning ('Plan your teaching and try to follow your plan') while Numrich (1996) reports on how novice teachers feel the 'need to be creative and varied in teaching'. A framework such as the one outlined in Figure 1 caters to both needs. It provides a clear structure for a lesson and it also allows for creativity and variety in the choice of options in each phase.

The pre-task phase

The purpose of the pre-task phase is to prepare students to perform the task in ways that will promote acquisition. Lee (2000) describes the importance of 'framing' the task to be performed and suggests that one way of doing this is to provide an advance organizer of what the students will be required to do and the nature of the outcome they will arrive at. Dornyei (2001) emphasizes the importance of presenting a task in a way that motivates learners. Like Lee, he sees value in explaining the purpose and utility of the task. This may be especially important for learners from traditional 'studial' classrooms; they may need to be convinced of the value of a more 'experiential' approach. Dornyei also suggests that task preparation should involve strategies for whetting students' appetites to perform the task (e.g. by asking them to guess what the task will involve) and for helping them to perform the task. Strategies in this latter category are discussed below.

Skehan (1996) refers to two broad alternatives available to the teacher during the pre-task phase:

> an emphasis on the general cognitive demands of the task, and/or an emphasis on linguistic factors. Attentional capacity is limited, and it is needed to respond to both linguistic and cognitive demands … then engaging in activities which reduce cognitive load will release attentional capacity for thelearner to concentrate more on linguistic factors. (p. 25).

These alternatives can be tackled procedurally in one of four ways; (1) supporting learners in performing a task similar to the task they will perform in the during-task phase of the lesson, (2) asking students to observe a model of how to perform the task, (3) engaging learners in non-task activities designed to prepare them to perform the task or (4) strategic planning of the main task performance. We will consider each in some detail.

Performing a similar task

The use of a 'pre-task' was a key feature of the Communicational Teaching Project (Prabhu, 1987). It was carried out as a whole-class activity with the teacher and involved the learners in completing a task of the same kind as and with similar content to the main task. Thus, it served as a preparation for performing the main task individually. For example, if the main task involved working out a class timetable from the timetables of individual teachers, then the pre-task would be the same but with different information in the teachers' timetables.

Prabhu explains that the pre-task was conducted through interaction of the question-and-answer type. The teacher was expected to lead the class step-by-step to the expected outcome, to break down a step into smaller steps if the learners encountered difficulty and to offer one of more parallels to a step in the reasoning process to ensure that mixed ability learners could understand what was required. The teacher was provided with a lesson plan that included (1) the pre-task and (2) a set of graded questions or instructions together with parallel questions to be used as needed. When implemented in the classroom, the plan results in a 'pedagogic dialogue'. Prabhu emphasises that the pre-task was not a 'demonstration' but 'a task in its own right'. It is clear from this account that the 'pre-task' serves as a mediational tool for the kind of 'instructional conversation' that sociocultural theorists advocate. The teacher, as an expert, uses the pre-task to scaffold learners' performance of the task with the expectancy that this 'other-regulation' facilitates the 'self-regulation' learners will need to perform the main task on their own.

Providing a model

An alternative is to ask the students to observe a model of how the task can be performed without requiring them to undertake a trial performance of the task (see Aston (1982) for an early example of such an approach). Minimally this involves presenting them with a text (oral or written) to demonstrate an 'ideal' performance of the task. Both Skehan (1996) and Willis (1996) suggest than simply 'observing' others perform a task can help reduce the cognitive load on the learner. However, the model can also be accompanied by activities designed to raise learners' consciousness about specific features of the task performance – for example, the strategies that can be employed to overcome communication problems, the conversational gambits for holding the floor during a discussion or the pragmalinguistic devices for performing key language functions. Such activities might require the learners to identify and analyze these features in the model texts. Alternatively, they might involve pre-training in the use of specific strategies. Nunan (1989) lists a number of learning strategies (e.g. ‘Learning to live with uncertainty’ and ‘Learning to make intelligent guesses’) that students can be taught to help them become ‘adaptable, creative, inventive and above all independent’ (p. 81) and thus more effective performers of a task. However, the effectiveness of such strategy training remains to be convincingly demonstrated.

Non-task preparation activities

There are a variety of non-task preparation activities that teachers can choose from. These can centre on reducing the cognitive or the linguistic demands placed on the learner. Activating learners’ content schemata or providing them with background information serves as a means of defining the topic area of a task. Willis (1996) provides a list of activities for achieving this (e.g. brainstorming and mind-maps). When learners know what they are going to talk or write about they have more processing space available for formulating the language needed to express their ideas with the result that the quantity of the output will be enhanced and also fluency and complexity. Recommended activities for addressing the linguistic demands of a task often focus on vocabulary rather than grammar, perhaps because vocabulary is seen as more helpful for the successful performance of a task than grammar. Newton (2001) suggests three ways in which teachers can target unfamiliar vocabulary in the pre-task phase; predicting (i.e. asking learners to brainstorm a list of words related to the task title or topic), cooperative dictionary search (i.e. allocating different learners words to look up in their dictionary), and words and definitions (i.e. learners match a list of words to their definitions). Newton argues that such activities will ‘prevent the struggle with new words overtaking other important goals such as fluency or content-learning’ when learners perform the task. However, there is always the danger that pre-teaching vocabulary will result in learners treating the task as an opportunity to practise pre-selected words. In the case of task-supported teaching this can be seen as desirable but in the case of task-based teaching it can threaten the integrity of the task.

Strategic planning

Finally, learners can be given time to plan how they will perform the task. This involves 'strategic planning' and contrasts with the 'online planning' that can occur during the performance of the task. It can be distinguished from other pre-task options in that it does not involve students in a trial performance of the task or in observing a model. However, it may involve the provision of linguistic forms/strategies for performing the task but a distinction can still be drawn between the non-task preparation procedures described above and strategic planning, as the former occur without the students having access to the task they will be asked to perform while strategic planning involves the students considering the forms they will need to execute the task workplan they have been given.

There are a number of methodological options available to teachers who opt for strategic planning. The first concerns whether the students are simply given the task workplan and left to decide for themselves what to plan, which typically results in priority being given to content over form, or whether they are given guidance in what to plan. In the case of the latter option, the guidance may focus learners' attention on form or content or, as in Sangarun's (2001) study, form and content together. Skehan (1996) suggests that learners need to be made explicitly aware of where they are focussing their attention – whether on fluency, complexity or accuracy. These planning options are illustrated in Figure 2. Here the context is a task involving a balloon debate (i.e. deciding who should be ejected from a balloon to keep it afloat). The guidance can also be 'detailed' or 'undetailed' (Foster and Skehan, 1996). The examples in Figure 2 are of the undetailed kind. Skehan (1998) gives an example of detailed planning for a personal task involving asking someone to go to your house to turn off the oven that you have left on. This involved instructions relating to planning content (e.g. 'think about what problems your listener could have and how you might help her') and language (e.g. 'think what grammar you need to do the task'). These options do not just provide for variety in planning activities; they also enable the teacher to channel the learners' attention onto different aspects of language use. For example, Foster and Skehan (1996) found that when students were given detailed guidance they tended to prioritise content with resulting gains in complexity when they performed the task.

Strategic planning options	Description
1. No planning	The students were introduced to the idea of a balloon debate, assigned roles and then asked to debate who should be sacrificed.
2. Guided planning – language focus	The students were introduced to the idea of a balloon debate and then shown how to use modal verbs and conditionals in the reasons a doctor might give for not being thrown out of the balloon (e.g. 'I take care of many sick people – If you throw me out, many people might die.'
3. Guided planning – content focus	The students were introduced the idea of a balloon debate. The teacher presents ideas that each character might use to defend his or her right to stay in the balloon and students were encouraged to add ideas of their own.

Figure 2: Options for strategic planning (based on Foster and Skehan 1999).

Another option concerns the amount of time students are given to carry out the pre-task planning. Most of the research studies that have investigated this kind of planning have allocated between 1 and 10 minutes. An effect on fluency was evident with very short periods of planning in some studies but longer was needed for an effect on complexity (Skehan, 1998 suggests 10 minutes is optimal). Finally, planning can be carried out individually, in groups, or with the teacher.

Summary and final comment

In these four ways, teachers can help to create conditions that will make tasks work for acquisition. As Skehan (1998) points out, they serve to introduce new language that the learners can use while performing the task, to mobilize existing linguistic resources, to ease processing load and to push learners to interpret tasks in more demanding ways. However, it is not yet possible to 'fine tune' learners' performance of a task through selecting specific pre-task options. At best, all that the research to date has demonstrated is the likely effects of some of the procedures referred to above. Important questions remain unanswered. For example, we do not know whether task preparation that involves an actual performance of the task is more or less effective than preparation that involves just observation. Nor is it clear to what extent linguistic priming subverts the 'naturalness' of a task resulting in teaching of the present-practice-produce (PPP) kind. Only in the case of strategic planning do we have some idea of how the different options affect task performance.

The during-task phase

The methodological options available to the teacher in the during-task phase are of two basic kinds. First, there are various options relating to how the task is to be undertaken that can be selected prior to the actual performance of the task and thus planned for by the teacher. These will be called 'task-performance options'. Second, there are a number of 'process options' that involve the teacher and students in on-line decision making about how to perform the task as it is being completed.

Task performance options

We will consider three task performance options that have figured in the research to date. The first of these options concerns whether to require the students to perform the task under time pressure. The teacher can elect to allow students to complete the task in their own time or can set a time limit. Lee (2000) strongly recommends that teachers set strict time limits. This option is important because it can influence the nature of the language that students' produce. Yuan and Ellis (2002) found that giving students unlimited time to perform a narrative task resulted in language that was both more complex and more accurate in comparison to a control group that was asked to perform the same task under time pressure. The students used the time at their disposal to monitor and reformulate their utterances. Interestingly, the opportunity to plan on-line produced a different effect from the opportunity to engage in strategic planning, which led to greater fluency and complexity of language. It seems, then, that if teachers want to emphasize accuracy in a task performance, they need to ensure that the students can complete the task in their own time. However, if they want to encourage fluency they need to set a time limit.

The second task performance option involves deciding whether to allow the students access to the input data while they perform a task. In some tasks access to the input data is built into the design of a task (e.g. in Spot the Difference, Describe and Draw, or many information gap tasks). However, in other tasks it is optional. For example, in a story retelling/recall task the students can be permitted to keep the pictures/ text or be asked to put them on one side as they narrate the story. This can influence the complexity of the task, as tasks that are supported by pictures and texts are easier than tasks that are not. Joe (1998) reports a study that compared learners' acquisition of a set of target words (which they did not know prior to performing the task) in a narrative recall task under two conditions – with and without access to the text. She found that the learners who could see the text used the target words more frequently, although the difference was evident only in verbatim use of the words not generated use (i.e. they did not use the target words in original sentences). Joe's study raises an important question. Does borrowing from the input data assist acquisition? The term 'borrowing' in this context comes from Prabhu (1987). He defines it as 'taking over an available verbal formulation in order to express some self-initiated meaning content, instead of generating the formulation from one's own competence' (p. 60). Prabhu distinguishes borrowing from 'reproduction' where the decision to 'take over' a sample of a language is not made by the learner but by some external authority (i.e. the teacher of the text book). Borrowing is compatible with task-based teaching but reproduction is not. Prabhu sees definite value in borrowing for maintaining a task-based activity and also probable value in promoting acquisition. Certainly, from the perspective of sociocultural theory, where learning occurs through 'participation', borrowing can be seen as contributing directly to acquisition.

The third task performance option consists of introducing some surprise element into the task. Skehan and Foster (1997) illustrate this option. They asked students to complete a decision-making task that required them to decide what punishment should be given to four criminals who had committed different crimes. At the beginning of the task they were given information about each criminal and the crime he/she had committed. Half way through the task the students were given further information of a surprising nature about each criminal. For example, the initial information provided about one of the criminals was as follows:

> The accused is a doctor. He gave an overdose (a very high quantity of a painkilling drug) to an 85-year-old woman because she was dying painfully of cancer. The doctor says that the woman had asked for an overdose. The woman's family accuse the doctor of murder.

After talking for five minutes, the students were given the following additional information:

> Later, it was discovered that seven other old people in the same hospital had died in asimilar way, through overdoses. The doctor refuses to say if he was involved.

However, this study failed to find that introducing such a surprise had any effect on the fluency, complexity or accuracy of the learners' language. This does not mean that this option is of no pedagogic value, as requiring learners to cope with a surprise serves as an obvious way of extending the time learners spend on a task and thus increases the amount of talk. It may also help to enhance students' intrinsic interest in a task.

Process options

Process options differ from task performance options in that they concern the way in which the discourse arising from the task is enacted rather than pedagogical decisions about the way the task is to be handled. Whereas performance options can be selected in advance of the actual performance of the task, process options must be taken in flight while the task is being performed.

The teacher's on-line decision about how to conduct the discourse of a task reflect his/her 'theory-in-use' (Schon, 1983) and 'practical knowledge' (Eraut, 1994). On the learners' part, they reflect the language learning beliefs (Horwitz, 1987) they bring to the classroom and, more particularly, to a specific task. How teachers and learners conduct a task will be influenced, to a large extent, by their prior experiences of teaching and learning and their personal definitions of the particular teaching-learning situation. Thus, the options described below are primarily descriptive, reflecting an internal rather than external perspective (Ellis, 1998) on the methodology of task-based teaching.

A common assumption of task-based teaching is that the texts, the discursive practices and the social practices of the classroom (Breen, 1998) that are constructed by and through a task resemble those found in non-pedagogic discourse. To achieve this, however, is no mean feat, especially if the teacher is directly involved in the performance of the task. As Breen points out, the 'texts' of lessons (i.e. the actual language produced by the participants) are typically teacher-centred with learners 'not actually required to do much overt or explicit discursive work' (p. 123), while the 'discursive practices' (i.e. the means by which the text are produced) 'construct learners as primarily responsive and seemingly fairly passive participants in the discourse' (p. 124) and the 'social practices' (i.e. the organisational and institutional circumstances that shape the texts and discursive practices) are directed at the avoidance of 'social trouble'. Task-based teaching, however, seeks the converse – texts that are learner-centred, discursive practices that encourage the learner to actively engage in shaping and controlling the discourse, and social practices that are centred on allowing and resolving social trouble. This poses a problem, which teachers need to address.

Figure 3 contrasts two sets of classroom processes. The first set corresponds to the classroom behaviours that are typical of a traditional form-focussed pedagogy where language is treated as an object and the students are required to act as 'learners'. The second set reflects the behaviours that characterize a task-based pedagogy, where language is treated as a tool for communicating and the teacher and students function primarily as 'language users' (Ellis, 2001). Thus, which set of behaviours arise is crucially dependent on the participants' orientation to the classroom and to their motives for performing an activity.

A **Traditional form-focussed pedagogy**	**B** **Task-based pedagogy**
Rigid discourse structure consisting of IRF (initiate-respond-feedback) exchanges	Loose discourse structure consisting of adjacency pairs
Teacher controls topic development	Students able to control topic development
Turn-taking is regulated by the teacher.	Turn-taking is regulated by the same rules that govern everyday conversation (i.e. speakers can self select).
Display questions (i.e. questions that the questioner already knows the answer)	Use of referential questions (i.e. questions that the questioner does not know the answer to)
Students are placed in a responding role and consequently perform a limited range of language functions.	Students function in both initiating and responding roles and thus perform a wide range of language functions (e.g. asking and giving information, agreeing and disagreeing, instructing).
Little need or opportunity to negotiate meaning.	Opportunities to negotiate meaning when communication problems arise
Scaffolding directed primarily at enabling students to produce correct sentences.	Scaffolding directed primarily at enabling students to say what they want to say.
Form-focussed feedback (i.e. the teacher responds implicitly or explicitly to the correctness of students' utterances)	Content-focussed feedback (i.e. the teacher responds to the message content of the students' utterances).
Echoing (i.e. the teacher repeats what a student has said for the benefit of the whole class)	Repetition (i.e. a student elects to repeat something another student or the teacher has said as private speech or to establish intersubjectivity).

Figure 3: Stereotypical classroom processes in traditional form-focussed pedagogy and task- based pedagogy

Two questions arise. The first concerns what the participants in a task need to do to ensure that the interactions they engage in manifest the processes described in column B in Figure 3. Implicit in this question is an acknowledgement of the importance of these processes for task-based instruction. The second question, however, challenges this assumption by asking whether in fact these processes are criterial of task-based pedagogy and whether, minimally, they need to be complemented by processes from column A.

It has often been pointed out (see, for example, Nunan, 1987) that the processes described in column B are a rarity even in classrooms where the teacher claims to be teaching communicatively. The main reason for this lies in the difficulty teachers and students have in achieving the required orientation. As Goffman (1981) has pointed out, classrooms are governed by an 'educational imperative' which dictates the kind of discourse that arises. It is for this reason that teachers and students find it difficult to consistently orient to language as a tool and to adopt the role of language users when they both know that the *raison-d'etre* for their being together is to teach and learn the language. In effect, task-based teaching calls for the classroom participants to forget where they are and why they are there and to act in the belief that they can learn the language indirectly through communicating in it rather than directly through studying it. This is asking a lot of them, especially if the social practices the participants bring to the classroom belong to a pedagogy of transmission rather than of interpretation (Barnes, 1976). It is probably easier to achieve when students are interacting among themselves, without the teacher being present, as the greater symmetry of social roles this affords leads naturally to the kinds of risk-taking behaviour required of a task-based pedagogy (Pica, 1987). This is one reason why pair and group work are seen as central to task-based teaching.

However, even when the participants in a task are oriented to treat language as a tool and to function as language users, the text of the task may disappoint, manifesting few of the characteristics facilitative of acquisition. Seedhouse (1999) has pointed out that the characteristics of task-based interaction do not always match those described in Figure 3. He illustrates how in some tasks the turn-taking system is conspicuously constrained, there is a tendency for students to rely on topic-comment constructions where verbal elements are omitted (a feature also noted in pidgins) and to produce highly indexicalised utterances. An even greater limitation in task-based interaction, according to Seedhouse, is the minimalization that characterizes some task-based interactions. This is illustrated in the extract below where the students were required to complete and label a geometric figure:

L1: What?
L2: Stop.
L3: Dot?
L4: Dot?
L5: Point?
L6: Dot?
LL: Point, point, yeh.
L1: Point?
L5: Small point.
L3: Dot
(From Lynch, 1989, p. 124; cited in Seedhouse, 1999).

Here all the utterances but one consist of a single word. Clearly, such interactions do not help the 'stretch' learners' interlanguages, one of the stated goals of task-based pedagogy (Nunan,1989). Seedhouse suggests that such limited interactions arise because 'learners appear to be so concentrated on completing the task that linguistic forms are treated as a vehicle of minor importance' (p. 154). In other words, the very nature of a task (i.e. the fact it is directed at accomplishing a specified outcome) may result in a restricted variety of communication.

Seedhouse overstates this limitation of tasks. First, it is possible to argue that the restricted nature of the talk shown in the extract above is well suited to the students' purpose. Second, the nature of the interaction depends crucially on the design characteristics of tasks and procedures for implementing them. Thus, richer varieties of communication characterized by more complex language use, are achievable if, for example, students are asked to perform open tasks with divergent goals and are given the opportunity to plan their performance before hand. Nevertheless, Seedhouse's critique needs to be addressed. Clearly, teachers need to monitor their students' performance of a task carefully, examining to what extent the processes described in Figure 3 arise and, crucially, whether the interactions manifest the minimalized and pidgin-like uses of language Seedhouse illustrates. The information obtained from such monitoring can be used to inform decisions about what tasks and procedures to use in subsequent tasks. In this way, teachers can build up a fund of experience of the task characteristics and methods of implementation that will ensure the kinds of interactions hypothesized to promote acquisition. Thus, the solution, to the problem Seedhouse identifies lies not in attempting to manipulate process options directly, which may well be impossible without imperilling the 'taskness' of the task, but through careful selection from the pre-task options and the performance options described above.

Where Seedhouse questions whether the kinds of behaviours shown in Figure 3 are achievable in task-based teaching, others have challenged whether they constitute appropriate goals for interaction in a classroom. Cullen (1998) has pointed out that the classroom context constitutes a communicative environment in its own right that is distinct from the communicative contexts of the world outside and on these grounds has challenged the basis for assessing the communicativeness of classroom discourse. In effect, then, Cullen disputes the assumption that underlies task-bask pedagogy - that classrooms need to replicate the kind of communicative behaviour found outside the classroom. He illustrates how 'what appears to be non-communicative teacher talk is not necessarily so in the classroom context' (p. 183) with an extract from an English lesson in Egypt. This interaction is teacher-led, is full of display questions, includes feedback that is form-focussed and contains a lot of echoing – all processes associated with a traditional form-focussed pedagogy. However, Cullen argues that in the context of the classroom, the interaction can be considered 'communicative' in that the entire sequence manifests a focus on message content, the teacher's questions are carefully structured, the feedback is clear and the use of echoing serves to ensure that the students' attention is not lost. He claims that the discourse is pedagogically effective because the teacher has successfully combined the role of ‘instructor’ and ‘interlocutor’. Arguably, this is what a task-based pedagogy needs to strive for. How might it be achieved?

One way is by incorporating a focus on form into the performance of the task. Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2001) report this can be achieved in either responding focus-on-form episodes, where one of the participants, usually the teacher, responds to a student utterance containing an error, or in initiating episodes, where either the teacher or a student elects to take time out from the exchange of message content to attend briefly to form, usually by means of a direct query about a specific form. Such attention to form differs from that arising in lessons of the traditional, focus-on-forms kind because, for, as Wilberg (1987) notes, ‘the content is dictated by the student, the form only by the teacher’ (p. 27). It also differs in another way. As Prabhu (1987) points out, correction during a task is ‘incidental’ rather than ‘systematic’ in nature. In incidental correction, only ‘tokens’ are addressed (i.e. there is no attempt to generalize the type of error), it is seen by the participants as ‘a part of getting on with the activity in hand, not as a separate objective’ (p. 63) and, crucially, it is transitory. Prabhu excludes preventive or pre-emptive attention to form but, as Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen’s study shows this too can be ‘incidental’.

Teachers can employ both implicit and explicit techniques to achieve this focus on form. These techniques can be used when some kind of communication problem arises (as occurs in the negotiation of meaning) or they can be used when the teacher chooses to abandon his/her role as a language user momentarily in order to function as an instructor (i.e. to negotiate form rather than meaning). Teachers can play a very direct role by initiating this negotiation but they can also intervene to support a process that students have started for themselves, a technique that involves ‘nudging’ the learners towards a solution. Teachers can also allow or even encourage students to use the same techniques themselves – for example, by accepting and responding to students’ queries about form.

Figure 4 describes some of the techniques that can be used by the task participants. Evidence from research (Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen, 2001) indicates that the use of these techniques, even when quite frequent, need not detract from the primary focus on message, which is the defining characteristic of a task. Thus, they serve as important process options for reconciling the roles of 'instructor/learner' on the one hand and 'interlocutor/language user' on the other. Furthermore, they potentially enhance the acquisitional value of a task by inducing noticing of linguistic forms that lie outside or at the edges of students' current interlanguages.

Type of Technique	Interactional device	Description
Implicit	1. Request for clarification	A task participant seeks clarification of something another participant has said, thus providing an opportunity for the first participant to reformulate.
	2. Recast	A task participant rephrases part or the whole of another participant's utterance.
Explicit	1. Explicit correction	A task participant draws explicit attention to another participant's deviant use of a linguistic form. (e.g. 'Not x but y.')
	2. Metalingual comment/question	A task participant uses metalanguage to draw attention to another participant's deviant use of a linguistic form (e.g. 'Past tense not present tense.')
	3. Query	A task participant asks a question about a specific linguistic form that has arisen in performing the task (e.g. Why is 'can' used here?).
	4. Advise	A task participant (usually the teacher) advises or warns about the use of a specific linguistic form (e.g. 'Remember you need to use past tense').

Figure 4: Implicit and explicit techniques for focussing on form during a task

To sum up, it is clear that process options cannot be prescribed. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify, in broad terms, the kinds of processes that the participants in a task performance need to strive for. These are:

1. Discourse that is essentially ‘conversational’ in nature (i.e. as described in column B of Figure 3). Such discourse can include ‘instructional conversations’.
2. Discourse that encourages the explicit formulation of messages.
3. Opportunities for students to take linguistic risks.
4. Occasions where the task participants focus implicitly and/or explicitly on specific linguistic forms.
5. Shared goals for the task.
6. Effective scaffolding of the participants’ efforts to communicate in the L2.

The post-task phase

The post-task phase affords a number of options. These have three major pedagogic goals; (1) to provide an opportunity for a repeat performance of the task, (2) to encourage reflection on how the task was performed, and (3) to encourage attention to form, in particular to those forms that proved problematic to the learners when they performed the task.

Repeat performance

Several studies (e.g. Bygate, 1996 and 2001; Lynch and Maclean, 2000) indicate that when learners repeat a task their production improves in a number of ways (e.g. complexity increases, propositions are expressed more clearly, and they become more fluent). A repeat performance can be carried out under the same conditions as the first performance (i.e. in small groups or individually) or the conditions can be changed. One interesting possibility examined by Skehan and Foster (1997) is that of requiring students to carry out the second performance publicly. As their study examined the ‘threat’ of such a requirement on learners’ initial performance of the task, it technically constituted a during-task option. However, if students are not told to repeat the task publicly until after they have completed the first performance, it becomes a post-task option. There has been no research comparing the learner production that results from a second performance carried out under 'private' conditions, as in the initial performance, and publicly. Clearly, performing a task in front of the class increases the communicative stress (Candlin, 1987) placed on the learner and thus can be predicted to lead to a reduction in fluency and complexity. However, it is not without value if students need experience in using English in front of an audience, as, for example, might be the case with foreign academics training to give oral presentations in the L2. Public performance is likely to encourage the use of a more formal style and thus may push learners to use the grammaticalised resources associated with this style.

Reflecting on the task

Willis (1996) recommends asking students to present a report on how they did the task and on what they decided or discovered. She considers this 'the natural conclusion of the task cycle' (p. 58). The teacher's role is to act as a chairperson and to encourage the students. The reports can be oral or written. Willis' examples make it clear that the reports should primarily focus on summarising the outcome of the task. However, it would also be possible to ask students to reflect on and evaluate their own performance of the task. For example, they could be invited to comment on which aspect of language use (fluency, complexity or accuracy) they gave primacy to and why, how they dealt with communication problems, both their own and others, and even what language they learned from the task (i.e. to report what Allwright (1984) has called 'uptake' [1]). Students could also be invited to consider how they might improve their performance of the task. Encouraging students to reflect on their performance in these ways may contribute to the development of the metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluating, which are seen as important for language learning (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990).

There is also a case for asking students to evaluate the task itself. Such information will help the teacher to decide whether to use similar tasks in the future or look for a different type. I have suggested that student-based evaluations of tasks can be carried out quickly and effectively using simple questionnaires (see Ellis, 1997a for an example).

Focussing on forms

Once the task is completed, students can be invited to focus on form**s**, with no danger that in so doing they will subvert the 'taskness' of the task. It is for this reason that some methodologists recommend reserving attention to form to the post-task phase of the lesson. Willis (1996), for example, sees the primary goal of the 'task component' as that of developing fluency and promoting the use of communication strategies. The post-task stage is needed to counter the danger that students will develop fluency at the expense of accuracy. In part, this is met by asking students to report on their performance of the task, as discussed above, but it can also be achieved by a direct focus on forms. It should be noted, however, that this is the not the position taken in this paper. I have emphasised that a focus on form constitutes a valuable during-task option and that it is quite compatible with a primary focus on message content, which is the hallmark of a task. Furthermore, in some tasks (e.g. consciousness raising tasks) a linguistic feature is made the topic of the task. Attention to form, in one way or another, can occur in any (or indeed all) of the phases of a task-based lesson. In the pre-task and post-task phases the focus will be on forms while in the during-task phase it will be on form, to invoke Long's (1991) distinction .

Two obvious methodological questions arise regarding attention to form in the post-task phase. The first concerns which forms should be attended to. The answer is fairly obvious; teachers should select forms that the students used incorrectly while performing the task or 'useful' or 'natural' forms (Loshcky and Bley Vroman, 1993) that they failed to use at all. In other words, teachers should seek to address errors or gaps in the students' L2 knowledge. Consideration also needs to be given to how many such forms a teacher should seek to address. Should the focus be placed on a single form that is treated intensively or a number of forms that are treated extensively? Both approaches are warranted and are reflected in the various options described below.

The second question concerns how the target forms should be dealt with. There is a whole range of options available to the teacher. It should be noted however that in many cases the effectiveness of these options has not been investigated.

1. Review of learner errors

While the students are performing a task in groups, teachers can move from group to group to listen in and note down some of the conspicuous errors the students make together with actual examples. In the post-task phase, the teacher can address these errors with the whole class. A sentence illustrating the error can be written on the board, students can be invited to correct it, the corrected version is written up, and a brief explanation provided. Lynch (2001) offers an interesting way of conducting a post-task analysis, which he calls ‘proof-listening’. This involves three cycles based on repeated playing of a recording of the task. First, the students who did the task review and edit their own performance. Second, the recording is replayed and other students are invited to comment, correct or ask questions. Finally, the teacher comments on any points that have been missed.

2. Consciousness-raising tasks

CR-tasks constitute tasks in their own right and, therefore, can be used as the main task in a lesson. But they can also be used as follow-up tasks to direct students to attend explicitly to a specific form that they used incorrectly or failed to use at all in the main task. Willis and Willis (1996) and Ellis (1997b) offer descriptions of the various options that are available for the design and implementation of CR tasks. When used as follow-up tasks, CR tasks can profitably take their data from recordings of the students’ performance of the task. For example, students might be presented with a number of their own utterances all illustrating the same error and asked to identify the error, correct the sentences and work out an explanation.

3. Production practice activities

An alternative or addition to CR tasks is to provide more traditional practice of selected forms. Traditional exercise types include repetition, substitution, gapped sentences, jumbled sentences, transformation drills, and dialogues. Willis (1996, p. 110) offers a number of more novel ideas. The value of such production practice activities has been called into question (see, for example, VanPatten, 1996) on the grounds that they have no direct effect on learners' interlanguage systems. However, they may help learners to automatize forms that they have begun to use on their own accord but have not yet gained full control over.

4. Noticing activities

A number of suggestions have been made for developing noticing activities as a follow-up to a task performance. Fotos (1994) used dictation exercises that had been enriched with the target structures that students had tackled initially in CR tasks to examine whether the subjects in her study subsequently attended to the structures. She found that they did so quite consistently. Lynch (2001) recommends getting students to make transcripts of an extract (90-120 seconds) from their task performance as a method for inducing noticing. After transcribing, they are required to make any editing changes they wish. The teacher then takes away the word-processed transcripts and reformulates them. The next day the students are asked to compare their own edited transcript with the teacher's reformulated version. In a study that investigated this procedure, Lynch found that students cooperated effectively in transcribing, made a number of changes (most of which resulted in accurate corrections of linguistic forms), and engaged in both self- and other-correction. Lynch also analysed the types of changes the students made, noting that the majority involved grammatical corrections, 'editing' slips (i.e. removal of redundancies, literal repetitions and dysfluencies) and 'reformulation' (i.e. changes directed at more precise expressions). Finally, Lynch comments that there was plenty left for the teacher to do after the students had made their changes.

Using the framework for designing a lesson

What constitutes the main activity of a lesson is largely a matter of perception and therefore, to some extent at least, arbitrary. For example, Prabhu (1987) talks of a ‘pre-task’ and a ‘task’. The former is carried out between the teacher and the whole class. The latter is performed by the students working individually. But, such a sequence of activities could easily be described in terms of ‘task’ and ‘post-task’. Indeed, Prabhu’s ‘pre-task’ involves the type of activity that most task-based methodologists would consider to belong to the during-task phase of a lesson. Similarly, a sequence of activities consisting of ‘task’ and ‘post-task’ where the latter involves the kind of transcribing activity advocated by Lynch could also be described in terms of ‘pre-task’ and ‘task’, if the transcribing activity is viewed as the main activity.

However, this caveat does not detract from the usefulness of the design framework described above as a basis for planning task-based lessons. Teachers need to decide first on the basic format of the lesson. Minimally, it will consist of the during-task phase but it can also include either or both of a pre-task and post-task phase. Once the basic structure of the lesson has been decided, the specific option(s) to be included in each phase of the lesson can be considered. The description of the process options for implementing the during-task phase of the lesson also provides a guide for the navigation of the actual task and for the teacher’s ongoing monitoring of the task performance.

Notes:

1. Allwright’s (1984) use of ‘uptake’ differs from that of researchers who have investigated corrective sequences in classroom discourse. Allwright uses the term to refer to what learners are able to explicitly report having learned as a result of participating in a lesson.

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What do we know about Learning and Teaching Second Languages: Implications for Teaching

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Abstract

In the last twenty-five years a number of insights have been achieved through research on the processes of second language acquisition/learning. This article discusses some of these insights, drawing implications for teachers for their classroom practice. In addition, there is a brief discussion on some of the insights that have been achieved about teachers' practical theories or teacher knowledge in the general education field. It is argued that in order for some of the insights to be translated into classroom practice, teachers and teacher educators have to understand the ways in which teachers' practical theories develop and consequently the types of behaviours teachers would wish to exhibit if they are to continue to develop professionally as teachers.

Keywords

Second language acquisition, second language teaching, foreign language teaching, teacher development, second language research

Introduction

Second language acquisition (SLA) has been in existence as a field of study for over 25 years, applied linguistics as a field just over 40 years [if we take the influential book by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964) as the beginnings of applied linguistics]. It took just over ten years for the first models of second language learning to be formulated (Krashen, 1979; Schumann, 1978a, 1978b) including a neurofunctional explanation of second language learning (Lamendella, 1997). Of these models, the Monitor Model became eventually known as the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985, 1991, 1994) and the Acculturation Model has continued to be used as an explanation for second language learning in certain contexts (Schumann, 1986).

These models of second language learning arose out of the research that had taken place up to that point and they in turn led to further research. Krashen's ideas as embodied in the Monitor Model, which eventually became the Input Hypothesis, have been described as "bold" and "brash" (Brown, 2000), but at the same time Brown has acknowledged that the ideas "have spurred many a researcher to look very carefully at what we do know, what the research evidence is, and then in the process of refutation to propose plausible alternatives" (p. 281).

This article looks at our current state of knowledge regarding second language acquisition/learning and discusses some insights that have been offered by research. It also looks very briefly at some insights from research into teacher knowledge and teachers' practical theories of teaching and suggests how these insights might be used to ensure that insights from research on SLA are translated into classroom practice more effectively.

Before beginning with these insights, a word of caution is necessary. These insights are what have seemed to me to be compelling and may not be accepted by other researchers as such. (In this respect, readers might like to read Harrison and Gough (1996), a conversation between the two authors on what makes a piece of research compelling for one person but not another.) Others have blazed a trail already and if there is anything new in this article, it is because I stand on the shoulders of these giants (e.g., R. Ellis, 2005; Lightbown, 1985b, 2000).

Insight 1: Adults and adolescents can 'acquire' a second language.

The focus of this insight is the word "acquisition" in the sense that Krashen (1982) has used it in distinguishing it from the term 'learning'. Acquisition is non-formal, subconscious way of picking up a second language through exposure to it. It therefore refers to implicit knowledge, rather than explicit knowledge, such as, that in Spanish one can omit the subject if it is easily recoverable from the context. The term has generally been associated with children learning their first language in contexts that are informal, meaningful and not planned (for language tuition purposes). The term, however, is not completely unproblematic when it is used in research contexts. A second language (SL) learner might in one context say "I don't know", a perfectly acceptable English utterance, while in another come out with this utterance: "No can play today". Can one say that this learner has acquired negation in English on the basis of one correct utterance? Or does the negation have to be used correctly in fifty percent of the cases? Or 80 percent? Or 90 percent? Myles, Mitchell and Hooper (1998), for example, show how learners of French in schools learn language chunks, such as, *Je ne sais pas* (= I don't know) for communication purposes and yet use less target-like language, such as, *Je ne sais pas la magasin* (meaning I don't like shopping). The latter is more typical for the level of development in that language. So, quite accurate production of language can mask the fact that acquisition of knowledge that should underlie such performance has not yet occurred. Studies that have used different criteria to make a judgement about acquisition thus present problems of comparability.

To return to the insight, the claim is that it is not just children who can acquire a language but adults (including young children and adolescents) can do so also provided there is a large amount of exposure, or input, to use a term used in the SL field. Some evidence for this comes from the early work of Elley and Mangubhai (1983) where children (10-12 years old) learning English as a second language (in a foreign language-like context) were provided with extensive input ("Book Flood") in English through regular reading (20-30 minutes) in the classroom. These children outperformed the control group who did not have this printed input but continued with their structural program for the same duration. The superior language development through extensive reading has been labelled “acquisition” by Krashen (1993b). Further examples of acquisition through reading have been documented in Elley (1991) and Krashen (Krashen, 1993a; 1993b).

While the above provides some evidence for acquisition through input provided via the printed word, rich input through oral as well as printed modes is provided in the immersion programs, of which the most researched are those offered in Canada (see, for example, Genesee, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1982).

Another line of research has, however, talked about whether anything can be learned unless it is noticed. One of the earliest writers to talk about noticing in the field of SLA was Schmidt (Schmidt, 1990, 1992; 1993) who has emphasised the importance of noticing in second language learning. While he has acknowledged that there can be acquisition, he has argued that most second language learners learn the second language and hence the concept of noticing is critical in understanding SL development (Schmidt, 2001). His own view is made explicit in a footnote:

> My own view is that conscious and unconscious processes probably interact in all domains of language, but that there is little evidence for learning without attention (one reading of ‘unconscious) in any of them. (p. 4)

Research has not been able to settle this question definitively and it remains of on-going interest (Ellis, 2002). But Nick Ellis (2005, p. 306) has argued that the “bulk of language acquisition is implicit learning from usage. Most knowledge is tacit knowledge; most learning is implicit; the vast majority of our cognitive processing is unconscious”. He does agree with Krashen (1982) that implicit and explicit learning are different, but, unlike, Krashen, he sees a role for explicit instruction and thus he can be seen to subscribe to a weak interface between the two types of knowledges, implicit and explicit.

Most language teachers are unlikely to be overly concerned whether what their students learn is explicit or implicit, except that fluency is better achieved when the language knowledge is more implicit, or has become more implicit. Of greater significance to teachers is the current understanding that generally the amount of second language learning is related to input, however it is provided. Motivating students to frequently watch English videos or listen to audiotapes in English outside formal classroom time is likely to lead to acquisition through substantially increasing the amount of input they would otherwise get.

Insight 2: Learners need to focus on form also in order to develop a more complete grammatical repertoire in the second language

In discussing Insight 1, I mentioned the immersion programs in Canada and their obvious success in teaching a second language, French (quite apart from the discipline curriculum). As evaluations of these programs occurred it became obvious that while students seemed to show a great amount of fluency in the use of French, the range of grammatical structures that were utilised in their communication was limited (Harley & Swain, 1984; Swain, 1985, 1993). This insight, that despite the provision of large amounts of comprehensible input provided in the immersion classrooms many students did not acquire the full range of grammatical structures, led to an assessment of the role of form in immersion classrooms. It led to what is called "form-focussed instruction", defined by Spada (1997, p. 73) as "any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners' attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly". This is a slightly different definition from that of Long (1991) where he talks about 'focus on form'. The critical difference between the two definitions is that Long defines focus on form occurring during meaning-based pedagogical tasks where attention is drawn to language as there is a perceived need rather than the focus occurring in some pre-determined manner. Long reserves the term "focus on form**s**" as referring to the type of grammar teaching that used to be the staple of many foreign language courses: grammar items are introduced and then they are practised either orally or in print. Spada, however, sees form-focussed instruction as an approach that can occur both spontaneously (as in Long sense) and in pre-determined ways, for example, as a means of providing some language prior to its use by students in a more communicative context.

In 'focus on form', in the Long sense, the intended outcome is noticing – the allocation of one's attentional resource at a particular moment to a form (Long & Robinson, 1998). It may occur at a point in a lesson, say group work, where many of the students are making the same type of mistake. A quick lesson on the correct form at that particular instance when students need the form might lead to a greater amount of noticing between what their current knowledge is and where they need to be in order to communicate with grammatical accuracy.

The evidence for the efficacy of 'focus on form' is growing, with learners as young as 7 and 8 (Harley, 1998), in content-based classroom (Doughty & Varela, 1998), and in reviews of focus on form studies (Ellis, 2001, 2002). There are nevertheless some who are still not convinced of its effectiveness (see, for example, Sheen, 2003). Evidence from the immersion studies suggest that form cannot be neglected. It is interesting to note that the book flood studies mentioned previously do not, it seems, show this shortcoming in grammatical development and it is intriguing why this might be so. Mangubhai (2001) explains this by pointing out that many of the book flood studies mentioned in Elley (1991), for example, occurred in countries where there was a tradition of focus on grammar teaching. It is therefore possible, he argues, that as students became better at extracting meanings from the stories they were reading, they had sufficient attentional resources left to devote to some focus on form.

Another related line of research focuses on the need to provide opportunities for comprehensible output. This hypothesis proposes that "through producing language, either spoken or written, language acquisition/learning may occur" (Swain, 1993, p. 159). Earlier, Swain had argued that learners have to be "pushed" to produce comprehensible output that is grammatical accurate and appropriate (Swain, 1985). There are, according to Swain (1993) four ways in which output might play a role in language acquisition/learning: (1) provides opportunities for meaningful practice; (2) could force a learner to move from simply semantic processing to syntactic processing also, (3) provides opportunities for hypothesis testing, and (4) one's output can generate responses from other speakers, feedback that can lead speakers to reprocess their output.

Both lines of research mentioned above emphasise the need to focus on form in addition to focusing on meaning. In focus on form one can do it more spontaneously as Long (1991) suggests or it may be a combination of spontaneous and pre-planned as Spada (1997) suggests. Swain's suggestion implies that teachers need to push their students to produce more language and produce it accurately. In both cases, the emphasis is on a greater focus on form, but this is not equivalent to doing more grammar exercises in classroom.

Insight 3: The learner's developing grammatical system, the interlanguage, is often characterised by the same systematic errors as made by a child learning that language as a first language. At the same time there might be systematic errors which appear to be based upon the learner's first language.

This insight seems to suggest that some of the mechanisms that operate when children are acquiring their first language operate also in second language acquisition (see for example, Ervin-Tripp, 1974, and papers in Hatch, 1978). In a seminal article Corder (1967) had suggested that perhaps second language learners had an "in-built syllabus" and that by analysing the errors learners were making we might get some insight into the grammatical system, the interlanguage, they were operating with at that particular moment in their learning.

Errors that arise out of the use of the rules of one's L1 in the second language context suggest that learners are using all their linguistic resources, including L1 resources, to convey their meanings. For example, *'Why daddy can go with us'* is acceptable in French but English does not permit *wh* questions without verb inversion (Spada & Lighbown, 1999). A study of the interlanguage of ESL learners in Hong Kong found that the surface structure of many of the interlanguage strings or sentences in English were identical or very similar to the usual sentence structure of Chinese (Chan, 2004).

What are the implications of this insight for teaching? If learners make these systematic errors will they disappear as they refine their developing grammar of the second language? How do we account for a learner such as Wes described by Schmidt (1984). He was able to communicate quite successfully but continued to have many grammatical inaccuracies in his utterances. If a learner's interlanguage becomes fossilized the task of the teachers becomes one of motivating such learners to get over this hump - not an easy task. Granted that there is systematicity in the interlanguage, Insight 2, discussed previously, provides a pedagogical solution to assist learners to move to the next stage in their interlanguage, though not with 100% success (Selinker, 1992).

Insight 4: There are predictable sequences in SL acquisition; learners have to acquire certain structures first before they can acquire others as their interlanguage develops.

Research has shown that there is a pattern and order in which certain grammatical features are learned, so that later items cannot be acquired until the earlier ones have been acquired. For example, the *~ing* progressive, plural and copula (*to be*) have to be acquired before the auxiliary (progressive, as in *'he is going'*) and the articles are acquired (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). Pica (1983) found that learners undergoing instruction did not manifest a different order of acquisition of grammatical features in comparison to those learning the SL more naturalistically. An extensive study conducted in Germany with adults acquiring German as a second language found that there was a developmental sequence in the acquisition of a number of grammatical features (Meisel, Clahsen, & Pienemann, 1981). They also noted that there was some variability in language use, depending upon the linguistic context in which the particular grammatical item/structure was used. Pienemann has developed these ideas further under his Processability Theory (Pienemann, 1998).

Regarding Insight 4, there have been two schools of thought: the "zero option" (Ellis, 1997) and the other that might be termed 'non-zero option'. The zero option suggests no teaching of grammar and instead the creation of opportunities for the use of language naturalistically, as found in untutored contexts or children's development of L1 (Krashen, 1982; Prabhu, 1987) The non-zero proponents have tended to argue from a cognitivist viewpoint that explicit learning can become implicit through practice (Sharwood Smith, 1981) or have argued that while grammar instruction may not lead to acquisition, explicit rules may allow learners to exploit this knowledge at a time they are ready to acquire that particular grammatical feature of the SL (Lightbown, 1985a; Seliger, 1979).

SL teachers have traditionally rejected the zero option for many different reasons, which we do not need to go into here. Teachers can, however, combine the insights in #4 and #2 and provide focus on form instruction when necessary. It may not inevitably lead to the learning or acquisition of that particular grammatical item under focus unless the learner(s) are developmentally ready to internalise it. It does reflect in a way Krashen's notion of i + 1 (Krashen, 1981) but as with this notion, teachers are unlikely to know which of the students are ready for the next stage.

Insight 4 can also provide an explanation for the frequently experienced phenomenon in classroom that a grammar rule is taught one week and seemingly learned, only to find errors the following week which indicate that previous week's lesson did not produce the desired or expected learning.

Insight 5: To become fluent in a language, one must practise using it. (And as a corollary to this insight) ***To become fluent in a language, one must receive extensive L2 input.***

In light of the discussion that has taken place so far, it is evident that the practice in this insight does not refer to grammatical practice of structures of the type that used to be standard in structurally based programs or in many foreign language textbooks. Research suggests that language learning occurs best when learners are engaged in communicative acts (Lightbown & Spada, 1999), or to put it in another way, when learners are engaged in encoding and decoding meanings in acts of communication (oral or printed). Such interactions frequently require modification of input through classification requests or reformulations (Long, 1985). This view has increasingly been labelled the Interaction Hypothesis, with some studies showing a link between interactions and acquisition (Gass & Mackey, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Van Lier, 1996).

As a corollary to this insight, one can say that very high levels of proficiency in a SL are unlikely to be developed in times that are normally allocated for foreign languages in school systems.

Practice, as conceptualised here, leads to a great amount of input (and output) that learners experience. It is therefore underpinned by the same research and arguments mentioned previously about the necessity of extensive exposure for the development of proficiency in a second language. This can be problematic in foreign language contexts where language input may be confined to the formal classroom. This does not necessarily have to be the case. Teachers might provide practice through making available to their students stories or other printed material in the SL to be read in or outside the classroom. Other sources of input – and hence practice – are videotapes of selected films, audiotapes of selected songs, stories or whatever might capture the interest of the particular group of learners. Another strategy for foreign language teachers is to encourage the formation of a Second Language Club, the members of which get together to use the language for purposes of communication and opportunities are seized to invite a speaker of the SL to present a talk or interact with its members. In other words, teachers should have dinning through their head the word ‘input’, ‘input’, ‘input’.

Insight 6: Knowing a language rule does not mean that one will be able to use it in communicative interaction or in writing.

This is one insight that teachers paradoxically know and yet do not seem to know. Anecdotally we know that teachers have had frequent experiences in their classrooms where their students can recite the rule but still break that same rule when speaking or writing. Yet, having known this, having this insight, teachers used to – and I use this deliberately as a way to referring to BCA (before communicative approaches) – teach grammar rules in the hope that they would translate into, what we would now refer to as communicative competence. This insight suggests that the focus in classroom should not be on learning explicit rules of a language, but on activities that are meaning focused. On the other hand, we have seen evidence from research on immersion language teaching that simply focusing on meaning may not draw the attention of learners to the forms in which meanings are encoded. We have also seen the argument that perhaps the rules that are learned become useful to the learners when they are ready to acquire those particular rules. We are thus led back to our insight number 2, which talked about focus on form.

Insight 7: Isolated explicit error correction is usually ineffective in SL learning.

Isolated explicit error correction refers to those instances where a teacher corrects a student but does not focus attention on that particular error. As Spada (1997) in her review on form-focussed instruction concludes instruction was likely to be more effective when there was greater explicitness in the instruction. Isolated explicit error correction, as defined above, does not have the characteristic of explicitness and therefore is not likely to be effective. This insight seems to suggest that to make some changes to the language behaviour of students error feedback may have to be over a sustained period of time. In light of insight #4, however, error correction is likely to be effective only when the students are ready for that bit of information. This might be one of the explanations for a study in which no differences were found between a group which received sustained error correction and one that did not (DeKeyser, 1993), though the study also found some interesting individual variation, including the effect of anxiety.

One form of error correction that is frequently used by teachers is, what is called, ‘recast’. A student says, ‘*Jill go to town*’, and the teacher says, *‘Yes, Jill went to town’* in the hope that the student will have noticed the mismatch in the use of the verb by her and by the teacher. But students, it seems, do not always notice the difference.

Lyster (1998) has shown that in the immersion language classrooms he studied – that is, in content-based classrooms - it is difficult for students to distinguish between feedback which confirms the content of what has been said, from the feedback meant to provide information on linguistic accuracy or pragmatic appropriateness. This is a caveat for teachers but should not be regarded as deterring them from bringing to the notice of students the mismatch between what they are producing currently and what is ultimately required of them.

Insight 8: In meaningful contexts learners are able to comprehend much more than can be judged by their ability to produce accurately language of comparable complexity.

Those who have had experiences with children will no doubt recall the fact that children seem to understand a lot more than what their spoken language might suggest (see, for example, Wanner & Gleitman, 1982). In other words, comprehension far exceeds the ability to produce language of comparable complexity. It has been argued that a similar situation can be found in second language acquisition and that this situation should be exploited in the sense that production should be delayed (Krashen, 1982). In meaningful contexts, SL learners can often guess the meanings by focusing on content words, or using knowledge of the world. For example, in a study reported in Mangubhai (1991), there was a learner who had been quite “fluent” in his understanding of the instructions (the study used *Total Physical Response* method of teaching Hindi as a second language). In his retrospective report he mentioned that he was able to achieve this fluency because he focussed on the content words only and used the contextual knowledge, if it was needed, to guess the meaning. He was, what was called in the study, an ‘input stripper’. By the 15th instructional session, when the sentences had become a little more complicated, and he was not always getting his actions right, he stated that he would have to start paying attention to the little words.

What implications can teachers draw from this insight? This insight suggests that teachers can occasionally use materials (both oral and printed) that may, on the surface, appear quite difficult for the learners but which may still be understood, provided, that the activity or activities associated with such use do not expect learners to get detailed meanings of the text, but rather the gist of what has been heard or read. The impetus for such uses might lie in the intrinsic interest of the topic combined with the planned activities that require oral interaction or written production based on that particular topic. This is not a plea to use materials that are beyond the ability levels of learners, but rather that, where such materials are used, surprising amounts of comprehension may in fact occur which may provide an input into other planned activities.

Insight 9: The different rate of learning observed in our students arises out of individual differences.

In any one class the same curriculum is taught to the same students, frequently by the same teacher, providing, in theory, the same amount of input. Yet the outcomes at the end of a program are quite variable for the learners. It might be true that the same amount of input may have been theoretically provided, but as was pointed out many years ago by Corder (1967) it is what learners attend to, the intake, that matters. Attention to input may be driven by many factors, including the moderating effect of learners' preferred learning styles, the level of motivation, the ability of learners to cope with degrees of ambiguity, the amount of anxiety, some of which might be more learner-specific, and so on.

There are a number of studies which show the (mostly) negative effects of anxiety (Dupuy, 1997; Ganshow & Javorshy, 1994; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Young, 1990), the positive effect of motivation (Gardner, 1985; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2003), and relationship between tolerance of ambiguity and SL proficiency (Chapelle & Roberts, 1986). There are other individual differences that have eventual impact upon the outcomes. In the Mangubhai (1991) study mentioned previously, one of the students wanted to know the meaning of every word from the very beginning of the lessons, while another was quite happy to chunk things and unpack them later, with the result the first student's outcome at the end of the teaching sessions was considerably less than the outcome achieved by the chunker.

As teachers, it is not possible to address many of the things that students bring to the classroom – what is sometimes referred to as the presage factors. However, teachers can try to minimise the anxiety factor in their particular classroom, or to vary classroom activities in ways that might address students' different learning styles, or develop classroom materials and activities keeping the factor of motivation in mind, in ways that Dőrnyei (1994) (and others) have discussed.

As research progresses, further insights into the acquisition/learning of second languages will be achieved. These insights need to be translated into classroom practice but this is not an easy matter as practices do not change easily until new knowledge is internalised into the thinking and practices of teachers. How this might occur is the matter of the next section. However, it would be both appropriate and timely to end this section of the discussion on insights from research with words of wisdom from Lightbown (2000, p. 454, emphases added):

> No matter how sound the research on which new ideas, materials and techniques are based, pedagogical innovations must be implemented and adapted according to *local conditions, the strengths of individual teachers and students, the available resources, the age of the learner, and the time available for teaching*

I next want to discuss briefly some insights achieved from the extensive research that has been conducted with teachers about their thinking and their theories of teaching (or practical theories) with which they operate in classroom. There is much that can be said on this topic but I have restricted myself to two related insights which I believe are pertinent for teachers.

Teacher Insight 1: The pour into a vessel view of knowledge does not work.

Personal knowledge is the teacher's filter for interpreting new information. It guides teacher actions in concrete and specific situations (Brown & McIntyre, 1993).

However, a teacher is not an island, and therefore personal knowledge should not be interpreted to mean that teachers have their own unique knowledge, not sharing any commonalities with other teachers. On the contrary, teachers' personal knowledge has a number of shared elements with other teachers because it originates from practical experiences with a number of commonalities, formal schooling in the past, initial teacher education or continuing professional training (Calderhead, 1996). However, the interpretation and internalisation of new knowledge is filtered through the sum total of knowledge (and experiences) that teachers bring to the task of learning or putting an idea into operation in classroom. Kennedy (1991, cited in Freeman, 2002, p. 6) summed up this issue quite succinctly when he said that "[t]eachers, like other learners, interpret new content through their existing understandings, and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know and believe". And teachers are not likely to change their beliefs about second language learning or acquisition by simply being told about other alternatives or different beliefs (see, for example, Pajares, 1992). What guides teachers' behaviours in classroom is discussed under the next insight.

Teacher Insight 2: Teachers' practical theories guide their behaviour in classrooms

Practical theories are viewed as "… notions about how to teach which have been crafted by individual teachers from their own *experiences* of teaching to suit their own *particular work settings.* [They are] … the valued residue of countless hours of *practice*, trial and error and *reflection* (Marland, 1998, p. 16, emphases added). Personal practical theories are known by a number of other terms also, including personal practical knowledge (Connelly, Clandinin, & Ming, 1997; Elbaz, 1983). What is important to note is that these practical theories arise out of teachers' experiences and not some theoretical knowledge and that they are contextually developed.

What does this insight entail? What would a teacher reading this article take from this insight? If teachers were to try to put into effect, say, task based learning in their classrooms they would put that approach into action in different ways depending upon their understanding of the approach, their beliefs about its efficacy and their evaluation of its likely success in their particular context. Each of these factors could operate differently for different teachers because each would be filtered through the personal practical knowledge of the teachers. Frequent practice, trial and error and reflection might make the practices more congruent to descriptions given in the literature.

Teacher development can thus be seen as the development of more complex and richer practical theories. Such developments might be triggered by a conference, a workshop or seminar teachers have attended, or courses of study undertaken, such as a Masters in TESOL, or indeed by critical events in classroom itself. They, especially study, give teachers tools to test their theories against other theories, to try out new approaches and as a result of these attempts to enrich their own practical theory. In the literature on general education, what teachers come to know what they know, is sometimes referred to as "new scholarship" (Zeichner, 1999).

I have talked about insights about second language acquisition gained from research and insights we have gained about how professional knowledge of teachers develop. These research insights can remain outside teachers' personal practical theories or teachers can try to unpack the ramifications of them for their classroom practice, and in doing so and reflecting upon the results, reframe their own experiences in classroom into a much richer personal practical theory.

I would like to end this article with a quote from a recent article by Johnson (2006, p. 248) who has paraphrased the well known educator, Dewey of the first half of the twentieth century:

> …it is through the attitudes of open-mindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognizing consequences), and wholeheartedness (continual self-examination) that teachers come to recognize their own assumptions about themselves as teachers, about their students, about the curriculum they teach, and about the nature and impact of their teaching practices.

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Designing Holistic Units for Task-Based Learning

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Introduction

This paper will outline the rationale behind the design of units of learning ‘activities’ in the form of interlocking sets of interactive holistic ‘tasks’ and supporting ‘exercises’. The illustrations used to support the argumentation are extracts from “task-based units” designed for a general education English foundation course at Kochi University in Japan over a seven-year period, and which are still being used and developed today. This paper will attempt to describe the theoretical underpinning of the units in relation to their practical aim: to encourage students to develop their ability to learn how to use English as a means of international communication.

Swan (2005) in his critique of task-based learning laments the polarization of attitudes in relation to recent discussion of language learning. On the one hand traditionalists argue in favour of a linear, atomistic syllabus design. On the other hand, hard-line task-based ideologues seem to exclude any atomistic activity in favour of all-or-nothing holism. Bygate’s distinction (2003, p. 176) between tasks and exercises helps to situate this debate. He defines 'exercises' as "activities which practise parts of a skill, a new sub-skill, a new piece of knowledge". In contrast, he defines 'tasks' as "activities which practise the whole integrated skill in some way". Bygate's discussion (2001, pp.23-48) lends support to the idea that task-based teaching needs to be situated in a broad curriculum framework, suggesting that isolated tasks are not sufficient in themselves to promote learning. The implication drawn from such research and discussion is that units of learning that involve the strategic use of holistic repeated "tasks" and supporting atomistic "exercises" provide one means of avoiding narrow ideological positions.

A task-based unitary framework is therefore proposed here that leads to student-led holistic outcomes in the form of written reports, spoken presentations and substantial small-group conversations that lead to decision-making outcomes. However, due consideration is also given to the design of atomistic exercises within the framework. In her model for task-based learning, Willis (1996, pp.52-65) proposes a pre-task component, a task-cycle component (pre-task/task/post-task) and a language focus component. With regard to focus on form, Willis emphasizes the importance of a post-task report phase, which could be a written activity such as writing a polished report or a spoken public-report phase in which students can be encouraged to focus on accuracy and can be prompted to recast inaccurate forms. Other key stages for Willis that improve the linguistic focus of task-based learning are the planning stage during which the teacher can take on a role of language advisor. This 1996 framework by Willis has been influential. In his 2006 Asian EFL Journal (AEJ) conference keynote speech, for example, Ellis made extensive reference to it, adopting it as his basic framework. This paper proposes a modified curriculum framework in the form of "Task-based Units".

Not surprisingly, SLA research does not lend strong support to either of the polarized positions discussed by Swan. Ellis (2005) outlined ten principles of SLA in instructed language learning. Rather than referring to work specifically focusing on TBL, this paper will consider the design of task-based units in relation to these ten principles. For example, Ellis argues (pp. 19-20) that, "the opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency" (principle 8), and that this is "more likely to be provided though 'tasks' than through exercises". However, he also suggests (p. 14) that, "instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form" (principle 3). Ellis also highlights the need for extensive input (principle 6) and the numerous contributions of output (principle 7). In the light of Ellis's ten principles, it appears that too much might be expected of "tasks", and that a more holistic approach, involving the design of task-based units, flexible combinations of repeated tasks and supporting exercises, can better respond to Ellis's ten principles. Designing task-based units also allows us to respond more effectively to the holistic nature of 'pragmatic' and 'discourse' competence without neglecting the need to focus, if not systematically, at least regularly, on atomistic aspects of "linguistic" competence and communicative enabling skills.

Language Education and Holism

"Holism" is a simple concept - the 'whole' is always greater than the sum of its parts - that has resonance when we consider what we do when we put together the parts to use a language. It helps provide a rationale for dealing with the complexities of interlocking skills and knowledge in language education. As Lowe (2005) points out, the EFL profession does not need another dogma. It might, however, benefit from an alternative conceptual framework from the fields of education and philosophy, which helps to provide coherence in what can be a bewilderingly multidisciplinary profession. Attempts to define the elusive concept of 'competence' for language communication, learning and assessment always tend to generate inclusive models of interlocking 'competences'. (See Canale and Swain, 1980, Canale, 1983, Bachman, 1990.) Bachman (1990), for example, includes 'strategic competence', 'language competence', subdivided into 'organizational', 'grammatical', 'textual' and 'pragmatic' competence, which is still further subdivided into 'illocutionary' and 'sociolinguistic' competence. To achieve 'competence', language learners need more than just atomistic linguistic knowledge, however essential this may be. They also need to practise putting together the parts.

Ellis (2005, p.19) provides support for activities requiring extensive output that "provide opportunities for learners to develop discourse skills". Two very important disciplines for language learning, 'discourse analysis' and 'pragmatics', are holistic almost by definition. (See, for example, McCarthy, 1991, Schiffrin, 1994, Kasper, 1997, Mey, 2000.) Discourse analysts consider language above the sentence or single utterance level, analysing relationships between form and function, highlighting the way utterances combine to form coherent spoken or written texts and the way that whole texts relate to broader contexts in which the text is produced and used. Pragmatics focuses more on the ways language users cooperate to create and negotiate meaning in whole contexts. Neither discipline neglects the importance of linguistic form or of conventional meaning, but both disciplines remind us that language and language use always amount to something which is greater than the sum of the parts and that using language requires participants to make many appropriate linguistic choices, which are dependent on what is required in a broader context. As Oatey and Zegarac (in Schmitt, 2002, p. 74) put it, pragmatics investigates how people "communicate more than what the words or phrases of their utterances might mean by themselves". Pragmatic and discourse competences are therefore holistic competences that take into account relationships between users, utterances in context, whole texts and the parts that constitute texts.

Halliday's systemic linguistic approach (See Halliday and Matthiesson, 2004, for a full systemic linguistic perspective) provides the most comprehensive holistic view of grammar in relation to the use of language. Halliday and Matthiesson (2004, p.19), explicitly state that systemic linguistics is: "concerned with language in its entirety; so that whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood always with reference to the total picture." (p.19). Assuming that discourse, pragmatic and systemic approaches to language use are reasonable representations of at least some of what is required to be a competent user of a language, it seems reasonable to consider 'holism' as an important concept for professionals involved in supporting language learning.

Educational Philosophy and Holism

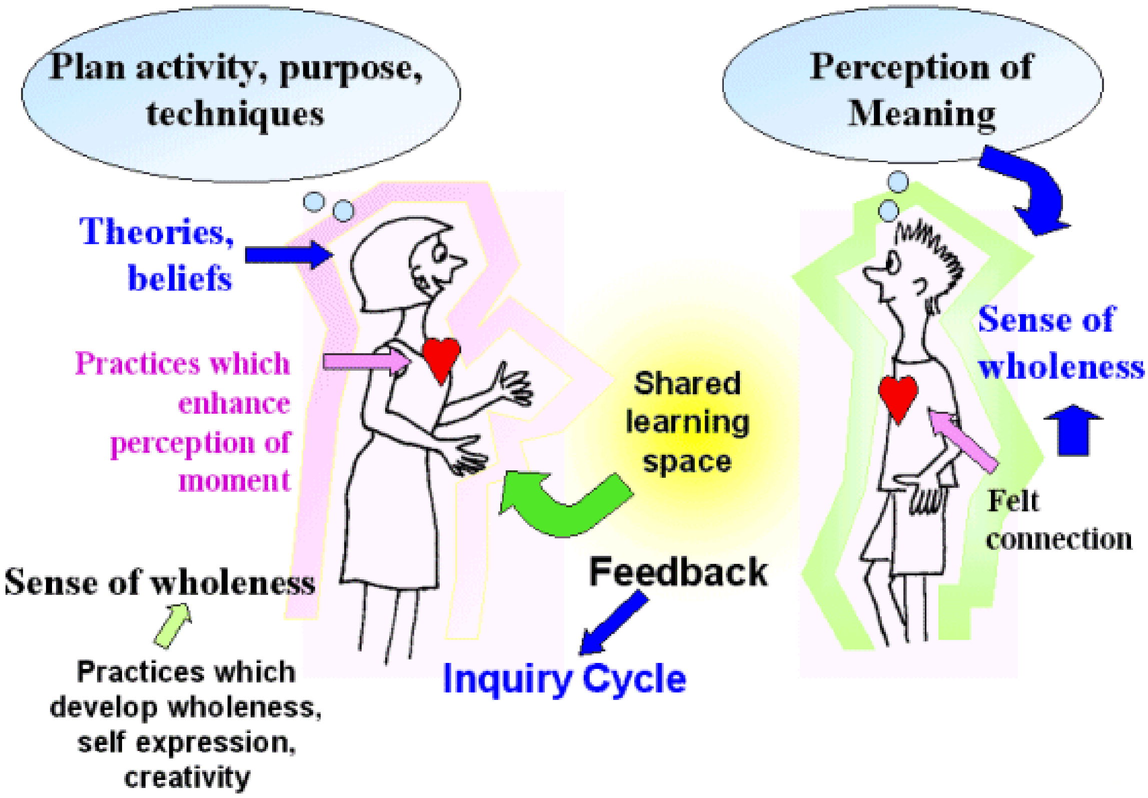
Task-based learning may often appear to be underpinned by rational arguments based on selective use of cognitive SLA theory, but the 'holistic' nature of tasks could lead us to look outside the confines of EFL theory to broader educational theories which are humanistic in persuasion and allow us to view students and teachers as 'whole people' for whom language use is inseparable from their whole personal and cultural identity. The Holistic Education Network of Australia, which actively promotes ‘holism’ for education in general, provides a broader view of “holism” as an educational philosophy that is relevant to language education in its broad aim of promoting learning and understanding through dialogue. They concede that the concept, “is difficult to pin down precisely, because by its very nature it embraces paradox, mystery, and contradiction”. Block (2004) however demonstrates in his very readable online overview that a philosopher’s precision can dispel much of the conceptual vagueness. Mental holism refers to belief systems, the identity of a “belief content” being “determined by its relation to a body of theories, or even the whole of a person’s belief system.” (p.2) For Block, “claims about the world are confirmed not individually, but only in conjunction with theories of which they are a part”. From a semantic viewpoint, holism reflects the view that, “the meaning of a sentence is determined by its place in the web of sentences comprising a whole theory” (p.2).

The Holistic Education Network of Australia advocates holism as a broad, educational philosophy that engages the “whole person” in the learning process, implying that atomistic classroom approaches that only focus on exercise-like activities, only engage a part of a student’s learning capacity. The following points, adapted from their website, summarize the concept for education in general, and elucidate what is meant by the “whole person”:

1. Holism actively engages students in the teaching/learning process and encourages personal and collective responsibility.
2. Its aim is to nurture a “sense of wholeness” in healthy, whole, enquiring people who can learn whatever they need to know in any new context.
3. It encourages the transfer of learning across separate academic disciplines.

4. It explores the relationship between diversity and unity, not rejecting the group, but equally valuing diversity, variety and uniqueness.
5. It is 'negotiated, not preordained', 'and created not found'.

While they are not concerned directly with language earning, the network emphasizes the principle of learning and understanding through dialogue, a principle that has a direct parallel in Ellis's SLA theory. The Education Network states that, "holism asserts that everything exists in relationship, in a context of connection and meaning -- and that any change or event causes a realignment, however slight, throughout the entire pattern. 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts' means that the whole is comprised of a pattern of relationships that are not contained by the parts but ultimately define them". The website uses colourful charts, illustrating how 'holism' can be presented as a colourful educational concept, underlining at the same time the promotional tone of the site.



Holistic Education Network of Tasmania, Australia.Free to use for educational purposes but please acknowledge source. (http://www.hent.org/maps_models.htm)

Holism and Language Learning

While we must not fall into the trap of imagining that historical views of "progress" as reported in academic publications reflect practice regardless of context, language learning theory has seen a gradual move towards a more holistic view of language use. In their review of applied linguistics, Schmitt and Celce-Murcia (2002, p.12) for example argue that, "the last thirty years has seen a move towards viewing language in much more integrative and holistic terms". Nunan (1989, 2005) considers skills integration as an important feature of language learning, appealing to such notions as interaction, task continuity, real world focus, language and learning focus and task outcomes. Skehan, too, (in Bygate et al., 2001, p.10) emphasizes whole task completion and outcomes, a relationship with real-world activities and giving priority to learners' own meanings.

"Can you learn a language in a holistic way?"

In an IATEFL conference debate (Bygate et al., 2003, p.177), a speaker from the floor asked the following question:

> Traditional approaches are often condemned in the task-based literature for taking a 'discrete item' or 'atomistic' approach to the teaching of structure. The alternative, so-called holistic 'focus on form' during the communicative activity, sounds impressive. But how, actually, can you focus on structural points without looking at them one at a time?

This question is partly addressed by Bygate's (2003) distinction between 'exercises' and 'tasks' discussed above. Similarly, Candlin (in Bygate et al., 2001, p. 235) defines 'exercises' as "serving as sequenceable preliminaries to, or supporters, of tasks", whereas 'tasks' are more inclusive activities, engaging students in a variety of interlocking processes, and encouraging them to "practise the integrated use of language, acquire language development strategies and use language meaningfully and creatively." This is a useful distinction, because it allows us to consider a combination of enabling 'exercises' and 'tasks' in larger, integrated units of learning, which might span several lessons. We may then continually change the focus between the 'parts' and the 'whole'. The smaller 'exercises' are used in support of 'tasks' and the 'tasks' in support of reinforcing language learning. The 'tasks' have two purposes.

They provide a forum and a focus for intensive language practice and they assist in language learning. The latter is supported by providing comprehensible input, or obliging students to negotiate to make input comprehensible, but also by providing students and teachers with feedback on strengths and weaknesses when exposed to unscripted communication to plan for further practice. The effectiveness of tasks is enhanced by task repetition, (Bygate, 2001), allowing students to focus more on form-meaning relationships and develop fluency.

Ellis's 10 Principles of Instructed Learning (2005)

Ellis's principles of instructed learning have been used as a convenient summary of principles that help provide appropriate conditions for second language acquisition. These act as a kind of checklist for unit design that is independent of the rationale of the task-based approach.

1. Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence. (Linguistic Competence)
2. Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.
3. Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.
4. Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 but should not neglect explicit knowledge.
5. Instruction needs to take account of the learner's built-in syllabusing.
6. Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input.
7. Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.
8. The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency.
9. Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners.
10. When assessing learners' L2 proficiency it is important to examine free as well as controlled production.

The design features of the units outlined below can be seen as an attempt to respond to many of these ten principles. In particular, the units provide extensive input, extensive opportunities for interaction and output and provide a framework for assessing free production. They are predominantly directed at implicit knowledge, but do provide opportunities for focus on form and developing explicit knowledge. At later stages of the units, after extensive teacher input, students too assist in the design of materials for input, providing them with a full participatory role. They focus on meaning, in particular, pragmatic meaning, which Ellis highlights as an essential focus.

In her paper asking, ‘can pragmatic competence be taught’, Kasper (1997, p.9) emphasizes that, “the language classroom in its classical format does not offer students what they need – not in terms of teacher’s input, nor in terms of students’ productive language use”. She advocates student-centred activities, which not only extend students’ speaking time, but also provide practice in: conversational management, using a wider repertoire of communicative acts, and interacting with other participants to cooperate to achieve understanding. Pragmatic competence also involves understanding and responding spontaneously and appropriately to unpredictable utterances. The positive and negative results of strategic competence needs careful consideration during spontaneous communication, as an important aim of a language lesson is to acquire language, but avoidance strategies are expedient communication skills which might even hinder language learning. Holistic activities are not always group activities: making a full solo presentation is also an interactive activity involving the production of a whole stretch of meaningful language. This activity may even encourage (if not require) students to re-use pre-taught atomistic skills and language in a less controlled environment. Both students and teachers have to become familiar with a broad variety of discourse roles.

Lowe (2005, p.12) argues against dogma in relation to Task Based Learning, the hard version of which, according to Lowe, says, “on no account teach a language form without performing a task”. He suggests that context rather than dogma should determine whether the task comes first and the language work second or vice versa. There are arguments for doing ‘tasks’ and ‘exercises’ at different stages during a holistic learning unit. The ‘task’ often comes last in the classroom activities described below, but this is not an absolute requirement. Some units use two or more tasks, and it is possible to use tasks at the start, in the middle or at the end of units. Doing a task first with no preparation can be an excellent diagnostic tool. Practice in the form of exercises can then be provided before doing the same or a similar task again. This approach is also useful for assessment and course evaluation purposes, rating scales being used by teachers and students to assess performance before and after teaching. The units of learning discussed below use a combination of exercises and tasks in integrated units of learning. It is only loosely based on Willis's (1996) framework for a task-based cycle.

Richards (2005) summarizes the main concern about task-based learning, stating, "Learners' grammar needs are determined on the basis of task performance rather than through a predetermined grammar syllabus. However, whether learners develop acceptable levels of grammatical proficiency through such an approach is problematic (p.153)." Richards points to research findings that challenge basic premises of TBL such as whether it always leads to negotiation of meaning (Foster, 1998 and Musumeci, 1996). Richards also discusses different ways of addressing grammar within task work (pp. 160-164) which include pre-teaching linguistic forms useful for the task, reducing the complexity of the task to allow students to focus more on form, and allowing students adequate planning time before performing a task, enabling them to coordinate both linguistic resources (such as vocabulary) and non-linguistic resources (such as problem solving strategies). He points out (p. 162) that the teacher has a key role in determining the extent to which the task is implemented with different emphases on fluency, accuracy and strategy use. Richards concludes (p. 164) that there is a need to consider "how a greater focus on grammatical form can be achieved during the process of designing and using tasks." The design of task-based units, distinguishing between exercises and tasks and looking at ways to enhance the effectiveness of focus on form during tasks, is an attempt to respond to this need.

Willis (1996, p.54) favours a non-interventionist, monitoring role during the task performance itself. It is, however, unwise to make de-contextualized prescriptions about any classroom approach. Teachers have to make their own decisions as their classroom interaction develops. Experience on our long-term project leads to the conclusion that, once task-based learning is well-established in a class, there can be a role for deliberate interruption, though not as a very regular occurrence, even when the task is running smoothly. Otherwise students become so absorbed in the task that they tend to neglect form, while it seems preferable that even during a task, language learners who need to acquire a language system should focus their attention equally on what they want to say and the best way to say it linguistically. For example, in a negotiation about what different drivers should have done to avoid an accident, a five-minute pause may be taken, to respond to inappropriate tense use, to generate “if” sentences or past modal expressions within the context of their discussion. Students generate as many utterances as possible such as “if the mini-driver had not parked on the corner, the escort driver would have seen the other car coming”, or "the mini driver should've waited longer at the intersection" and then go back to their negotiation.

Assessment

Micro-linguistic knowledge and micro-skills are characterized as the enabling skills and knowledge that support macro-activities, but performing in the macro-activities is the ultimate course goal. Tests are therefore always macro-activities such as giving a presentation or keeping a conversation going in a small group and are linked to the formative evaluation each student sets in motion in the placement testing prior to the course. Common rating scales for self, peer and teacher assessment has now been fully established to co-ordinate assessment and embody course aims. An example of one of four scales, the use of which has been developed over many years, is provided below. Eight areas of competence were defined for assessment of performance in tasks. These generated eight scales that were reduced to four scales, each of which combined two skills areas, as illustrated below. (See Nunn, 2000, for a full description.) Once such scales became established, they served as a basis for studies in intra-rater and inter-rater reliability to be reported elsewhere.

Keeping a Conversation Going: Turn-taking and Negotiation Combined Scale	**1.** Has (almost) no ability to keep a conversation going. Without constant help, the conversation is always likely to break down. **2.** Rarely self selects, but responds minimally to other speakers and sometimes supports their Contributions. Negotiates rarely and/or only with a very limited repertoire. Communication sometimes breaks down without support. **3.** Responds fully when nominated, supports other speakers and sometimes self selects. Has an adequate repertoire for negotiation. Communication almost never breaks down. **4.** Is able to take initiatives, self-selecting and negotiating whenever necessary drawing on a wide repertoire of expressions and techniques. Helps other participants to join in and interrupts politely when appropriate.

Keeping a Conversation Going: Turn-taking	**1.** Has (almost) no ability to exploit turn-taking to keep a conversation going. Without constant help, the conversation is always likely to break down. **2.** Rarely self selects, but responds minimally to other speakers and sometimes supports their contributions. Only rarely nominates other speakers, even when he/she has the floor. Communication sometimes breaks down without support. **3.** Responds fully when nominated, supports other speakers and sometimes self selects. Communication almost never breaks down. **4.** Is able to take initiatives, self-selecting, holding the floor, interrupting or nominating as the conversation demands. Helps other participants to join in.

Making Communica-tion Effective: Negotiation	**1.** Has (almost) no ability to negotiate effectively. Without constant help, communication of even basic information is unlikely to be successful. **2.** Sometimes adjusts to the contributions of other speakers, but only rarely negotiates and then only with a very limited repertoire limiting the effectiveness of the communication. **3.** Is able to negotiate when necessary, adjusting to the contributions of other speakers and demonstrating an adequate repertoire for negotiation. Communication is normally effective and successful. **4.** Is able to adjust fully to other speakers` contributions, taking initiatives and negotiating persistently whenever necessary, drawing on a wide repertoire of expressions and techniques. Takes a full share of the responsibility for successful communication.

An Overview of a Task-based Project Unit: Preparing to Visit Foreign Countries

The unit outlined below represented the first stage in a long-term curriculum process to design task-based units. A pool of task-based units was then prepared by a team of three full and twelve part-time course tutors. These units are constantly being revised and developed. They are made available to all other instructors for use in the courses. In this way, new teachers are provided with a resource bank of units. Experienced teachers tend to adapt the materials to fit their own teaching styles and the identified needs of particular classes. Table 1 below outlines the first unit of recorded and photocopiable materials prepared by full-time staff for course tutors to modify and re-design to meet the precise needs of their teaching groups. Several course tutors also used it as a kind of model for developing parallel units. Teaching method and classroom activities all had the ultimate aim of preparing students to take part in macro-activities that can be classified into two basic kinds, the second of which is illustrated below:

1. Solo-speaking:
    - Giving a short speech or presentation.
    - Narratives.
    - Telling or retelling a story.
    - Telling a well-known story, a personal or funny story.
2. Small-group conversations (including pairs and small groups of three and four):
    - Decision making conversations
    - Information exchange conversations
    - Opinion exchange conversations
    - Negotiations
    - Surveys

Preparation Stage

Extensive and intensive listening and reading activities provide extensive input in both listening and reading in the topic area. The listening components also model the interactive tasks that the units highlight.

Unit Overview (Part 1)

Activity type	Purpose	Details
Preparatory activities Listening/ Reading Activities	Providing input Introducing topic area and lexis Extensive reading and listening Modelling future activities	A set of reading texts on foreign trips, e.g., Darren's trip to Fiji A recorded two-person conversation choosing a foreign country for a holiday A three-person conversation choosing a country for a homestay or study visit

Example from part 1

A reading text (also available as a spoken narrative for listening): A trip to Fiji

Read about Darren's trip to Fiji and fill in the gaps using the words in the table.

Main curries east Indian months lessons hitchhiking electricity family western seasick crew afford youth giant lay rainwater humid cheap capital coral Fiji traditional Pacific Fijian spending sun-bathing thirty-four

After I graduated from university, I wanted to go somewhere very different from Canada so I decided to go to ________, a small island country in the _______________ Ocean. Fiji is a very interesting place because it has two cultures - the native ________ people and people of ________ descent. In addition to the local food, you can also find many Indian restaurants with tandoori chicken and lots of _______. Everyone knows Fiji has very warm weather but I want to explain it in more detail. On the ___________, the weather is very different. On the west side, it's hot and very dry but on the _____ side the weather is wet and __________. Fiji's ______ city, Suva, is on the east side. Nadi, which has the international airport, is in ________ Fiji.

I didn't have very much money when I went to Fiji so I couldn't _______ hotels. Usually I stayed in a _______ hostel which costs about 1000 yen per night with breakfast. This is very _______ but you have to share a _________-style room with six to ten beds. In the countryside, you can stay in the ___________ huts called bures. These are very cheap but they have no__________. I also used my tent a lot when camping on the beaches. The most interesting part of my trip was ________ time on a small island by myself. I was taken to the island by motorboat, and picked up two weeks later. The island had a small kitchen area for cooking, _________for taking a shower and a small bure to sleep in. There was nothing else. I spent every day snorkeling, reading, and ___________. The _______ was beautiful with many tropical fish.

After spending three _______ in Fiji, I was ready to try something different. A popular way to travel in the South Pacific is ___________. But not by car. I didn't have enough money to buy an airplane ticket so I went to the yacht club and I found

that you can get a job as a ______ member on sailboats going to Australia or New Zealand. I was very lucky to join a _____________ going to Australia. The trip from Fiji to Australia took _________ days, including a one-week stop in a small country called Vanuato. I was ________ for the first week but after that I got used to it and it was a very good experience for me.
I had two jobs on the yacht. In the mornings from 8-12 I taught the three children their school_______. Also, I had to do a night watch from 8 p.m. until midnight. The most exciting part of the trip was stopping at a small island near New Caledonia to watch the _______sea turtles come up on the beach to _______their eggs.

What do you think? Answer these questions in writing and explain your answers.

Which part of Darren's trip would you have enjoyed the most?

Which part would you not have enjoyed?

Now make a group of three students and compare your answers. Be ready to report your discussion to the whole class.

Part 2: Micro-linguistic Exercises

There are arguments for doing micro-linguistic activities at different stages of the unit. As the aim is to encourage focus on form, it is intended that this would encourage students to continue focusing partly on the form of their message during the holistic interactive tasks. A pool of exercises is available: instructors decide if and when to apply them, before, between or after tasks, depending on the perceived needs of students at different stages of the unit.

Unit Overview (Part 2)

Language exercises at various stages of the unit	Warm-up activities, Focus on form, Practising language useful for tasks Intensive reading and listening practice	Anagrams – names of countries and nationality words A set of exercises for question practice (atomistic written exercises, and exercises combined with listening/reading texts), (direct, indirect, conversational questions, follow-up questions, asking for clarification) Comparisons Decision-making expressions

Examples from Part 2.

Enabling Skill 1: How to stay in English when you don't understand.

The post office employee can't always understand what the customer wants. Use the following expressions in the box to help him keep the conversation going in English:

-I'm sorry. Could you repeat that more slowly please?

-Could you spell that, please?

-Would you mind repeating the name of the country again, please?

-Excuse me, I didn't quite catch that.

-I still haven't quite got that.

-I'm sorry. I don't understand X. Customer: I'd like a stamp for Afghanistan, please.

Assistant: Excuse me, ………………………………….

Customer: I'd like a stamp for this airmail letter to <u>Afghanistan</u>.

Assistant: I still haven`t quite got that. Would ………………….. the name of the country again, please?

Customer: <u>Afghanistan</u>.

Assistant: <u>Afghanistan</u>, sure. That's 110 yen.

Customer: And I've got another airmail letter for <u>Qatar</u>.

Assistant: I'm sorry. Could you …………………………. please?

Customer: Yes, sure. I need another stamp for <u>Qatar</u>.

Assistant: Could ……………………….., please?

Customer: Sure. <u>Qatar is spelt Q-A-T-A-R</u>.

Assistant: <u>Q-U-A</u>

Customer: No. <u>There isn`t a U. Q-A-T-A-R</u>.

Assistant: <u>Q-A-T-A-R</u>. Oh, I've got it. <u>Near Saudi Arabia</u>. That's 110 yen too.

Customer: My father is a philatelist. Do you have any special stamps?

Assistant: I'm sorry. ……………………….…… philatelist.

Customer: My father collects stamps.

Assistant: Oh! I understand. Yes, we have some very nice collection stamps this week.

Practise reading the conversation with your partner.
If you are the customer, change the underlined information.
If you are the assistant, check when you don't understand.

Skill 2: Practise asking questions to find out information.

Daisuke is preparing some questions for his conversation. The words are in the wrong order. Write them again correctly.

Location	in exactly England we where would go ?
Accommodation	kind accommodation Scarborough is what of there in ?
Activities	what us of activities there could kind you we do ?
Weather	weather is during what the like the in summer England?
Length of stay	how we would long there stay?
Price	Cost how would it much? price in what is the included?
Other information	know is need else there anything we to?

Part 3: Interactive Tasks

The interactive tasks illustrated below are central to the design of the units. They are used by teachers to design and record listening materials. They are used by students to practice using language in an interactive activity, to put into practice what they have learned and to develop their ability to communicate in a semi-authentic situation.

Unit Overview Part 3: Interactive Task 1:

Initial Tasks Teacher-Generated	Providing output activities, Providing opportunities for extensive interaction, Promoting pragmatic functional ability, Providing opportunities to practise lexico-grammar	A small-group conversation exchanging information on three countries from an information sheet provided by the teacher comparing the information reaching a decision

Example of Part 3: Choosing a Foreign Country

Each group member has information about a different English-speaking location. The students (1) exchange information, (2) exchange opinions about the three or four locations, (3) try to make a decision about one country they will visit together.

You are planning to spend about one month in an English speaking country. Each student in your group has information about a different country.

1. Read this sheet carefully. Prepare to speak. Remember these are only notes. Try to speak clearly and correctly. You may add information from your knowledge or imagination.
2. You will need to ask questions to find out information about the other countries.
3. You will need to stay in English when you can't understand.
4. you will need to remember the information to decide which country your group will visit.

Student A

Country	England
Location	Scarborough - Small seaside town North East England
Accommodation	With an English family (the father is a fisherman)
Weather	15-25°C in summer - often changes

Activities	Fishing Windsurfing Sailing
Length of stay	3 weeks
Price	60,000 yen (Includes accommodation, food and activities)

Example:

- Where exactly would we go in England?

Scarborough - Small seaside town North East England

(Have you heard of) Scarborough. (It's) a small, but very attractive seaside town in the North East of England.

Student B

Country	U.S.A.
Location	New York
Accommodation	Dormitory for international students
Weather	Very cold in winter Hot and humid in summer
Activities	Many sports Night clubs
Length of stay	5 weeks
Price	150,000 yen Includes accommodation, breakfast and evening meal, indoor sports at the hostel

Example.

Where exactly would we go in America?

New York

- *(We could try) New York. (It's) a really interesting and lively city.*

Unit Overview Part 3

Final Tasks	Task repetition Internet research skills Extensive reading Student generated input and information Assessment/evaluation of students and unit Final self-assessment Reaching a decision in a team Reporting a decision individually	Students fill in similar sheets to task 1, researching information from countries where English is not a first language Assessment in a three-person conversation using student-prepared information with unknown interlocutors group report – spoken individual report – written (letter)

Example of Part 3: Interactive Task 2

The final task is student centred, in that the students research information using the same categories as for task one, about a potential destination, in which English is spoken as a foreign language. Students are encouraged to research beyond contexts where English a native language. The task format itself is very similar to task one, except the information is different, and is supplied by the students. This provides the kind of task repetition discussed above that has been found to be beneficial by Bygate (2001).

Choosing a Foreign Country: Preparation Sheet

Prepare detailed information for your next conversation. You are planning to spend about one month in a foreign country where English is spoken as a second or foreign language. Each student in your group has information about a different country. Use books or the Internet to find out interesting information to fill out the table below. Make notes using key word and phrases, do not write full sentences.

Country	
Location	

Accommodation	
Activities	
Weather	
Length of stay	
Price	
Other important information	
Interesting cultural information	

Optional final written assignment

Write a letter in English to your parents asking for help to visit the foreign country your group has chosen. Start like this:

My dear parents,

I am writing to you in English to show you that I am working very hard to improve my English ability.

- *Explain why you need to visit a country where English is a foreign language and how this will improve your English in our international world.*
- *Explain which countries you thought about in your group.*
- *Explain why you chose the country you did.*
- *Explain the expenses.*
- *Explain about things like safety, accommodation, etc.*
- *Ask for help and permission.*

Conclusions

"Task-based units", rather than "task-based learning" per se, have been presented here as a flexible curriculum tool that supports the teacher by providing a large pool of possible materials, but which does not impose a linear syllabus for teachers to follow inflexibly. Decisions about the balance between focus on task and focus on form are ultimately left to the teacher. How much of a unit will be used in a particular class is also left to the judgement of the teacher. Even the order of materials is not fixed. Worksheets use simple word processing tools and can also be modified by individual teachers according to their needs. Teachers are also encouraged to design alternative units that match their own teaching style. To ensure fairness in assessment between different classes, the rating scales are used by all classes as common criteria for all task assessments.

A set of task-based units provides the kind of practice that fulfils many of Ellis's ten principles for SLA, such as extensive input, focus on meaning, focus on form, opportunities to interact and extensive opportunities for output. It does not assume that students should not be thinking of the form of the message, just because they are required to focus on the message itself. An underlying assumption is that ways need to be found to encourage students to reflect on the form of the message during the interactive task phases. The teacher may decide to adopt different roles, during the tasks. In addition to independent, student–led group work, teacher-led performances by small groups in front of the class can be used to focus on form. During such sessions the teacher may interrupt or even take a role in the conversation.

In the context where they were designed, after initial innovation difficulties of an administrative nature, the units have become a standard accepted format, well-supported by students, who testify to improved ability by the end of the course. Indeed, some students state that these units provided them with their first opportunities to really use English effectively. However, student feedback is not taken as irrefutable evidence of progress. Students and teachers use the assessment criteria for self, peer and course evaluation. Students are graded in task performance at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the course using these common rating criteria. Teachers are not judged on their students final grades and are encouraged to use assessment to help them find their own ways of improving students' language ability during task performances. This approach has also led to professional development opportunities for teachers, some of whom are gaining their first experience in the profession, in areas such as, designing and developing materials, learning to evaluate spoken performances using rating scales and making mini-presentations at local academic meetings and participants are encouraged to conduct data-supported research into different aspects of the project such as assessment or classroom discourse studies.

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Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning: An Overview

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Abstract:
The purpose of this article is to present an overview of second language (L2) task-based language teaching and learning. Prabhu (1987) deserves credit for originating the task-based teaching and learning, based on the concept that effective learning occurs when students are fully engaged in a language task, rather than just learning *about* language. Ellis (2003b) distinguished between task-*supported* teaching, in which tasks are a means for activating learners' prior L2 knowledge by developing fluency, and task-*based* teaching, in which tasks comprise the foundation of the whole curriculum. I am concerned here with the latter of the two. To address the topic, the article is arranged in the following way: (a) the concept of "task," (b) analyzing tasks, (c) sequencing tasks, and (d) implications for future research.

1. The Concept of "Task"

The idea of "task" is not as simple as it might seem. Many definitions and perspectives exist, as shown by the list in Table 1. Each one is discussed in turn.

Table 1. Possible definitions of and perspectives on the concept of "task"

Task as . . .

An imposed tax, duty, or piece of work

An everyday piece of work

A job responsibility

A general activity or exercise for L2 learners

An outcome-oriented L2 instructional segment

A behavioral framework for research

A behavioral framework for classroom learning

Task as an Imposed Task, Duty, or Piece of Work

An early definition of *task* comes from Old North French *tasque*, which meant a duty, a tax, or a piece of work imposed as a duty. *Tasque* originated from the Latin *taxāre,* to evaluate, estimate, or assess (Barnhart 1988, p. 1117). This suggests a task is externally imposed and might be onerous.

Task as an Everyday Piece of Work

Long (1985) defined a task as "… a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward . . . [B]y 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between" (p. 89).

Task as a Job Responsibility

Task also refers to a job responsibility or duty, that is, a specific part of a particular job that a person is asked to do. For example, the job of an administrative assistant requires the task of scheduling appointments for the supervisor. Jobs can be "task-analyzed" for personnel and training purposes (Smith, 1971). This general view of task again implies that the task is externally imposed on the person from outside.

Task as a General Activity or Exercise for L2 Learners

Many L2 textbooks present activities or exercises for learners to accomplish. Sometimes these activities or exercises are discussed as tasks, without a particular emphasis on outcome.

Task as an Outcome-Oriented L2 Instructional Segment

This perspective is similar to the one above except that it focuses on an outcome that the L2 learner is expected to produce or attain. In this perspective, the task is an outcome-oriented segment of work in a curriculum or lesson plan. This idea came from adult vocational education, then spread to elementary education and other fields, such as L2 learning and teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Breen (1987) defined a *language task* as a structured language endeavor which has a specific objective, appropriate content, a particular working procedure, and a range of possible outcomes for those who undertake it. Breen suggested that language tasks can be viewed as a range of work plans, from simple to complex, with the overall purpose of facilitating language learning. In fact, he asserted, "All materials for language teaching . . . can be seen as compendia of tasks" (Breen, 1987, p. 26). In a similar vein, Prabhu stated that a task "is an activity that requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process" (1987, p. 17). These definitions underscore the idea that a task is a structured instructional plan that requires learners to move toward an objective or outcome using particular (teacher-given) working procedures or processes. Again, a task is imposed from the outside and does not come from the learner.

Task as a Behavioral Framework for Research

Activity Theory, based on work by Vygotsky (1978) and his colleagues, asks a fundamental question: "What is the individual or group doing in a particular setting?" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 211). Drawing on Activity Theory, Coughlin and Duff (1994, p. 175) distinguished between an L2 task and an L2 activity. In their view, *task* refers to the "behavioral blueprint provided to students in order to elicit data" for research or assessment. Coughlin and Duff defined *activity* as "the behavior that is actually produced when an individual (or group) performs a task" (1994, p. 175). This distinction can be crucial if we consider that a task may trigger different activities across individuals and in the same individual on different occasions.

Task as a Behavioral Framework for Classroom Learning

In an instructional setting, following Vygotskian concepts, a *task* consists of the instructions or directions that the teacher gives students for learning—that is, the behavioral blueprint provided to students in order to elicit learning. In this context, an *activity* is what students actually *do* with these instructions, that is, the behavior (regardless of whether it is overtly observable or purely mental) that occurs when students perform a task that has been presented to them.

Summary of the Definitions of Task

There are many viewpoints about and definitions of *task.* Initially the definitions involved a tax, piece of work, everyday activity, job responsibility, or general activity for learners. In L2 teaching and learning, *task* is now often viewed as an outcome-oriented instructional segment or as a behavioral framework for research or classroom learning. Most often it still has the connotation of being externally imposed on a person or group, although the connotation of being burdensome or taxing is no longer emphasized. I now turn to ways by which we can analyze tasks for task-based teaching and learning.

2. Analyzing Tasks for Task-Based Teaching and Learning

My analysis of tasks includes the following dimensions: task goals, task types, high versus low stakes, input genre and modality, linguistic complexity, cognitive load and cognitive complexity, interaction and output demands, amount of planning allowed or encouraged, timing, teacher and learner factors, and (as influenced by prior factors) overall task difficulty.[1]

Task Goals

Potential task goals fall into three main groups: focus on meaning, focus on form, and focus on forms (Long, 1997; Salaberry, 2001). These are summarized below and in Table 2. Additional task goals are also described.

[1] Nunan (2004) analyzed tasks in terms of several components, such as: *goals* (to be expressed as micro-behavioral outcomes), *input* (spoken, written, or visual; it can be in a range of input authenticity, as long as it stimulates language learning), and *procedures* (related to task types, which covers fluency versus accuracy, skill getting versus skill using, and procedural authenticity). Other features of Nunan's (2004) analysis of tasks are *teacher and learner roles* and *instructional settings* in which tasks occur. See also Oxford, Cho, Leung, and Kim (2004).

Possible Task Goal A: Focus on Meaning

The first potential goal is to focus on meaning. In this type of syllabus, learners receive chunks of ongoing, communicative L2 use, presented in lively lessons with no presentation of structures or rules and no encouragement for learners to discover rules for themselves. This is an analytic syllabus (Wilkins, 1976), in which any understanding of the structure of the language must come from the learner, who might or might not perceive regularities and induce rules (Long & Crookes, 1992, p. 28). Grammar is viewed as developing naturally when the learner is ready for a given structure, so no structures should be discussed. The focus on meaning is sometimes not considered instruction at all, because the teacher can be viewed as simply providing opportunities for L2 exposure (Doughty, 2003).

Possible Task Goal B: Focus on Form

The second potential goal is to focus on form within a communicative, meaningful context by confronting learners with communicative language problems (breakdowns) and causing them to take action to solve the problems. In Long's (1985) view, a focus on form occurs when attention is mostly on meaning but is shifted to form occasionally when a communication breakdown occurs. Many techniques are used to meet this goal, such as "recasts" in which the instructor gives a corrective reformulation of the learner's incorrect production or understanding. With a recast, the learner must discern the difference between the correct contextualized form and the original contextualized form and figure out the underlying relationships and rule. Because the learner is involved with language analysis, this is an analytic syllabus (Wilkins, 1976). In this mode, ". . .[T]hree major components define a focus on form . . .[:] (a) can be generated by the teacher or the learner(s), (b) it is generally incidental (occasional shift of attention) and (c) it is contingent on learners' needs (triggered by perceived problems)" (Salaberry, 2001, p. 105).

However, as Salaberry (2001, adapted from Johnson, 1996) noted, a different type of focus on form occurs when the forms are preselected for tasks, rather than arising from learners' needs (the communication problem or breakdown during a task). This alternative focus on form is found particularly in communication-oriented textbooks, where a focus on meaning comes first, followed by a focus on form. Constraints of textbook tasks cause preselection of forms to occur, thus reducing the possibility of a spontaneous and incidental focus on form, such as that found in Long's model. In the preplanned focus on form model (Salaberry, 2001), the goal is to focus on preselected forms related to meaning-oriented tasks.

Possible Task Goal C: Focus on FormS

The third potential goal is to focus on formS by means of presenting specific, preplanned forms one at a time in the hope that learners will master them *before* they need to use them to negotiate meaning. The learner must synthesize all of the material himself or herself; hence a focus on formS syllabus is a synthetic syllabus (Wilkins, 1976). Lessons tend to be dull, sometimes arcane, and not oriented toward communication, as though L2 learning could be reduced to memorizing accumulated, small items and mechanistically applying myriad rules.

A Caveat about These Goals

Looking back at the second goal, we see that it combines elements of the first and the third. It provides an emphasis on meaning but with an insertion of form when and where needed by learners. Skehan cautioned that distinctions among these goals are not totally firm because "… the two underlying characteristics of tasks, avoidance of specific structures and engagement of worthwhile meanings, are matters of degree, rather than being categorical" (1998, p. 96).

Potential Additional Task Goals

Additional task goals might include learning how to learn, that is, learning to select and use particularly relevant learning strategies and understanding one's own learning style (Honeyfield, 1993; Nunan, 1989; Oxford, 1990, 1996, 2001b). Learners can learn how to learn while doing a task that involves both language and content, as demonstrated by the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). Goals may also focus on content knowledge, as in learning mathematics or social studies through the L2 (Honeyfield, 1993; Oxford, Lee, Snow, & Scarcella, 1994) or may relate to cultural awareness and sociocultural competence (Nunan, 1989; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Task goals may differ according to whether there is a single, common task goal (convergence) or multiple task goals (divergence) (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Table 2. Possible goals for L2 tasks: Relationship to various types of syllabi for task-based teaching and learning

Goal and Syllabus Type	Goal Statement/Description	Source
A. Focus on meaning -- Analytic syllabus	"Learners are presented with gestalt, comprehensible samples of communicative L2 use, e.g., in the form of content-based lessons in sheltered subject-matter or immersion classrooms, lessons that are often interesting, relevant, and relatively successful. It is the learner, not the teacher or textbook writer, who must analyze the L2, albeit at a subconscious level, inducing grammar rules simply from exposure to the input, i.e., from positive evidence alone. Grammar is considered to be best learned incidentally and implicitly, and in the case of complex grammatical constructions and some aspects of pragmatic competence, only to be learnable that way."	Long (1997, Option 2, Focus on meaning, ¶2)
B. Focus on form— Analytic syllabus	"Focus on form refers to how attentional resources are allocated, and involves briefly drawing students' attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication, the temporary shifts in focal attention being triggered by students' comprehension or production problems."	Long (1997, Option 3, Focus on Form, ¶1)
	This model of focus on form, like the one above, is "based on the use of language as a means to an end (accomplishment of a communicative task) . . . [and] focuses on meaning as a whole first. The focus on the grammatical item comes afterwards, but the selection of the specific grammatical components may be arbitrary [i.e., *not* connected with a specific communicative problem]. . . . [This model] is represented	Salaberry (2001), p. 104

	in textbooks where we find a pre-determined order (by nature of the constraints that textbook authors face). . . ."	
C. Focus on forms – Synthetic syllabus	"The teacher or textbook writer divides the L2 into segments of various kinds (phonemes, words, collocations, morphemes, sentence patterns, notions, functions, tones, stress and intonation patterns, and so on), and presents these to the learner in models, initially one item at a time, in a sequence determined by (rather vague, usually intuitive) notions of frequency, valency, or . . . 'difficulty'. Eventually, it is the learner's job to synthesize the parts for use in communication. . ."	Long (1997, Option 1: Focus on Forms, ¶1)

Task Types

Many types of L2 tasks exist, particularly in the realm of communicative instruction. Here is a listing of some key task types found in the literature: problem-solving (Nunan, 1989; Pica et al., 1993; Willis, 1996a); decision-making (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Nunan, 1989; Pica et al., 1993); opinion-gap or opinion exchange (Nunan, 1989; Pica et al., 1993); information-gap (Doughty & Pica,1986; Nunan, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Pica et al., 1993); comprehension-based (Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2000; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Tierney et al., 1995); sharing personal experiences, attitudes, and feelings (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Oxford, 1990; Willis, 1996a, 1996b); basic cognitive processes, such as comparing or matching (Nunan, 1989; Willis, 1998), listing (Willis, 1998), and ordering/sorting (Willis, 1998); language analysis (Willis, 1996a, 1996b, 1998); narrative (Foster & Skehan, 1996); reasoning-gap (Nunan, 1989); question-and-answer (Nunan 1989); structured and semi-structured dialogues (Nunan, 1989); and role-plays and simulations (Crookall & Oxford, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In addition, task types include picture stories (Nunan, 1989); puzzles and games (Nunan, 1989); interviews, discussions, and debates (Nunan, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2001); and everyday functions, such as telephone conversations and service encounters (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Task types also encompass practice with communication/conversation strategies, learning strategies, and text-handling strategies (Cohen, 1998; Honeyfield, 1993; Nunan, 1989; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Additional task types can lead to communicative videomaking (Talbott & Oxford, 1989, 1991). For more on various types of tasks, see Bygate et al. (2001) and Yule (1997).

Many task types involve multiple skills and subskills, such as reading a passage for comprehension and then doing something with the information that has been read, such as answering questions, discussing the information, making a decision, solving a problem, and expressing how one feels about a given situation.

Importance of the Task: Low or High Stakes

One aspect of external pressure concerns whether the task is perceived as important, specifically whether it is viewed as a low- or high-stakes requirement. In a low-stakes, relaxed task, there is less stress during the task. In a high-stakes task or set of tasks, such as those found on an English competency examination for graduation or for university entrance, much more anxiety can be expected. Those learners who tend to be anxious anyway may become particularly tense while doing a high-stakes task. Skehan (1996a) discussed the differential effects of low- and high-stakes tasks.

Timing

The amount of time allotted for the task can be a major factor (Honeyfield, 1993; Skehan, 1996a), especially for L2 learners who are at the beginning and low intermediate levels. When a task is "speeded," that is, when only a certain amount of time is given to complete the task, it might become more difficult for some learners. If students are allowed to take all the time they need, i.e., if the task is "unspeeded," this takes off some of the pressure. In-class tasks do generally have a time limit, although, depending on the task type and the goals, some tasks that are unfinished can be done as homework assignments.

Input Genre and Modality

Tasks can be analyzed according to the input genre (newspaper article, diary, recipe, diary, TV show, conversational talk, lecture, and so on) and modality (e.g., written, spoken, graphic/pictorial) (Honeyfield, 1993; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1996a). Genre and modality interact. For instance, a newspaper article can be a written text and an accompanying picture, and it can also be read aloud.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) cited a range of input materials for L2 tasks, including books, newspaper, video, TV, and so on. Interest level of the learners in the material is particularly crucial. If materials are perceived as boring or as too easy or too difficult, learners will be unmotivated to do the task (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Publishers provide materials of wide interest to most students, although cultural factors such as religion can prevent some materials from being used for L2 tasks in particular locations.

Also, relevance and suitability of task input—and of tasks themselves—also depend on whether the L2 learning occurs in a foreign versus a second language setting. Certain input and tasks would be more available and feasible in a second language environment than a foreign language environment, because in the former there are many more natural resources in the target language and many more native speakers of the language with whom to interact. Yet because of the Internet, the foreign language environment now contains instant L2 input (not just written text, but also multimedia that could help develop multiple skills) that were simply unavailable to learners in times past. In locations where students have easy access to the Internet, teachers can take advantage of new input in simulations and WebQuests. The widespread presence of games and videogames on the Internet creates additional input possibilities. However, in some Asian countries, many learners are already so involved in L1 videogames for entertainment that they might not recognize L2 game-based or videogame-based tasks as a serious endeavor. The context determines the relevance of various types of input.

Linguistic Complexity

An important task factor is linguistic complexity (Dahl, 2004; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Skehan, 1996a), such as number of words in a sentence, amount of redundancy, degree of use of dependent clauses and other complexity-creating structures, discourse style, sequence complexity, technicality of vocabulary, concreteness or abstractness, sectioning, and other features. As noted by Dahl (2004), linguistic complexity is not synonymous with "difficulty" but is instead an objective property of a system—a measure of the amount of information needed to describe or reconstruct it. It is the result of historical processes of grammaticalization and involves mature linguistic phenomena (Dahl, 2004). Gibson (1998) indicated that linguistic complexity is a function of the "integration cost" and the "memory cost" associated with keeping track of obligatory syntactic requirements, such as center-embedded dependent structures, placement of large phrases earlier (heaviness effect), and ambiguity effects.

Salaberry (2001) mentioned the following issues involved with task language features: frequency and saliency; and linguistic categories, such as vocabulary, phonology and phonetics, morphosyntax, discourse, pragmatics/speech acts, and sociolinguistics. All of these contribute in various ways to the degree of linguistic complexity.

Linguistic complexity is not the same as "difficulty." The person's familiarity with the material, the topic, or the language properties mitigates some of the difficulty even when the linguistic material is complex. The difficulty is also affected by the number of language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and subskills required to do the task.

Cognitive Load and Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive load is another feature of the task. The concept of cognitive load relates to Sweller's (1988, 1999) assumption that people's capacity to process information is limited. The more that a learner tries to hold in his or her head at a given moment, the harder the learning is and the more likely there will be a cognitive overload. Another assumption is that some tasks have a higher cognitive load. For instance, the task of integrating information from multiple sources might have a higher cognitive load than the task of following an example. Cognitive load can be increased by competing stimuli in the input or during the task, distracting the learner.

Cognitive complexity is yet another characteristic, but it relates not just to the task but also to the person. Analysis of cognitive complexity has been defined as "an aspect of a person's cognitive functioning which at one end is defined by the use of many constructs with many relationships to one another (complexity) and at the other end by the use of few constructs with limited relationships to one another (simplicity)" (Pervin, 1984, p. 507). Therefore, cognitive complexity involves a person component (unobservable cognition and observable behavior) and a task structure component. If a computer is involved, there is also an interactive system component (Rauterberg, 1992).

The task-required cognitive processing operations can be complex (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ikeda & Takeuchi, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Skehan, 1996a), but not every cognitively complex task is viewed as difficult. Whether or not a particular student actually perceives a given, cognitively complex task to be difficult and challenging depends considerably the student's familiarity with the kind of cognitive operations required.

Interaction and Output Demands

Presence or absence of a demand for output is a task factor. Swain (1985) and Scarcella and Oxford (1992) emphasized the importance of students' providing comprehensible output in task situations, often through interaction with others. Task interaction may be one-way, as in one person talking and the other listening or writing notes. It may be two-way (Long, 1985; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), as in two individuals engaged in an information-gap task (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Nunan, 1989) or sharing personal experiences (Foster & Skehan, 1996). It may be multi-way, as in a group discussion, role-play, or simulation (Crookall & Oxford, 1990). Among many examinations of which types of tasks promote L2 learning (see, e.g., Plough & Gass, 1993; Robinson, 1995; Yule et al. 1992), a review by Pica et al. (1993) reported that negotiation of meaning is most likely to occur when learners are involved in an interaction with the following four features:

- Each of the students holds a different portion of information that must be exchanged and manipulated in order to reach the task outcome.
- Both students are required to request and supply this information to each other.
- Students have the same goal.
- Only one outcome is possible from their attempts to meet the goal.

Thus, qualitative differences in the nature of the negotiation of meaning resulting from different tasks and different types of interaction, as Nunan (2004) also pointed out.

However, interaction and output might not be essential, depending on the task purpose. For learning the use of relative clauses, Tanaka (1996, in Ellis, 2003a) found that practicing with input proved to be more efficient than practicing with output (using relative clauses in traditional production-practice tasks). Input practice tasks helped students understand relative clauses better, and their ultimate production ability was just as strong with input practice tasks as with traditional production-practice tasks.

When production practice is the goal of the task, complexity of the output becomes a task factor. Output complexity relates to the complexity of language the learner uses and the cognitive sophistication of the output, both of which depend on the learner's willingness to take risks in restructuring forms and concepts (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan, 1998b).

Allowable Amount of Planning

The amount of planning (a metacognitive learning strategy; see Oxford, 1990) allowed or encouraged is a factor in how well the learner accomplishes the task. Foster and Skehan (1996) examined the influence of task type and degree of planning on three different aspects of L2 performance: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The study employed three types of tasks (personal information exchange, narrative, and decision-making) under three planning conditions (unplanned, planned but without detail, and planned with detail). Results indicated that planning had clear effects on both fluency and complexity of participants' output. However, planning was not the key to accuracy. In fact, less detailed planners were more accurate than non-planners and those who planned in detail. Interactions emerged between task type and planning conditions. Effects of planning were greater with narrative and decision-making tasks than with personal information exchange tasks. In their discussion, Foster and Skehan noted that a trade-off existed between the goals of performance complexity and performance accuracy. They explained that individuals have a limited capacity for attention, as noted earlier, so when a task is more cognitively demanding, attention is diverted from formal linguistic features—the basis of accuracy—to dealing with these cognitive requirements.

Sometimes when learners are allowed an opportunity to plan, this makes the task seem easier, but at other times the allowance of planning sends a signal that this is a difficult task, which makes certain learners anxious. The way the planning is introduced and implemented influences the value of planning.

Timing

The amount of time allotted for the task can be a major factor (Honeyfield 1993; Skehan 1996a), especially for L2 learners who are at the beginning and low intermediate levels. When a task is "speeded," that is, when only a certain amount of time is given to complete the task, it might become more difficult for some learners. If students are allowed to take all the time they need, i.e., if the task is "unspeeded," this takes off some of the pressure. In-class tasks do generally have a time limit, although, depending on the task type and the goals, some tasks that are unfinished can be done as homework assignments.

Teacher Roles and Characteristics

Teachers can take many different roles in regard to L2 tasks (Honeyfield, 1993; Nunan, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Willis, 1996a, 1996b, 1998).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Scarcella and Oxford (1992) mentioned the following task roles for teachers: selector/sequencer of tasks, preparer of learners for task, pre-task consciousness raiser about form, guide, nurturer, strategy-instructor, and provider of assistance. Cultural and linguistic backgrounds and teaching styles influence the roles teachers feel comfortable taking (Oxford, 2002; Oxford, Massey, & Anand, 2003; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). The amount and kind of help provided by the teacher was singled out as a task-related teacher factor by Honeyfield (1993) and Scarcella and Oxford (1992).

Learner Roles and Characteristics

Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Scarcella and Oxford (1992) identified possible task roles for learners, such as group participant, monitor, risk-taker/innovator, strategy-user, goal-setter, self-evaluator, and more. Others (Honeyfield, 1993; Nunan, 1989; Oxford, 1990) have also discussed learners' task roles. A particularly important learner role in a task situation is that of task-analyzer. The learner must analyze task requirements and find suitable strategies to match them.

The learner can take control of the task—that is, be responsible for his or her performance on the task—by considering the task requirements and employing learning strategies to accomplish the task more efficiently and more effectively (Cohen 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford 1990). On the part of the learner, this involves a serious commitment, motivation, confidence, clarity of purpose, and willingness to take risks (Dörnyei 2001; Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001; Honeyfield, 1993; Oxford, 1996; Skehan, 1998b; Willis, 1996a, 1996b, 1998), but these may be dampened by language anxiety (Arnold, 1998; Oxford, 1998; Young, 1998).

Learning styles are likely to affect choice of strategies for accomplishing tasks (see Oxford, 2001). Learning styles also make a difference in which tasks are perceived as difficult by individual learners. For example, face-to-face communication tasks might be viewed as easier for a person with an extroverted learning style than an introverted learning style. Learners whose learning style is highly analytic, concrete-sequential, and/or closure-oriented might perceive greater ease in accuracy- and form-focused tasks than fluency tasks.

Overall Task Difficulty

Honeyfield (1993) specified the following influences on general task difficulty: procedures to derive output from input; input text; output required, such as language items (vocabulary, structures, etc.), skills, or subskills; topic knowledge; text-handling or conversation strategies; amount and type of help given; roles of teachers and learners; time allowed; and learner characteristics, such as motivation, confidence, and learning styles. For Skehan (1996a), factors related to task difficulty include: code (language) complexity, cognitive complexity (cognitive processing, cognitive familiarity), and communicative stress (time, modality, scale, stakes, and control).

Summary of Analyzing Tasks for Task-Based Teaching and Learning

This section has discussed factors that are often analyzed with regard to L2 tasks. Some of the major factors are complexity (linguistic and cognitive); overall difficulty, which is not the same as complexity; and roles of learners and teachers. How we can sequence tasks and parts of tasks is the topic of the next section.

3. Sequencing Tasks for Task-Based Teaching and Learning

As noted by Richards and Rodgers (2001) and Willis (1996a, 1996b, 1998), a task has a natural series of stages, such as preparation for the task (pre-task), the task itself, and follow-up (post-task). Many L2 learner textbooks now follow this practice. In addition, tasks are often placed into a sequence as part of a unit of work or study. Sequencing is a major issue in a task-based syllabus. Swales (1990), tasks are "…sequenceable goal-directed activities…relatable to the acquisition of pre-genre and genre skills appropriate to a foreseen or emerging . . . situation" (p. 76, in Salaberry, 2001, p. 102). Skehan (1998b) noted that tasks have discernable implementation phases, for which there should be clear criteria for outcomes assessment.

The traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) teaching/learning cycle was at one time virtually the only acceptable L2 task sequence. In the PPP cycle, grammar presentation came first, followed by controlled and less controlled practice and then by actual production. However, Willis' (1996a, 1996b, 1998) task-based model offers a task cycle that opposes the PPP sequence. In this model, which effectively combines meaning and form, the communicative task comes before the focus on form (language analysis and practice). Another special feature is that students not only do the task but also report on it. Willis' framework consists of the following:

- Pre-task - introduction to the topic and task.
- Task cycle
    - Task planning
    - Doing the task
    - Preparing to report on the task
    - Presenting the task report
- Language focus - analysis and practice (focus on form).

Nunan (2004) argued in favor of units based on topics or themes in which Halliday's (1985) three groups of macrofunctions[2] are divided into microfunctions, each linked with certain grammatical structures. Nunan's task-based syllabus contains six stages per unit:

- schema building,
- controlled practice embedded in a context (unlike traditional controlled practice),
- authentic receptive skills work,
- a focus on form (lexical and/or grammatical),
- freer practice ("communicative activities"), and at last
- the (communicative) task itself.

It is interesting that Nunan, unlike Ellis (2003) and Long (1985, 1991, 1997), waited until the very end of the process to include the communicative task. In

[2] Halliday's (1985) macrofunctions are as follows: (a) the ideational or referential function, representing the external world, thoughts and feelings, and logical relations existing among experiences and processes; (b) the interpersonal function, encompassing relations between addressor and addressee in discourse situations or speech acts; and (c) the textual function, concerning the way language makes links with itself and the situation to produce linguistically cohesive and semantically coherent text.

Nunan's model, the task is a culmination of all other work. In this sense, as noted by Feeney (2006), this is not too far from the PPP format, except that Nunan's controlled practice occurs within more of a communicative context than is usual with the PPP arrangement. Nunan's focus on form occurs *before* both freer practice and the task, whereas Willis's (1996b) model employs a focus on form *after* the task.

Long's (1985, 1991, 1997, 2005) task-based language teaching model presents a focus on form, which involves meaning, structure, and the context of communication. The model follows the following sequence of task development, implementation, and assessment/evaluation:

- Needs analysis to identify target tasks
- Classify into target task types.
- Derive pedagogic tasks.
- Sequence to form a task-based syllabus.
- Implement with appropriate methodology and pedagogy.
- Assess with task-based, criterion-referenced, performance tests.
- Evaluate program.

In Long's model, tasks are selected based on careful analysis of real-world communication needs. Such tasks are particularly important—even catalytic—for L2 learning because they can generate useful forms of communication breakdown (Long, 1985). The teacher offers some kind of assistance to help the learner focus on form at the point when it is most needed for communication. This is the moment when meaning meets form. While not explaining the learner's error, the teacher provides indirect assistance so the learner can solve his or her own communication problem and can proceed to negotiate meaning still further. Long (1997) presented the following typical instructional sequence for a "false beginner" class of young adult prospective tourists.

- Intensive listening practice: The task is to identify which of 40 telephone requests for reservations can be met, and which not, by looking at four charts showing the availability, dates and cost of hotel rooms, theater and plane seats, and tables at a restaurant.
- Role-playing: The learners take roles of customers and airline reservation clerks in situations in which the airline seats required are available.
- Role-playing: The learners take roles in situations in which, due to unavailability, learners must choose among progressively more complicated

alternatives (seats in different sections of the plane, at different prices, on different flights or dates, via different routes, etc.).

In this model, the exact sequence of any given task or set of tasks would depend on the learners' needs, which shape the goals of instruction.

Ellis (2003b) distinguished between (a) unfocused tasks (e.g., ordinary listening tasks or interactions) and (b) focused tasks, which are used to elicit a particular linguistic feature or to center on language as task content. He cited three principal designs for focused tasks: comprehension tasks, consciousness-raising tasks, and structure-based production tasks. Elsewhere (Ellis, 2003a) presented a sequence of tasks for helping learners become more grammatical, rather than for attaining the elusive goal of mastery. The sequence includes:

- Listening task, in which students listen to a text that they process for meaning).
- "Noticing" task, in which students listen to the same text, which is now gapped, and fill in the missing words.
- Consciousness-raising task, in which students discover how the target grammar structure works by analyzing the "data" provided by the listening text.
- Checking task, in which students complete an activity to check if they have understood how the target structure works.
- Production task, in which students have the chance to try out or experiment with the target structure by producing their own sentences.

Johnson (1996), Skehan (1998b), and Willis (1996b) discussed sequencing of tasks according to methodological task features, such as extent of communication (negotiation of meaning), task difficulty, and amount of planning allowed. Others have discussed how to sequence tasks to reflect the developmental sequence of language acquisition. Skehan (199b) suggested targeting a range of structures rather than a single one and using the criterion of usefulness rather than necessity as a sequencing criterion.

Salaberry (2001) argued that a successful task sequence leads learners to: (a) communicate with limited resources, (b) become aware of apparent limitations in their knowledge about linguistic structures that are necessary to convey the message appropriately and accurately, and finally, (c) look for alternatives to overcome such limitations. Building on the work of McCarthy (1998), Salaberry offered a pedagogical sequence of four stages, which for the learner would be involvement, inquiry, induction, and incorporation. For the teacher the corresponding four-step sequence is introduction of the topic, illustration, implementation, and integration. See Table 3. This sequence is very detailed and includes multiple tasks at each stage.

Table 3 Four stages of teaching/learning showing sequence of tasks

Teacher		Learner	Salaberry's example
1. Introduction of topic	← →	1. Involvement (motivation to participate in the task)	Teacher illustrates particular features; students rate various movie reviews written by movie critics on a scale from the most positive to the most negative.
2. Illustration	← →	2. Inquiry (communicative analysis of language in communicative context; mostly initiated by learners, not the teacher)	Teacher reads a movie narrative and asks students to identify events in the plot (in infinitive form); students separate main events from minor events; students reconstruct story in writing in present tense.
3. Implementation	← →	3. Induction (development of hypotheses about structure and functions of the language)	Students do a listening comprehension task: place pictures of main movie events in correct order. Then they listen to the tape again to write down as many plot events in *past tense* as possible while tape is played to reconstruct whole plot, including minor events (modified dictogloss). Students have not yet had a formal explanation of past tense endings, but teacher can informally give past tenses of various verb types from student narratives in #2. During the [essential] debriefing stage students may be given the actual script that was read to them so that they can compare it to their transcription; this is crucial for allowing students to verify, modify, or reject their hypotheses (from induction). Learner controls the learning process.
4. Integration	← →	4. Incorporation (assimilation of knowledge about new L2 features in a way productive to the overall L2 system)	Students produce their own movie scripts (incorporation). For instance, they can be asked to write a dialogue for a series of (scrambled) pictures that recount a possible eye-witness account of an event parallel to the movie plot (#3). They act out the scene (concrete outcome).

Source: Summarized from Salaberry (2001, pp. 108-110).

It is evident that no consensus yet exists about the best way to sequence tasks or to sequence elements within tasks. This is one of the key areas of research needed in the field. The next section offers a set of implications for research.

4. Implications for Future Research

Researchers have made significant strides in this field. However, it will be important to keep focusing on what is meant by “task-based L2 teaching and learning.” The term can evoke many different images, depending on which theorists and models are involved and on various and locations in which such teaching occurs. We have seen many variations and possibilities above. The definitional and conceptual question, “What do we mean by task-based learning and teaching?” can be broken down and elaborated as a series of questions:

- What are optimal or at least relevant types of task-based teaching to fulfill different learning goals of diverse students of different ages, genders, L1 backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, backgrounds, needs, learning styles, interests, and occupations?
- What are the most relevant criteria for sequencing tasks in task-based teaching? Do these criteria differ by any of the factors just listed?
- With a focus on form, does a given sequence of tasks work better, or should tasks be spontaneously determined based on evident learner needs at the time?
- How does the ordinary teacher find (or create) a task-based syllabus that fits the authentic language needs of his or her students?
- Can an off-the shelf task-based syllabus ever work for multiple age groups in diverse settings in different parts of the world?
- How much does cultural background influence the acceptability of different task types, input, and sequencing?

From these questions and from the whole article it is clear that task-based teaching and learning as a field is an exciting field that is experiencing much ferment at this time. Task-based teaching and learning potentially offer great riches if explored by teachers in their dual roles as instructor and action researcher. Professional researchers can provide additional answers to the questions raised here. The answers will enhance the teaching and learning of languages around the world. The ultimate beneficiaries will be the students whose needs will be more fully met if the questions are clearly raised, explored, and answered.

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A Task-based Approach to Teaching a Content-based Canadian Studies Course in an EFL Context

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Abstract

This paper offers a task-based methodological framework for introducing Canadian culture and content to intermediate level Japanese learners. There are very few commercially prepared materials dealing with Canadian culture currently on the market in Japan, and what is available is informational, generalized and staid in nature and often focuses on only one skill such as reading or listening. Materials and methodology presented in this paper are designed to address a wider range of language skills and are issues based, meaning that students must comprehend different perspectives of target content materials, synthesize and consolidate these perspectives and produce language (meaningful output) demonstrating an understanding of the target issues in question. Example issues presented in this paper include bilingualism and French immersion education. The materials and framework draw from several established definitions of tasks but were originally prepared using Nunan's (1989) definition of a communicative task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (p.10).

Key words: Task-based learning, content-based instruction, Canada, culture, classroom roles

Introduction

EFL teachers work in an incredibly wide range of contexts ranging from more structured language programmes to situations where language teaching is relegated to adjunct status. While the most common form of language teaching requires teachers to work with students on the four skills, other teachers are often charged with teaching courses leaning in the direction of content-based instruction. These include subjects like Intercultural Communication and Comparative Culture where the teacher must achieve some unspecified balance, often different from class to class, in getting important content aims across to students while at the same time helping them to develop their language skills. These content and language aims usually intersect at varying points along a spectrum, and are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated by factors such as curricular needs, student abilities and teacher beliefs. This paper describes how a task-based approach was used to develop materials and methods for a content-based course in Canadian Studies for second-year students in a Japanese university. The teaching methodology and supplementary materials presented here give special focus on input/output tasks that encourage students to interact with opposing viewpoints of several Canadian cultural issues.

The learning context

The method and materials proposed here have been developed to match the needs of lower-intermediate to intermediate level students from a Japanese university department, the Department of International Studies, offering a broad range of course options but no one particular area of structured, developed specialization. In this department, students can choose from courses including Economics, Intercultural Communication, Comparative Culture, Literature and Japanese Language Teaching to language courses in English, German and Chinese. There is a small annual cohort of approximately 20 students of the total yearly departmental intake of 90 students who are motivated to learn English but must choose from a hodgepodge of language course offerings lacking any coherent structure in which a student may try to advance from one level to the next. The majority of these English language classes are also taught in Japanese using the traditional grammar translation method. It was thus determined that the main part of the materials developed for the second-year bridging seminar on Canadian Studies be student-centered communicative tasks in which students used the language to exchange content-related meaning. In contexts like this, methods and materials often need to be developed and re-designed, in many cases from year to year, to match the particular learning needs of an individual group of learners. This has the positive effect of constantly infusing new tasks and materials into a bank of materials that the teacher can then choose from to match teaching aims with a given set of learners. However, because students self-select into this course, interest in both communicative language learning and the Canadian course content can be assumed as a starting point.

Tasks and content-based instruction

In EFL content-based language courses like the one described here, students need to be engaged in a variety of tasks and classroom roles as they attempt to gain a greater command of both the language and the target content. Nunan (2004) has summarized the benefits of content-based instruction as including an “organic, analytical approach to language development” and “a framework within which learners can have sustained engagement on both content mastery and second language acquisition” (p.132). He also notes how these benefits work toward increasing motivation and engaging the learner more actively in the learning process, and clearly states that CBI is very much in line with the principles of task-based language teaching. Brinton (2003, cited in Nunan, p. 132) identifies five principles of CBI:

1. Instructional decisions are based on content rather than language criteria,
2. Skills should be integrated as much as possible,
3. Students should be involved actively in all phases of the learning process,
4. Content should be chosen for its relevance to students’ lives, interests and/or academic goals,
5. Authentic materials and tasks should be selected.

The tasks, materials and methodology offered in this paper fulfill these principles and are intended to be flexible enough to work both within a strict CBI framework and in content-based situations calling for more focus on language needs.

At this point, rather than committing to whether a task need be more form centered or more meaning centered, it is perhaps more constructive to suggest that the shape and role of tasks needs to be flexible enough to fit not only the various contexts in which EFL is taught but also within a single teaching context and even within an individual course. Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001) help in this regard by offering that "definitions of task will need to differ according to the purposes for which the tasks are used" (p.11). When placed within larger units of instruction, "loose definition tasks" can serve both the learner and the teacher more effectively when a particular context calls for flexibility and negotiation in what materials are to be presented, how they are to be taught and how classroom roles between teacher and student necessarily evolve in a given learning situation. Nunn (2006, this volume) has proposed a task-based framework based on units of instruction that leads students through tasks and exercises which may or may not focus on form through to "holistic outcomes in the form of written reports, spoken presentations and substantial small-group conversations that lead to decision-making outcomes" (p. 70). The same unit-based model can be successfully applied to more content centered courses in the form of flexible staged tasks which allow for instruction to be adapted to fit situational needs.

In a Canadian Studies unit where students are asked, for example, to develop a critical understanding of bilingualism in Canada, these tasks may include an introductory lecture listening task where the teacher's role is more central. It might further call for lectures to be supplemented or preceded by Dictogloss-style (Wajnryb, 1997) dictation form-focused tasks based on the subject material and profiling subject related vocabulary items where a small group of learners may work together to reconstruct a shorter dictated text as accurately as possible, or a pair-based collaborative note-taking task (see, for example, Nunn and Lingley, 2004, p. 16) based on the lecture itself in which students support each other in identifying the main points of the lecture and any key vocabulary, phrases and expressions. This lecture listening task might alternatively follow a later-stage holistic communication task – again, the key aspect is flexibility for the teacher in determining when a specific task should be introduced in a unit and whether it be language oriented or meaning oriented. The unit would also feature reading tasks in which the teacher circulates to monitor and check comprehension as students interact (individually and in pairs) with a prepared text, and higher level main tasks where learners take more central communicative roles exchanging and synthesizing meaning based on differing viewpoints of a single issue. These activities lead to a final student generated piece of language output either in the form of a written assignment or, more commonly, a presentation in which the student leads the seminar in an aspect of the Canadian issue researched independently. These staged tasks meet several of Brinton's principles, with prominence given to the integrated multi-skills approach to language teaching in which speaking, listening, reading and writing are all dealt with, often in conjunction with each other. The assessed final stage meets Breen's third principle which calls for students to take control of the learning process. Giving responsibility to the learner to lead a seminar for 20 minutes fosters a "learning-by-doing" environment and reduces dependence on the teacher. Also, the text materials in the main classroom tasks, the lecture listening tasks and those materials accessed through independent research all meet Brinton's fifth principle regarding authenticity.

Defining tasks

The varying definitions of tasks have been well covered in the literature in general and in this volume in particular, and need not be revisited here in any great detail. Ellis (2003) has summarized these nicely and has added his own concise definition as follows: "Tasks are activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use" (p. 3). But what is more helpful here in assessing whether a set of tasks for classroom use adequately meets the requirements in fulfillment of a task-based approach are what Ellis (2003, pp. 9-10) has identified as the critical features of a task. These features are 1). A task is a workplan, 2). A task involves primary focus on meaning, 3). A task involves real-world processes of language use, 4.) A task can involve any of the four language skills, 5). A task engages cognitive processes, and 6). A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome. We shall return to this list of features later in assessing whether the materials and approach presented herein can be considered as comprising a fully task-based approach. However, for the purposes of this paper, what constitutes a task draws primarily on Nunan's (1989; 2004) definition of pedagogical tasks as "a piece of classroom work that involves the learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form" (2004, p.4).

Task authenticity, text authenticity

What makes a task authentic? Guariento and Morley (2001, p.350) note the importance of student "engagement" in a task as essential in determining task authenticity. While most definitions of task authenticity refer to a relationship with real world applications such as reserving a table at a restaurant, it is argued here that what happens in, and what is needed for, the actual classroom is very much "real world" for a student. Note-taking tasks, practicing how to communicate meaning in the target language and tasks which develop target content understanding are all of central importance for students as they strive to succeed in their real world university learning situations and perhaps even prepare for overseas study that will require confidence in using the language of the classroom in a different real world. Nunan (2004) proposes that pedagogical tasks such as information exchanges can have an "activation rationale" designed "to activate their emerging language skills" (p. 20). When students are given the task of reading a short text, sharing the contents with a partner, listening to an explanation of what their partner has read about the same topic and then consolidating that information to share with a larger group of students, a variety of skills are activated and engaged to communicate a specific outcome ensuring task authenticity.

As noted, there are few commercially prepared Canadian resource materials on the Japanese market available for EFL students. What is available provides only a very generalized understanding of Canada and mainly employs single-skill language exercises as opposed to a multi-skills approach based on content. After a lengthy search only two textbooks, both published in the early 1990s, were found that deal with Canadian culture and both were set up, as most textbooks are, in a very linear way and focused on comprehension of a reading passage with supporting fill-in-the-blanks activities and manipulation of language form. One textbook relied heavily on listing Japanese translations of key words in the passages and neither provided any meaning-centered communicative tasks. Topics included standard fare such geography, history, food, sports, environment, houses and shopping. Given the dearth of Canadian content materials available, a task-based approach using authentic materials is suggested as best matching the language and content needs of learners.

Guariento and Morley (op cit) have noted the importance of using authentic materials to maintain and increase learner motivation by suggesting that they "give the learner the feeling that he or she is learning the 'real' language; that they are in touch with a living entity, the target language as it is used by the community which speaks it" (p.347). In a content-based teaching context, the use of authentic materials seems the obvious tack but in an EFL situation, some simplification is often necessary both for spoken and written texts. As we are using a flexible interpretation of tasks and how they can be used to either focus on form or meaning depending on need, it also seems appropriate to keep an open mind regarding authenticity. Although the sample texts provided here were written with the aim of helping students come to terms with different perspectives of the target content, they were nonetheless written with the understanding that the reader would be an EFL student. In other words, some simplification has been used in the short texts although every effort has been made to make the texts seem as authentic as possible – the language is natural, the meaning is clear and directly relevant to the content and the tasks. The texts for the French Immersion content were simplified from an article written by Cummins (2000), an authority on the subject. The texts for Canadian bilingualism are largely simulated – perhaps quite low on the continuum of what constitutes authenticity but nevertheless authentic. Spoken lecture discourse can also be simplified and controlled by the speaker but still the activity simulates authenticity when the lecture is not delivered at natural speed. We can add here that, as Guariento and Morley (op cit) note, even when spoken and written texts are fully authentic, "partial comprehension of text is no longer considered to be necessarily problematic, since this is something which occurs in real life" (p. 348).

Students use or are directed to a list of un-simplified, unaltered authentic materials when researching for final presentations. These may include newspaper articles, web sources or chapters of books. No claims are made here that students always prepare polished presentations to the class and, quite often, it is easy to see that many do not fully understand their own presentation content. However, the process of researching a topic in the target language and trying to communicate to classmates what they have been studying is an important one. When students fall short of being able to fully explain the aspect of Canadian culture for which they are responsible, the teacher may take on a more active role in helping the student through the final task of leading the seminar, drawing out information by questioning and facilitating peer questioning. The aim is always to ensure that the class has achieved an acceptable understanding of the Canadian content even though a learner-centered approach is being employed.

Canadian studies in the EFL classroom: Bridging language and content

Language teachers interested in introducing Canadian content can assume little or no "common knowledge" about Canadian issues, and the terms, phrases and cultural references used when discussing or teaching about Canada. Canadian Studies courses might employ any number of vocabulary items and expressions unique to the Canadian experience – the 1980 referendum, Bill 101, language police, the Conquest, the Quiet Revolution and the "Distinct Society" clause are but a few that come to mind that would need explicit pre-teaching, perhaps with the support of a glossary, in a unit on Quebec's place in Canada. Bernier (1997) notes that teachers must be especially sensitive to this in supporting ESL students in L1 contexts and suggests that techniques and strategies need to be adopted to open student access to the target content. This is all the more important in EFL situations where student access to the content requires even more explicit attention. This can be accomplished either with specific vocabulary teaching prior to addressing content in an authentic or near authentic way, or with tasks, activities or exercises that address content and language simultaneously. To keep flexibility at the forefront, we should even consider doing both, allowing for maximum recycling of the vocabulary items.

Even with intermediate level Japanese learners with good communicative command of English as assessed using institutionalized rating scales (Nunn, 2000) it can be assumed that students will have only a surface understanding of Canada and the many issues confronting contemporary Canadian society. Pedagogical responsibility in the teaching of EFL content-based courses demands that the teacher reconcile to the best of his ability the linguistic needs of the student with an approach to the content that challenges the intellectual abilities of the learner. Finding this balance and making decisions about what might need to be sacrificed either in terms of language or content remains the individual responsibility of the teacher who weighs any number of factors before settling on an approach. In the end, as Srole (1997) points out, “All good teachers know that they must reach their audience” (p. 105), and balance between content and language will naturally work itself out in each teaching context.

In spite of overall favourable impressions of Canada as a “safe” country with plentiful nature, what students know about Canada is usually limited to being able to name a few natural wonders such as the Rocky Mountains, Niagara Falls and the northern lights. Students might also be able to identify a couple of major cities, the odd entertainer such as Céline Dion and other things associated with Canada such as Anne of Green Gables and ice hockey. This initial limited understanding does not preclude the possibility of gaining a more in-depth understanding of issues central to contemporary Canada but it does suggest the need for a measured approach to the tasks used. For this reason, teachers may want to use tasks which help to build and practice the vocabulary needed for discussing Canadian issues more comfortably. This is what Snow, Met and Genesse (1989) have referred to as “content-obligatory language” and might include, in the materials provided here on bilingualism in Canada for example, such words as “Anglophone”, “Francophone”, “federal government”, “provincial government” “unilingual”, and “immersion”. Bilingualism in the general sense will include still other content obligatory concepts such as "additive bilingualism", "subtractive bilingualism" and "relative competence".

While the penultimate and final stages of the task-based approach presented here require holistic use of language by students in the form of information exchange tasks and individual presentations with specific communicative outcomes, form-focused or micro-linguistic tasks are usually needed to familiarize students with the content-obligatory vocabulary and serve as a necessary foundation step in working through the staged progression of tasks that become more meaning focused. When the teacher aims to have students come to terms with meaningful content material, which in a Canadian Studies courses would include tackling issues such as Quebec's place in Canada, multiculturalism, language policy in unilingual Quebec, First Nations land claims, regional identity and immigration policy, foundation materials emphasizing pre-task listening and reading activities, language exercises and more form-focused tasks serve to strengthen what can be accomplished in the later meaning-focused tasks. Again, it is noted here that these language-centered tasks may also be re-incorporated at various stages of the unit, even revisiting them during the more holistic stages, where the teacher may interrupt a task to correct or clarify language items, or model accurate language use through interaction with students. This is also a feature of Nunn's (this volume) unit-based framework.

Methodology and materials: Getting started with Canadian content

The following readings are suggested as a later stage meaning-focused task for introducing students to two key Canadian issues – Bilingualism and French Immersion Education. These later stage materials and the tasks students are required to do with them would be preceded by preparatory vocabulary building exercises such as gap filling, glossary building, matching and dictation exercises which function to familiarize students with language needed for smoother interaction with content. These preparatory input activities also serve to mobilize learner attention and arouse interest (Skehan, 2002). An example of a dictation text is provided here which highlights target vocabulary while, at the same time, introduces an aspect of the target content. It is a fully authentic text, altered very minimally by deleting one word. The teacher reads the texts three times, twice by speaking slowly and once at natural speed. Students write down as much as can and then, working in groups of three, students try to collaboratively reconstruct the text with one group writing it out on the board. The teacher can then profile target vocabulary and language forms, as well as discuss pertinent content, explaining certain parts in more detail and fielding questions from the class.

Authentic dictation text for Canadian Bilingualism topic

Recently released data from the 2001 census reveals the deep divide in Canada's linguistic duality. The census found that 17.7% of Canadians describe themselves as bilingual. The 2001 figure was up from 17% in the 1996 census. But the big growth area in bilingualism was among Canada's francophones, of whom almost half said they could speak both French and English. That compares to less than 10% of anglophones. Considering francophones make up only about 23% of Canada's population, and their numbers are falling, the trend is not positive. Among English speakers outside Quebec (Canada's major francophone province) only 7.1% said they were bilingual. Indeed, only Quebec and New Brunswick, another province with a significant francophone population, exceeded the national average of bilingual citizens.

From *Guardian Weekly*, February 20, 2003

After doing two or three such communicative dictation activities and other micro-linguistic language exercises, students work in pairs with each given a different perspective about the target content issue in the form of a short reading text. The student is required to read through and be prepared, without looking at the text, to explain the gist of the content of the text to his/her partner. The teacher’s role in this task is to monitor the task, circulating among the students to check for understanding. While it is a meaning-focused task, students may have questions regarding form which the teacher may have to address. The pair is then asked to consolidate the information provided in both readings by first explaining to their partner the gist of their text and giving examples. As an interactive task, some negotiation of meaning by asking and answering questions and seeking clarification is required. When both students have fully explained and understood each other’s text, they are then asked to work together to consolidate the differing positions of the brief texts and, finally, to briefly present a balanced explanation of the issue (bilingualism or French Immersion) to the larger class – collaborating and sharing information for a joint communicative outcome. See Table 1 for a detailed progression of the different task stages and roles teacher and student take during each stage. A lecture listening task is offered here as a follow-up later stage task but can also be used at an earlier stage of the unit as an introduction to the target content.

Issue 1: Bilingualism in Canada

Student A text: Canada - A Bilingual Country

Canada is officially a bilingual country. Both French and English are spoken in Canada. All Canadian citizens can get government service in either French or English. Road signs are written in both official languages, French and English can be found on all products sold in Canada and both languages are spoken on airplanes, trains, etc. If you want to get a job working as a federal civil servant, bilingual ability is needed and politicians must use both. National radio and television broadcasts are provided in both languages. The Prime Minister of Canada must be able to use both English and French. Most of Canada is English. There are ten provinces. Eight of these are officially English speaking. One of the provinces, Quebec, is officially French speaking. Only one small province, New Brunswick, is officially bilingual with French spoken mainly in the northern part and English in the southern part. Canada is famous internationally as a bilingual country. Second language education is also very good in Canada. For example, English-speaking Canadians can go to French immersion schools to learn French.

Student B text: Is Canada a Bilingual Country?

Although many people believe Canada is a bilingual country, this is actually a myth. Only a small number of Canadians can speak both languages fluently. There are more Francophones who can speak English than English-speaking Canadians who can speak French. Overall, only about 10% of all Canadians are really bilingual. The number of bilingual Anglophones is actually only about 7%. In truth, there is very little need for English in most parts of Quebec and there is very little need for French in most parts of English Canada. Many Canadians complain that providing services in both languages is a waste of government money. Very few English-speaking Canadians have interest in learning French and get angry when French ability is necessary to get good jobs. Many English Canadians also don’t want to travel to Quebec. Also, the policy of official bilingualism is a policy of the national government but most provincial governments favour one language. For example, the government of Quebec has an official unilingual policy – French. Many people in Quebec see bilingualism as a danger to their French language and culture. In reality, we cannot say that Canada is bilingual.

Issue 2: French Immersion Education

Student A text: The Benefits of French Immersion Education
Canada is famous internationally as a bilingual country. Second language education is also very good in Canada. For example, many English-speaking Canadians can go to French immersion schools to learn French. Immersion means to be completely involved in, or surrounded by something. For Canadians, learning a second language is becoming more important for getting a job. Government jobs, teaching, journalism and the service industry are examples of jobs that require French ability. The best way to get French ability in the classroom is to learn through French Immersion. There are three types of French immersion education: early, middle and late immersion. Early immersion starts in kindergarten or Grade 1. Middle immersion starts in Grade 4 of elementary school and late immersion starts in Grade 7, the first year of junior high school. Teachers use only French in the classroom. That means subjects like social studies, science and math are taught in French. Research shows that early immersion is the best way to become fluent in French. It is clear that students are bilingual after studying French using the immersion method. When a student gets 50-80% of classes taught in the French language, that means the student is getting a lot of language input.

Student B text: Problems in French Immersion Education?
There is no doubt that immersion is one of the best classroom methods for learning a second language. French immersion education in Canada is well known a successful teaching model. But it certainly isn't perfect. English students who started French immersion in kindergarten or Grade 1 were measured for French ability after Grade 6. While their receptive skills (listening and reading) were almost like native French speakers, their expressive skills (writing and speaking) were clearly not as good as a French native speaker. There is also a high drop-out rate which means that a lot of students who start French immersion don't finish it. People in Canada are also starting to worry that students who enroll in French immersion are mainly from high-income families. Enrollment rates from lower income families are low. It is also interesting that more than 60% of all students who take French Immersion are girls. Another important point is that the only French that students get comes from the classroom with almost no French language use with family or friends. The language of the playground is usually English. Some parents also complain it is difficult to help their children with their homework because they don't speak French. Finally, one important problem with French Immersion is that there are often not enough qualified teachers.

Classroom roles for teacher and learner

In Nunan's (2004) analysis of tasks, the respective classroom roles of teacher and learner is a key feature. When teachers are willing to step back and let holistic communicative tasks develop as they may (and in many cases this means a certain sacrificing of both form and content), there is the assumption not only that the learner will be able to perform the tasks adequately but also the general belief that learners can be central, and will want to be central, to their process of learning language. The general learning context described in this paper provides minimal classroom opportunity for student-centered language learning based on using the L2 as the language of instruction. Therefore, some activities in which the teacher is central can serve dual preparatory functions with both teaching language form and in establishing the expectation of a greater student role because even the activities described as having a central role for the teacher very much involve the learner actively. Roles noted in Table 1 (below) suggest the variety of roles teachers perform, including a central role, in support of student centered learning.

Table 1 Classroom roles during Canadian content task stages

Task stage	**Student role**	**Teacher role**
Early stage (form)	Reading: Gap-filling activity Writing: Glossary construction	Supportive Facilitator
Early stage (form)	Listening I: solo Listening II: small group accurate reconstruction of dictation text	Central (giving brief dictation profiling essential vocabulary, checking)
Early stage (meaning)	Reading (solo) comprehension, gist	Monitor (circulating & checking understanding)
Later stage (meaning)	Interactive, pair work (consolidating differing perspectives into a whole)	Facilitator (helping students consolidate materials from the texts)
Later stage (meaning)	Brief presentation of a Canadian issue	Assessment
Early or late (meaning and/or form)	Active listening (individual, and pair-based collaborative note-taking)	Central (lecturing, recycling of content/vocabulary.)
Final stage (meaning)	Presentation - Leading the seminar (learner-centered communication of content)	In the class = assessment Out of class = facilitator, advisor (during private consultations)

Back to the features

Returning now to Ellis's six features of tasks, we can now determine if the set (or unit) of staged tasks constitutes a task-based approach to teaching Canadian content. Some the suggested early tasks and activities focus more on form and we must also admit that it may be necessary to sometimes deal explicitly with language and form even in the later stage meaning-focused tasks. However, the set of tasks as outlined in this paper is essentially a flexible work plan with dual aims of helping students build much needed communicative language skills and teaching target Canadian content. The tasks, especially the later stage tasks, involve a primary focus on meaning in that the target content is always central to the tasks. While the overall balance of the unit of tasks is meaning/content centered, form and language development is by no means ignored and is profiled where necessary. Authenticity of these classroom tasks and texts has been justified in terms of the "real-world" applications students may need the language and content for. Each of the four skills is practiced, usually in ways which call for students to employ different skills at one time. Another of Ellis's task features is that a task engages cognitive processes which is obviously what happens when students work through the penultimate interactive task stage of the lesson in which they work in pairs with short texts representing different perspectives of a single issue – comprehending, manipulating, producing and consolidating shared meaning through interaction is virtually cognition defined. The last of Ellis's task features refers to a clearly defined communicative outcome which is exactly what the latter meaning-focused task stages do in the form of an assessed two-part holistic and communicative language operation.

Conclusions

This paper has introduced a set of materials and a methodological framework for a task-based approach to CBI in an EFL context. Because of the difficulties in teaching content courses like Canadian Studies in EFL situations, a flexible approach to the use and function of tasks in content-based teaching in the context described is central. It calls for tasks that ultimately require students to produce meaning-centered communicative outcomes to be supplemented at the teacher's discretion by preparatory form-focused tasks and language exercises when needed. The framework presented is based largely but not solely on Nunan's (1989, 2004) definition of tasks and is further situated in relation to Brinton's five principles of CBI and Ellis's (2003) features of tasks.

Using tasks to facilitate content-based instruction in a Canadian Studies course for intermediate-level Japanese EFL students is offered here as one example of how task-based teaching can be used to meet divergent student needs. The approach and materials have been developed for a specific teaching context and are offered not as a method for all contexts but as an example of how method can be adapted and manipulated to meet the needs of a specific group of learners, and to show that teachers can create ways to use authentic materials to teach target content aims in content-based EFL courses. The methodology as described here attempts as much as possible to fulfill language and content aims in as balanced a way as possible but stops short of valuing one over the other. Each teacher (and student) will ultimately find their own balance in such an approach with the tasks used differently by each group of learners.

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Task Based Teaching: Learning English without Tears

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Abstract

Many areas of education are undergoing changes in the way teaching and learning is perceived. Teacher-centered lecturing and structural-syllabus instruction are giving way to a more student-centered, hands-on, practical, and flexible approaches (Shank and Cleary, 1994). The field of second language teaching is no exception in this paradigm shift. One of the areas which came under this paradigm shift is the traditional Present-Practice-Produce method of teaching English. It has been replaced by Communicative Language Teaching. An offshoot of Communicative Language Teaching is Task-Based Teaching. This paper, as a point of departure, strongly argues that 'Task based teaching has an edge over other traditional methods of teaching' through the description of a project undertaken with a group of second language learners from a school in Bangalore, India, where the medium of instruction is Kannada. The project was based on the assumptions of Constructivism, Krashen's (i+1) Input Hypothesis and the concept of 'whole language'. Our project began with the hypothesis that task based teaching enhances the language proficiency of learners. As we could not do away with the use of textbook mandated by the school, the textbook was recreated into meaningful tasks which were introduced during the pre-task stage and the learners were actively involved in working through them. A discussion on the forms used by the learners while doing the tasks was found to be

very fruitful. The paper reports in detail on the objectives of the project, the planning and implementation phase, the difficulties faced during the implementation of the plan, and the insights gained from this project.

1. Introduction

Every language teacher today realizes the importance and the relevance of the "student-centered, hands-on, practical and flexible approach" (Shank and Cleary, 1994), and the worldwide demand for Communicative Language Teaching which helps to understand the language in context and to use it effectively in situations outside the classroom. As a result, changes have been taking place in many areas of education. The field of second language teaching is no exception in this paradigm shift. But for ELT, it has become a challenge to accommodate the changes due to various reasons. The most important factor is that one can not ignore the practical aspect of every existing education system. For example, completing the syllabus using the prescribed text books, preparing students for examinations are part of many classroom realities. In spite of the honest intention of tailoring a needs-based flexible course, every teacher is required to function within a large, systematized, controlled education system. This is inevitable in large institutions as in India where the number of learners in a particular course could exceed several hundred. The entire machinery acquires a certain regimentation forced by the demands of time, place and funds. This paper argues that if a teacher is resourceful, s/he can still find ways to overcome the difficulties associated with the systematized and controlled education system in order to make learning more meaningful.

Section 2 below discusses some theoretical aspects that underpinned the feasibility of recreating the prescribed textbook as a series of meaningful tasks, and the outcome of task-based learning.

2. Theoretical background

A project was undertaken in Bangalore, India, to see how a shorter learning system could be embedded within the larger prevailing system and thereby make the best use of the situation. So it became necessary to see how the merits of different language learning frameworks like Communicative Language Learning, Task-Based Learning and Present- Practice-Produce(PPP), can be put together to achieve the best result.

As Joanne Pettis, quoting Henry Widdowson comments, “If you say you are eclectic but cannot state the principles of your eclecticism, you are not eclectic, merely confused” (Pettis, 2003). Roger Dunne from Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico rightly states, “In any event, most language teachers are probably influenced more by course books than by manuals and training courses and most popular course books are decidedly eclectic in their approach. It is probably these pragmatic market forces that will determine the future direction of language teaching in many parts of the world rather than a fight to death between academic fundamentalists” (Dunne, 2003). So it was found necessary to discuss the principles on the basis of which the project was developed.

2.1 Background information to the project

First of all, the kind of course books that are used internationally are different from the kind that was used in the class chosen for the project. The book focused only on reading and writing. Secondly, one aim was to show how the ‘market forces’ can be given a slight change of direction, and what appears like an handicap can be turned into an asset if the prescribed text was re-created into tasks. Because the units in the book were tapped to apply an eclectic approach, the presenters have decided to show how it is possible to make units in the prescribed text book tailor made for a specific class.

2.2. Supporting theories

The project was set within the dual framework of Communicative Language Teaching and Task-Based Learning. Theories of language use in context play important roles in Communicative Language Teaching and theories of language learning play important roles in Task-Based Learning. Hence, the merits of both were used in the project.

2.2.1 Communicative Language Teaching

Howatt (1984) distinguishes between the weak and the strong versions of Communicative Language Teaching. The weak version stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use English for communicative purposes and therefore attempts to integrate communicative activities into the programme of language teaching. This is the version followed in most learning contexts, especially in Asian countries. As different from this, the stronger version of communicative language teaching claims that language can be acquired only through communication. This would mean that teaching involves not just "activating an existing knowledge of the language", but "stimulating the development of the language system itself" (Howatt, p. 279). However, whether it is the weak or the strong version, the proponents of Communicative Language Teaching have always viewed learning a second/foreign language as acquiring the linguistic means to perform different functions. Some principles of Communicative Language Teaching include:

1. Language should be a means to an end and the focus should be on meaning, not on the form.
2. The learner has to formulate and produce ideas, information, opinions and so on.
3. Teacher intervention to correct mistakes should be minimal as this distracts from communication.

(Richards and Rodgers, 1994)

2.2.2. Task Based Learning.

As David Nunan (1989) says, "Task based teaching and learning is teaching and learning a language by using language to accomplish open ended tasks. Learners are given a problem or objective to accomplish but are left with some freedom in approaching this problem or objective." A task is defined by David Nunan as "an activity (or technique) where students are urged to accomplish something or solve some problem using their language. Preferably, this activity is open-ended; there is no set way to accomplish their goal" (1989).

According to Jane Willis, a task is a goal-oriented activity with a clear purpose. Doing a communication task involves achieving an outcome, creating a final product that can be appreciated by others. Tasks can be used as the central component of a three-part framework: "pre-task", "task cycle", and "language focus." These components have been carefully designed to create four optimum conditions for language acquisition, and thus provide rich learning opportunities to suit different types of learners (Willis, 1996). Learners get *exposure* at the pre-task stage, and an opportunity to recall things they know. The task cycle gives them speaking and writing exposure with opportunities for students to learn from each other.

The task cycle also gives students opportunities to *use* whatever language they have, both in private (where mistakes, hesitations, and approximate renderings do not matter so long as the meaning is clear) and in public (where there is a built-in desire to strive for accuracy of form and meaning, so as not to lose face).

Motivation (short term) is provided mainly by the need to achieve the objectives of the task and to report back on it. Success in doing this can increase longer term motivation. Motivation to listen to fluent speakers doing the task is strong too, because in attempting the task, learners will notice gaps in their own language, and will listen carefully to hear how fluent speakers express themselves.

A focus on form is beneficial in two phases in the framework. The planning stage between the private task and the public report promotes close attention to language form. As learners strive for accuracy, they try to organize their reports clearly and check words and patterns they are not sure of. In the final component, language analysis activities also provide a focus on form through consciousness-raising processes. Learners notice and reflect on language features, recycle the task language, go back over the text or recording and investigate new items, and practise pronouncing useful phrases.

2.3. Constructivism

"There's no intellectual growth without some reconstruction, some reworking" (Dewey, 1938, p.64). The notion of constructivism was another base which indicates that all learning involves relearning, reorganization in one's prior representations of the world. So it was assumed that whatever English is learned in the earlier years by the students in the experimental group would also play a part. They will 'sort out the system that operates in the language with which they are presented' (Williams and Burden, 1997, p.13). Also, one of the assumptions of constructivism is 'contextualized learning'. As the main goal of the project was to exploit the mandated text book, contexts provided in various units of the book formed the background of the central task. One of the intentions in doing so was to demonstrate that a language teacher need not give up in a material driven or text book driven course.

2.4 Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1987) explains how successful "acquisition" occurs: by simply understanding input that is a little beyond the learner's present "level" – he defined that present "level" as i and the ideal level of input as i +1. There were two reasons why it was found necessary to take this hypothesis as one of the bases. First of all, after a few lessons the pattern of teaching can become predictable and hence boring. So it is necessary to set tasks at (i+1) level to keep them motivated. Secondly the linguistic experience of the students in the project group was found suitable to make the tasks challenging. The meaning focused tasks formed the centre of the learning activity. Except for very little incidental explanation of exceptional uses, students were left to understand and form their own grammatical principles and rules. Also according to N. S. Prabhu, students may learn more effectively when their minds are focused on the task, rather than on the language they are learning (Prabhu, 1987).

The constructivist view of language learning looks at student-centred learning as the concept of students doing more than the teacher and the cognitive view supports students' choice of what they will learn and how. Since the project had to work within the existing syllabus, students had no choice. But the tasks set were such that students had a lot to do. Effort was made to follow as many tenets as possible. By empowering them it was possible to get better participation in the tasks they were doing and it made them more motivated. Students also felt their efforts were better appreciated and respected in this system. It increased their confidence and hence their involvement in the whole process.

2.5. Whole language

The aim of the project included targeting all the skills and so the concept of 'whole language' was kept in mind. According to Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores (1987), 'Whole Language' is based on the following ideas:

a) Language is for making meaning for accomplishing purposes.
b) Written language is language and thus what is true for language in general is true for written language.
c) The cuing systems of language (phonology in oral, orthography in written language, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) are always simultaneously present and interacting in any instance of language use.
d) Language use always occurs in a situation.
e) Situations are critical to meaning making.

Bergin and Lafave (1998) say, "Whole Language proponents assert that given choice and meaningful tasks in an appropriate environment, students will be motivated to read and write." With this in view, tasks which aim at the development of all the skills, were designed and were set in contexts or environments as close to the ones students are likely to find themselves in.

Whole Language emphasizes the importance of 'guidance' from the teacher and 'participation' in the learning process. This is based on Vygotsky's (1962) concept of 'zone of proximal development'. The group and pair work which were an essential prerequisite of the tasks in our project, was included to provide assistance at the 'Zone of proximal development' by both the peers and the teacher.

Bergin and Lafave (1998) say, “Cognitive psychology also endorses the ideas that language must be learned as a whole and taught as a whole.” Also Goodman says, “Whole language identifies three phases in Language development, perceiving - in which the learner through listening and reading attends to certain aspects of experience, ideating – through which the learner reflects on the experience, and presenting - in which the student expresses new knowledge through speaking and writing (1986)”. With these phases in mind the tasks were designed to guide the students along the entire teaching and learning process. As the project progressed students could see the difference between the traditional classroom situations in which they had learned English in the earlier years and found how in their present learning situation meaning occupied an important place. Steve Graham and Harris (1994) drew a distinction between the traditional classroom and the Whole Language classroom.

	Traditional Classroom	**Whole language Classroom**
1	Students hold a skill-based view of writing	Students hold meaning based views of writing
2	Does not emphasize peer interaction as much as Whole language classroom	Emphasizes peer interaction more than the Traditional classroom
3	Students choose the topic	Students are given the topic
4	More individualistic work	Students discuss topic with others
5	Tasks are more closed	Tasks are more open

The system of education in which the project was run, believes in teacher-centred learning. But as other bases of the project were using Communicative Language Teaching method and focusing on the Whole Language, the project shifted the responsibility of learning onto the students. The teachers were facilitators of learning and not presenters of information. Lea et al. (2003, p. 322) give the following tenets of the student-centered learning.

- the reliance on active rather than passive learning
- an emphasis on deep learning and understanding

- increased responsibility and accountability
- an increased sense of autonomy in the learner
- an interdependence between teacher and learner,
- mutual respect within the teacher learner relationship
- a reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both teacher and learner

With the support of these theories of teaching and learning, the project was designed and carried out to see what positive results accrue if more learner participation is ensured through using tasks in teaching English as a Second Language. The details of the project and the insights gained through this project will be discussed in the following section.

3. The Project

Taking into consideration the concept of 'whole language', principles of communicative approach to language teaching, and the principles of the task-based teaching/learning, a teaching project was undertaken to teach a set of students from class 1X .

3.1. The rationale

The rationale behind this project was that, the methodology adopted in the class room will play a major role in enhancing learning, despite the materials prescribed for teaching.

3.2. The School

When the investigators approached the school authorities of six schools in Bangalore, the administration of 'The Basaveshwara Boys High School' Rajaji Nagar, Bangalore had permitted the investigators to teach class lX students between 2pm and 4pm, five days a week, for 4 months.

The school is run by the management of 'The Basaveshwara Education Society' with aid from the Government of Karnataka. The school offers education from classes

1 to X in both English and the medium of Kannada to more than 2000 students. There were 53 teachers working in this school and they were teaching various core subjects like mathematics, science and languages like English, Hindi and Kannada.

3.3. The English Teachers

Out of the 53 teachers, 11 teachers taught English as a Second Language for classes V to X. These teachers are graduates/post graduates with B.Ed training. Their teaching experience varied from one year to eighteen years.

3.4. The Learners

The investigators had an informal discussion with the students of the experimental group. They were, however, scared to speak in English as they never got opportunities to speak in English. A questionnaire was also designed and administered to find out more information about the learners and their level of English (Appendix-1).

Out of the 31 students, parents of 12 students were educated and employed, four were businessmen, 11 were farmers, and two attenders, one electrician and one was employed in a private factory. Kannada is the first language of 28 students. One student was from Andhra Pradesh (Telugu as first language) and two from Maharashtra (Marathi as their first language). Most of them subscribe to a Kannada newspaper and 18 students do general reading in Kannada. One boy reads story books in English, and the English newspaper ‘The Asian Age’. Only three students listen to news in English and watch English programmes on television.

3.5. Hypotheses

Based on the findings of the informal discussions and the questionnaire, the following hypotheses were formed:

1. Task-based teaching enhances the language proficiency of learners
2. Tasks encourage learners to participate more in the learning processes

To test these hypotheses, it was decided to take up task-based teaching for class lX students at The Basaveshwara Boys High School, Bangalore.

3.6. Pre-project preparation

Before starting the project, a lot of preparation in terms of analysing the existing materials for teaching English, looking at some definitions of a task, and how to analyze a task and so on, was carried out by the investigators.

3. 6.1. Materials

Before taking up this project, the investigators analysed the materials used for teaching English for classes Vlll, lX, and X. The text books contained 10 units (for reading and writing) and 6 poems. It was found that class lX reader was inappropriate in many respects. For example, reading passages were too long and loaded with difficult vocabulary. And grammar was given very little importance. Not many examples or activities were provided. Therefore, it was decided to recreate the prescribed textbook materials into meaningful tasks and provide ample opportunities for maximum learner participation.

3.6.2 Tasks

After deciding the use of task based teaching methodology, the definition of a task and the components of a task were examined.

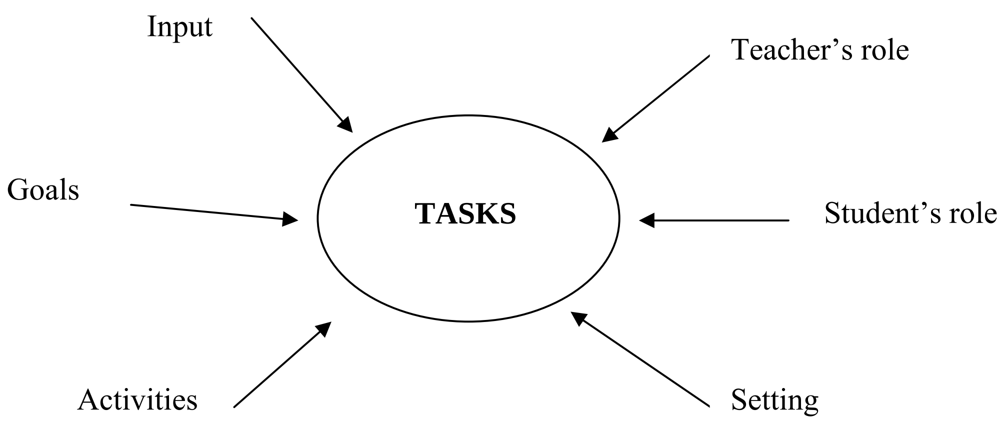
3.6.2.1 Definitions

'An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was considered a task' (Prabhu, 1987). 'An activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language, i.e., as a response' (Dictionary of Applied Linguistics).

3.6.2.2 Components of a Task

Tasks contain some form of 'input' which may be verbal (a dialogue/role play/reading) or, nonverbal (pictures/a gesture) followed by an activity which is in some way derived from the input. This activity sets out what learners need to do in relation to the input. Tasks have also goals and roles for both teachers and learners.

Components of a 'Task' (Nunan, 1989)



From the above diagram, a task can be viewed as a piece of meaning focused work, involving learners in comprehending, producing and/or interacting in the target language.

Before taking up the task of converting the textual content into various tasks, the following points were noted and kept in mind by the investigators:

- The objective of the task must be stated very clearly
- The task must be appropriate for the level of the learners
- The task must equip the learners with the ability to apply classroom learning in new situations.
- Tasks must be interesting and motivating to the students
- The form the input takes, must be clear to the teacher
- The roles of teachers and students must be specified clearly

- Through the task, learners must be encouraged to negotiate meaning
- The language that will be generated by the task must be predicted
- There should be variety and flexibility in the tasks

3.7. The design of the project

Before the actual teaching began, a meeting was arranged in which teachers and the two investigators exchanged information about the existing methods of teaching in this school, the different sections, students in each section and to some extent their background information.

3.7.1 The Subjects

The school had four sections of students studying in class lX. The medium of instruction for students of sections A and B was English and for sections C and D it was Kannada. It was presumed that the academic standards of students of section C were low when compared to students of section D. So the teachers expressed their wish to extend help to students of section C through this project. Thus section C became the experimental group with 31 boys, all of whom had voluntarily participated in the study.

3.7.2 Pre-test

To ascertain the linguistic level of the students, a pre-test was designed and administered. A brief introduction to the nature of the test was given a day prior to the test. All instructions were given in English and were also translated, orally, into Kannada. The data obtained through this pre-test were analysed for preparing tasks and activities (to follow i+1 hypothesis).

3.7.3 Methodology

Six units of the prescribed text book were represented as a series of tasks. Care was taken to accommodate all the four basic skills of language learning in these tasks (Appendix 2). In addition to the two investigators teaching on this project, two teachers of English from the school were encouraged to work on this project. They used to sit in the classes and observe, take notes in a diary, reflect and discuss with the investigators. They also assisted us in preparing, typing and photocopying work sheets and so on. Input was introduced and discussed during the pre-task stage. Students were told what they should do while working on tasks. During the post-task session, tasks were discussed and feedback was given by the teachers. To begin with, students were put into groups to work. Then they worked in pairs. Finally tasks were set for individual work. Whereever necessary, students were asked to repeat some of the tasks.

3.7.3.1 An example

Unit 1

Day 1

To introduce the concept of 'Swayamvara', a passage was written. It was used for listening task.

Pre-task: what is swayamvara? (Students discussed with peers and gave some answers)

Who could announce swayamvara? Is it still practised? Is it a good idea? Why /Why not?

Task 1: Your teacher will read out a passage. Listen to the passage carefully and complete the blanks (Blank completion worksheet was given to students).

Task 2: Your teacher will read the passage again. This time listen to the passage carefully and choose the correct answer and circle it (Worksheet based on multiple choices).

Post-task: Discussed the concept of swayamvara, and introduced some vocabulary.

Role-play: Five role play cards were prepared and a lot of information about each role was provided in each card.

Pre-task: Each role was introduced and some time was given to students to think about these roles. Then volunteers were given the role play cards to process the information.

Task: Students enacted their roles, the rest of the class listened to them.

Post-task: A number of questions were asked about these roles and the teacher and some students together answered the questions.

Some information from the reading passage was taken from the prescribed text, and based on the information the listening tasks were designed. Then, the remaining information from the prescribed text was re-written in the form of a monologue and each monologue was assigned a role. These monologues were used for speaking activities:

Day 2

A dialogue:

The remaining information of the first unit from the prescribed book was re-written in the form of a dialogue.

Pre-task: The speakers in the dialogue were introduced and a part of their conversation was also explained.

Task: Two students came forward to participate in the task and the rest of the class took notes and after the dialogue, the whole class answered some comprehension questions.

Post-task: The structures used in the dialogue were explained and students were given a worksheet to do. The worksheet was based on 'IF' clause type one.

Day 3

Students were asked to bring their prescribed text book to the class. They were put into six groups of five tudents.

Pre-task: Each group was asked to read 3 paragraphs, identify 10 new words they learnt, and summarise the information, and report it to the whole class

Task: Students read the assigned paragraphs. They did not encounter difficulties with the theme or the vocabulary in the paragraphs, as they were introduced through various tasks in the previous two days.

Post task: Students introduced the vocabulary and also reported the summary.

Day 4

Text-based exercises

Pre-task: Students were put into two groups. They were told what they should do.

Task: Group A asked the comprehension questions given in the text. Group B answered the questions without using the text.

Group B was given ten statements and they read them out. Group A said whether these statements were right or wrong and also correct the wrong statements

Post-task: Students did the writing exercises given in the book (as required for the end of year examination).

Day 5

Language games- Vocabulary games and grammar games.

3.7.4. Findings

The pre-test scores revealed that most of the students had average proficiency in English and that they were particularly weak in speaking and writing (productive skills). The final test was administered on both the experimental and the control groups on the same day, at the same time under similar conditions. In the experimental group, 12 out of 28 students got 10+ marks more than what they got in their pre-test. Thirteen students received 1 to 9 marks more than what they got in their pre-test. One student had no change in his scores. Out of 28 students only 2 got below 35% as against 9 in the pre-test.

# of students	Differences in scores	%
12	+10 to +23	42.85
13	+1 to +9	67.85
2	-1 and -8	
1	No change	

The means of the final test scores of the two groups were computed to measure the difference in their performance.

Groups	Means	Standard deviation
Experimental group	45.5	14.42
Control group	21.6	4.93

There was a difference in the means of the two groups. All other factors being common, the task-based teaching was the only variable. Therefore, the difference in means is due to the treatment given to the experimental group.

3.7.4.1 Observations made during the project

The following observations were made during the project period:

- Students showed interest in learning English. The reasons they gave were, “classes are full of activities and play.”
- Teachers also noted that students started talking in English.
- Students started using English for various purposes like greeting their friends in English, seeking permission before entering the class, apologizing for coming late to the class, asking questions in the class. For example, ‘Teacher, what do we do next?’ ‘Is it right?’ ‘Can you help me in writing this letter?’.
- The mid-term exam results also showed improvement in students’ performance.
- Teachers involved in this project showed interest in using tasks for teaching. This was noticed in their diaries.

- Another interesting observation made was that two students who are brothers showed a steady progress. Their father is a farmer from whom they never got any help in learning English. They were highly motivated by the tasks and were encouraged to participate in doing the tasks.
- Another student, a son of a businessman, had a very clear goal for learning English. He expressed that he wanted to learn English to improve his speaking skills because he wanted to become a lawyer. During the project time, he was very eager to complete any given task before others.
- Two students said that their writing skills improved because of the feedback they got from the teacher and the challenging nature of the tasks given to them.
- However, three students did not show any progress.

3.7.5 Insights and suggestions

Though it consumed a lot of time, the investigators felt that it was quite a rewarding experience as they gained useful insights by working through the project.

3.7.5.1 Insights

- Even with the existing constraints, classroom teaching can be given a communicative orientation, giving enough opportunities to students to use the language creatively.
- Teaching can be made learner-centred, with more emphasis on the learning process
- Any given text may be re-created into various tasks and activities.
- Task-based teaching enhances the language proficiency of learners.

3.7.5.2 Suggestions

Teacher trainers at both, pre-service and in-service training level are called on to impress upon the trainees, the need for training in designing tasks to make teaching more effective.

3.7.6. Difficulties faced during the project

First of all, the time given for the project was only four months, so the tasks were based only on the textual content and the tasks based on non-textual content could not be designed and tried out. Secondly, parents of the students in the experimental group had to be convinced that the tasks/activities were all based on the prescribed textbook and that all their children were well prepared to take the final exam.

3.8 What next?

If the number of the prescribed units are reduced at all levels, and teachers are given incentives for re-designing the content into meaningful tasks, in addition to preparing some non-text based tasks, then more effective teaching/learning can take place. Therefore, we call upon all teachers of English to re-create texts into tasks of various types, use them, and provide feedback to the teaching community.

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Appendices

1. Questionnaire

Dear Student,
I am your new English Teacher. I would like to know about you. So please fill in the information.

1. Your Name
   Class
   School
   Languages you learn in the school

2.Qualification of your parents
   Father
   Mother
   Others (Brother / Sister if any)

3. Occupation of your parents
   Father
   Mother

4. Your Address

5. Language you speak at home.

6. Newspapers you get at home.

7. Newspaper / Magazines / Story Books you read in English.

8. Help you get from your parents (tick the right choice)
(a) a lot of help (b) minimum help (c).no help

9. Language you use while talking to your friends
   a. In school
   b. Outside school hours.

10. Do you want to improve your English? Yes / No

11. Give at least 2 reasons why you want to improve your English?

12. What do you want to do to improve your English?

13. Do you listen to news in English? Yes / No

14. Do you watch English programs on TV? Yes / No

15. Do you use a Dictionary when necessary? Yes / No

Thank you dear student for providing this information
I. MEENA LOCHANA (Project Coordinator)

2. Sample tasks

LISTENING TASK

Your teacher will read the Passage aloud. Listen to the passage carefully, and say whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F)

1. King Shantanu was not happy to see his son grow to manhood.
2. Bhishma was very intelligent.
3. Bhishma was dark in complexion.
4. Bhishma married Sathyavathy.
5. Sathyavathy became the queen of Hastinapura.
6. Bhishma did not care to become a king.
7. Bhishma wanted to make their race strong.
8. Shantanu got a gift from his son.
9. Bhishma can die, whenever he wants to die.
10. Bhishma also got a gift from his Father.

3. Speaking task

Role play (Text based) Unit - I

1.

I am Ganga. I will tell you about my life.

2.

I am Satyavathy. - married Shantanu. - two sons. - first son died in battle. - 2nd became King.

5 sets of role play cards are prepared.

15 students will take the roles and speak about their roles.

4. Writing tasks

1. Class will be divided into two groups.

Group A

Ask questions from the cards.

12 questions

Group B

Answer the questions with out looking into the text

12 answers

Reverse the roles.

Group B Ask questions

Group A

Answers

(Answers are corrected.)

Students write the answers.

5. Reading tasks

Students are given short story books to read. They were given two days time to read.

After 2 days, a story telling session was arranged and students narrated the stories they had read.

Some students narrated only half of the story, and others were asked to guess the ending and complete the story.

(story telling sessions were very well received by the group and a lot of language was generated besides developing the skills and sub-skills of reading and speaking)

6. Grammar task.

STORY

Read the story.

Ramesappa is a young farmer. He never attended any school. He has a poultry farm. He has great hopes to become very rich. One day he was going to the market with a basket full of eggs. He was dreaming like this.

'If I sell these eggs, I will get a lot of money. If I get a lot of money, I will buy a beautiful house. If I have a beautiful house, I can buy good clothes, I will look handsome. If I look handsome, a beautiful princess will love me. If a princess loves me, I will marry her. If I marry a princess, I will become a prince. If I become a prince, I will be going in a car. If I go in a car, I will drive like this dash!! he removed his hands from the basket! And what happened? The basket fell down and all the eggs were smashed.
What is the moral of the story?

If I <u>sell</u> these eggs, I <u>will get</u> a lot of money.

Underline all the verbs.

Look at the 'if' sentences.

Look at the resultant sentences.

Students are put into pairs. One asks the questions and the other answer.

If you meet Dr. Rajkumar, what will you ask him?

If you get Rs. 100/-, what will you buy?

If you get a first class, what will your father give you?

If you become a doctor, what will you do?

If you go to Mysore, what will you see?

If you meet Sachin Tendulkar, what will you ask him?

Researching the Influence of Target Language on Learner Task Performance

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Bio Data

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Abstract

There has been talk in TBL of the dangers of giving students target language before or during the pre-task because students may use the subsequent task to practice target forms and not focus on communication (Ellis, 2003, p. 246). Textbooks are often considered culprits in this predetermination of language forms (Willis, 1990), as model dialogs lock students into particular grammatical forms and restrict student vocabulary, thus reducing the communicative value of a task. This research addresses the concern of supplying learners with target language forms during the pre-task phase. Suggested phrases from the textbook were introduced before the task, but students were encouraged to also use their own ideas in task completion. Whether students deviated from or remained bound by the suggested forms and vocabulary during task completion was analyzed. Thirty-six student performances on a task were analyzed. Preliminary results indicate students use textbook language as a scaffold, employ unique vocabulary not included in the textbook, and do not vary grammatical forms.

Keywords: Task-based learning, focus on form, target forms, pre-task language focus

Introduction

Task-based researchers have long discouraged teachers from sharing target language during the pre-task phase of a task-based lesson. Summarizing the concerns of many, Ellis writes:

> There is also a danger in directing pre-task training based on a model at specific aspects of language or language use; learners may respond by treating the task they are subsequently asked to perform as an 'exercise' for practicing the strategies/features that have been targeted. (2003, p. 246)

Despite these calls for caution, there is little or no literature that deals with the issue directly through research. Thus this study was conceived as a preliminary exploration of how learners use the language focused on before a task during task performance.

Literature

There are two aspects to the danger of focusing on language forms before task performance.

1. The language, as predetermined by the teacher, may not match native speaker models.
2. The students may look upon the rest of the task as a production phase, where they are expected to use the pre-specified forms previously introduced.

Regarding point one, Edwards (Undated) asked native speakers to perform a guessing task, where they discussed the possible function of unusual kitchen tools. Example language she predicted the speakers might use included modal verbs such as *might be* or *could be*. However, during the task the native speakers didn't use modal verbs. Instead their language included hedges such as *It almost looks like a…* and *It looks as though you can actually…*.. Edwards concludes that in introducing target language forms before a task, those forms may not be typical of native speaker interaction.

The second point can be seen as contrasting TBL, where student focus is supposed to be on communication, and PPP, where students are expected to practice target forms. Criticism of PPP has become widespread and Skehan offers a concise summary of its shortcomings:

> The belief…that learners will learn what is taught in the order in which it is taught no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology. (1996, p. 18)

The point Skehan (1996) is making is that PPP, which selects certain forms which are first practiced through drilling before students are expected to produce the forms, ignores the fact that learners don't learn this way. Instead learner acquisition is dependent on internal factors, such as the current state of their internal L2 framework and the level of language pattern they are able to notice. Tasks, initially proposed as an alternative to PPP, are considered an improvement because rather than predetermining and drilling language forms, they offer a means of allowing learners to use the language currently available to them for genuine communication. During the course of this genuine communication learners experience a need to convey their intended meaning then after the task learners are encouraged to expand their language proficiency through consciousness raising (Skehan, 1996).

My context

While proponents of TBL make eloquent arguments against pre-specifying language forms, it is still necessary to adapt the theory of TBL to specific teaching contexts. In my own context at a private women's junior college in Nagano, Japan, there are two factors which potentially interfere with the implementation of a pure task-based lesson.

1. The syllabus for the course must be based on a textbook, and I am only a minor player in the textbook selection process.
2. A paper test on the contents of the course must be administered at the end of the semester.

Regarding the first point, if textbook selection were up to individual teachers, it may be possible to select a task-based text which would make employing tasks in the classroom easier. However, the textbook is chosen by a group of teachers, and is used across the curriculum. Regarding the second point, since the material in the textbook forms the basis of the end of semester exam, it is important to ensure that the content in the textbook is covered in class.

As a believer in task-based learning and its effectiveness in helping learners to improve their communicative ability, rectifying the disparity between the literature and the demands of my own context was difficult, particularly if “Tasks are genuinely not intended as practice activities, not even 'free' practice, of language presented earlier in the lesson or course” (Edwards, undated). Since my students would be tested on the material in their books, I felt it necessary to incorporate that language into the tasks, but was also interested in encouraging students to use original language as well. Thus this research was conducted to determine to what extent introducing students to textbook language before performing a task would affect task performance.

Methods

As this study was intended as a preliminary inquiry, students’ written work was collected and analyzed. Completed written tasks from the top two streams of three first-year classes were chosen for this research. Since full tasks are often long and involved the activities in this research are more accurately pre tasks. Students were asked to write their responses on a worksheet then they shared their answers in small groups of five or six. While one member of the group spoke, the other members wrote the speaker’s response on their own sheets. For a sample worksheet, please see Appendix 1. The task was performed twice and both performances were analyzed for this research.

Data was collected over the course of the 2004 semester but one particularly successful task will be analyzed here. In this task students first complete the picture task, where they chose a picture in their textbooks and explained why the person in the picture was studying English. Next students completed the personal task, where they explained why they studied English. A total of 36 students in two classes participated. Their completed worksheets were collected and analyzed to determine whether students used textbook language or unique language.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the results of student task performance.

Table 1: Results of student task performance

Task	Number of students	Used textbook vocabulary	Used original vocabulary
Picture task	35[1]	7	28
Personal task	36	16	20

[1] One student unreadable

In one sense the concerns of the TBL literature were verified, in that no students varied their grammatical forms from the examples in the textbook. They used one of the two sample forms below in all instances.

1. I study English to…
2. I study English because…

However, when student vocabulary use was analyzed, there tended to be considerable variation, with a majority of students using original vocabulary in the picture task, and a more even split of textbook and original vocabulary in the personal task. Interestingly, students who used textbook language for the picture task tended to use original language in the personal task and vice-versa, indicating students were comfortable changing between using textbook and original language.

Discussion

The data is encouraging in that it seems to indicate students both used original language and manipulated textbook forms, meeting institutional expectations and realizing my desire to practice genuine communication during class. The use of original language and genuine communication, a prerequisite for successful task implementation, is encouraging. Also encouraging is the fact that students are manipulating and being exposed to the textbook forms which will be tested at the end of the semester. Furthermore, it was evident from student answers that they enjoyed the activity and at least some students strove to be original and interesting. Some sample student language is included below.

Sample picture task language:

1. to make *ikayaki* abroad
2. to be in the movies
3. to having family meal

Sample personal task language:

1. I study English because I like Western music
2. I study English because I wants to speak English!!! and I like English
3. to go junior college

Contrast these with the textbook vocabulary students were exposed to before the task (Richards, 1998):

1. to travel abroad
2. to pass an exam
3. to get a better job
4. to make new friends
5. because it's required
6. because I like studying languages
7. because English is an international language

It was also interesting to note that even when using textbook language forms, errors tended to creep into student writing. This may indicate that even though students are using textbook forms, they are "passing through fixed developmental sequences…which have to include often quite lengthy stages of *non*targetlike use of forms…" (Long & Crookes, 1992) which are thought to be a prerequisite for language learning.

Conclusion

This study was intended as a preliminary investigation into what TBL literature considers the danger of supplying students with sample language before a task. The need for introducing such language arose when attempting to adapt TBL theory to institutional requirements. While the sample of students for this research is small and only one task has been included, the data seem to indicate that the low proficiency learners in my classes tended to be influenced by sample grammatical forms but could and did use unique vocabulary to complete the task. Before broader conclusions can be drawn, it will be necessary to analyze student speech during task performance and to expand the scope of research beyond my own local context.

While the task described in this research was successful in that students varied their language beyond that available in their textbooks, this is one of the few such successful tasks employed during a semester of study, indicating a number of factors must be successfully balanced in order to ensure a variety of language use. Unsuccessful tasks included:

1. Choose a piece of clothing or an accessory you want to buy and explain why you want to buy it.
2. Describe your ideal boyfriend.
3. Describe your ideal vacation.

In the above tasks student language tended to adhere strictly to the sample language in the textbook and when language did vary, the vocabulary used was often inappropriate and the intended meaning obscure. Several factors which inhibited student creativity and which should be kept in mind when designing similar tasks in the future include:

1. Clarity of task directions
2. Example language and task explanation complexity
3. Difficulty of textbook
4. Difficulty of concept

It is hoped that additional research into the issue of introducing sample language forms before task performance will confirm the observations of this preliminary investigation. If it does, then the attitude of TBL researchers toward pre-task introduction of sample language can hopefully shift from concern over potentially inhibiting learners to thinking of pre-task language as a tool to help liberate learners to be confident they have a scaffold to ensure successful task completion when their interlanguage framework fails them. Such a shift would hopefully ease the difficulty of implementing TBL in second and third ring countries as teachers could be confident they were meeting institutional requirements while at the same time facilitating the development of genuine communication skills among students.

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Appendix 1: A sample complete task worksheet

Unit 3 Text Class

Name:________________ Day: Mon / Wed / Fri SN: 57

Name	Reason
Me	I study English to get a better job.
Sizuka	She studys English to get a better job.
kasumi	She studys English because it's required

Yumi
She studys English
because She like
Engl

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Models, Norms and Goals for English as an International Language Pedagogy and Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning.

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Abstract

It is now a widely accepted phenomenon that English has spread to become a world language or a global lingua franca. Based on the increasing diversity in users and uses of English in cross-cultural settings at the present time, the assumptions of current approaches in ELT are currently being re-examined in literature. This paper aims to examine the theoretical assumptions and practices of task based language teaching and learning within the framework of English as an international language pedagogy taking into consideration the issues of innovations in the nativization process, the use of native norms as a point of reference, the status of non-native norms and the choice of a pedagogical model. Given the increasing importance of "mutual intelligibility" and "accomodation" in international interactions among English users from different backgrounds and of the studies in reconceptualization of competence in relation to EIL, the place of tasks in the curriculum is re-examined.

Introduction

The global spread of English has a number of consequences both for the nature of English and its teaching. In many non-native contexts where English is used quite intensively and extensively in the daily lives of people, English has taken various forms reflecting the cultural and linguistic backround of the speakers. In the global context, on the other hand, English functions as an international language. At the present time, non-native speakers outnumber native speakers and these non-native speakers use English for a variety of purposes, including, very often, intercultural communication. One significant feature of such communication is that it mostly occurs among non-native speakers in international contexts. Such being the case, native speaker norms, in such interactions, may not only be unnecessary but also inappropriate. These and the related factors have recently led some researchers (e.g., McKay, 2002, 2003) to re-examine common ELT assumtions and has given way to a new approach characterized as English as an International Language Pedagogy. The consequences of the global spread of English as investigated from local to international contexts raised the issues of models, norms and goals in language pedogogy as key areas of discussion. This paper deals with these issues with respect to both local and international contexts and language pedagogy. Furthermore the assumptions of task based language teaching and learning are re-examined within the framework of English as an international language pedagogy. With the rise of task based language teaching and learning the traditional distinction between syllabus design and methodology becomes problematical. Taking the issues of models, norms and goals for EIL pedagogy as a point of reference, the place of tasks in the curriculum is reframed.

World Englishes

Nelson (1992, p.327) argues that "when approaching a language transplanted to a new cultural and linguistic context- as, for example, English in India- one is brought to various realizations about the notion of *language* and the *varieties* that a language may develop." Indeed, the global diffusion of English has resulted in varieties of English in different sociocultural contexts. Kachru (1985, 1992) presents this sociolinguistic profile of English in terms of three concentric circles: The inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle. The inner circle represents the traditional basis of English, where English is the primary language. The countries in this circle are the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zeland. The outer circle comprises the institutionalized non-native varieties of English in such countries as India, Nigeria and Singapore. These countries have a colonial history with the users of the inner circle. English is used quite intensively and extensively in the domestic daily lives of the people and has established new norms shaped by new sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts. Finally, the expanding circle comprises countries where performance varieties are used. In such countries as China, Israel and Turkey, English functions as an international language.

The studies of institutionalized nonnative varieties of English (e.g., Kachru, 1985, 1992; Strevens, 1990; Nelson, 1992) have argued for the recognition and acceptance of these varieties in their own right, devoid of comparisons with the inner circle native speaker varieties and the term world Englishes is suggested to represent these variaties such as “Indian English”, “Nigerian English”, and “Singaporean English”. Thus, the three concentric circle model brought to the English language in different sociocultural contexts a pluralistic perspective and to its users a variety of speech fellowships. English is no longer the sole property of native speakers but it is, as well, the language of non-native speakers who use and adopt it in their own sociocultural contexts. Among the discussions of the institutionalized nonnative varieties of English several issues have been the focus of attention. These are the status of the innovations occuring in these varieties, codification of these innovations, the issue of non-native and native norms, and the resultant implications for the choice of a pedagogical model.

Innovations, standards, norms and models in world Englishes

Traditionally, the use of English by non-native speakers has been judged by how it approximates native language use. Differences in non-native language use have often been viewed as deficiencies. Thus variations in institutionalized nonnative varieties have been labeled as “mistakes” or “errors” which should be corrected to avoid fossilization. This led largely to the characterization of non-native knowledge of language as “interlanguage” on the path to native speaker competence.

The studies of institutionalized nonnative varieties, however, have suggested different typologies for these terms. The underlying motivation being that the sociocultural context of language use naturally affects the language and the resultant changes in the language would by no means be considered as deficit characteristics. Thus, Kachru (1992) argues for a distinction between the terms "mistake" and "deviation":

> A "mistake" may be unacceptable by a native speaker since it does not belong to the linguistic "norm" of the English language; it cannot be justified with reference to the sociocultural context of a non-native variety; and it is not the result of the productive processes used in an institutionalized non-native variety of English. On the other hand, a "deviation" has the following characteristics: it is different from the norm in the sense that it is the result of the new "un-English" linguistic and cultural setting in which the English language is used; it is the result of a productive process which marks the typical variety-specific features; and it is systematic within a variety, and not idiosyncratic (p.62).

As a result, such arguments led "deviations" to be characterized as "innovations", which imply "difference" and not as "errors" or "mistakes", which imply "deficiency". It is this "difference" view which gives recognition to the non-native norms.

The other central issue in these discussions is when a deviation should be considered as "innovation". Bamgboşe (1998, p, 3) suggests five factors for deciding on the status of an innovation. These are "demographic" (the number of users), "geographical" (the spread of an innovation), "authoritative" (the actual use or approval of use of an innovation by writers, teachers, media practioners, examination bodies, publishing houses, and influential opinion leaders), "codification" (in the restricted sense, putting the innovation into a written form in a grammar or pronuncing dictionary, coursebooks or any other type of reference manual) and "acceptability" (the ultimate test of admission of an innovation). Among these factors, Bomgboşe argues, codification and acceptability are the most important since without them innovations will still be viewed as errors.

To Kachru (1985, p.18) "codification implies determining the bounds of such innovations or creativity- in other words, 'allowable' deviation from the native norms." Codification is also of great importance since it relates to the establishment of standards for innovations occuring in these institutionalized non-native varieties. In the case of the inner circle varieties, various channels of linguistic regulation like dictionaries, literary works, textbooks and media have led to the establishment of well known inner circle varieties like American English and British English. In the outer circle, however, while innovations are used quite intensively and extensively in the local context of non-native speakers the codification of these innovations has not been well established yet. In terms of pedagogy, the codification and related problems make it difficult to adopt these non-native varieties as pedagogical models. Codified inner circle varieties are mostly seen as ideal pedagogical models throughout the world, one reason being that pedagocial materials are available in these standard English varieties. In the outer circle, however, hardly any reference material is found to inform pedagogical instruction.

Aside from the codification problem, proficiency tests for the inner circle varieties are well etablished, which is not the case for the outer circle varieties. This naturally leads to testing non-native speakers according to the norms of inner circle users. These tests, however, hold strict association of English with the western culture and hence learning English means learning western cultural values and communicative norms. Kachru (1985: 21) calls this western cultural spread along with language in pedagogy prescriptivism and argues that

> With the spread of English we also expect the learners to acquire the norms of behavior appropriate to the users of the inner circle. The expected behavior pattern characterizes what one might call an educated Englisman (or American). This hypothesis is based on the assumption that language spread entails spread of cultural and social norms, or what has been termed in pedagogical literature an 'integrative motivation' for language learning.

Above all, in most cases, inner circle models are associated with power and prestige, which make them more preferable as pedagogical models. "Quite often, people know of features of non-native varieties and can even see the utility of such features in sociocultural situtions, yet they are reluctant to accept the logical conclusion that such recognition implies the replacement of the native norms they have come to ador" (Bomgboşe, 1998, p. 5). Thus the native speaker accent is generally found fascinating by non-native speakers though they recognize the viability of their accent and wish to keep it. In short, the speakers of outer circle varieties have a less positive attitute to their own varieties than to inner circle varieties.

While there is general concensus on the fact that language pedagogy in the outer circle should no longer be informed by native speaker models, such factors make it difficult to adopt outer circle models in language pedagogy in these contexts. In the expanding circle, where English functions as an international language, related issues need further examination.

English as an international language pedagogy

Beside the emerging reality of world Englishes in different non-native contexts, another focus of attention is the global nature of English, characterized as "English as an international language" (Strevens, 1992; Jenkins, 2000; MacKay, 2003), "English as a global language"(Crystal, 2003) or "English as a lingua franca" (Seidlhofer, 2004). The global status of English has brought with it varied implications both for its development and its teaching. On the one hand, the number of non-native speakers exceed the number of native speakers and thus the center of authority in the development of English is shifting from native speakers. Crystal (1997, p. 137) maintains that "a new form of English, World Standard Spoken English, will arise in international communication in that most people are "multidialectical" to a greater or lesser extent" (in Yano 2001, p.125).

Though there is not yet a global variety of English, the global spread of English in the expanding circle still has important implications in pedogogy, the most important of which is that most communication in English now occurs among non-native speakers in non-native contexts and these non-native speakers need not adopt the communicative norms of the inner circle users when they use English as an international language. Rather, Smith (1983, 1987) argues that "native English speakers should study English as an international language if they plan to interact in English with non-native speakers who use a different national variety" (in Hassal, 1996, p. 422).

Traditionally, however, learning English as a foreign language meant learning it for interaction with native speakers, achieving native speaker competence in proficiency and learning English to understand cultural conventions of native speakers. This is inherent in the communicative language teaching tradition which adopts "communicative competence" as the ultimate goal for language learners and native speaker norms of use as the only appropriate use of language.

MacKay (2002, 2003) successfully questions the legitimacy of such assumptions based on the current status of English as an international language and argues for a new orientation in the teaching of English as an international language. The basic tenets of such an orientation is that as an international language English cannot be linked to a specific country or culture, in other words, English is denationalized. Since learners of English as an international language have specific goals in learning English they do not need to achieve native speaker competence. The cultural content for ELT should not always be native speaker cultures. Western cultures of learning characterizing current communicative approaches are not the most productive way of teaching.

In these discussions, while the validity of the inner circle norms in learning English as an international language is successfully questioned, there arises the issue of what norms and models should be followed in EIL pedagogy.

Models, norms and goals for English as a international language pedagogy

The characterization of the actual language content to be taught and learned in teaching English as an international language pedagogy is of crucial importance for curriulum or syllabus design specifications since it will serve as the model to inform pedagogical instruction. In the case of outer circle varieties of English the issue of a pedagogial model seems to be less controversial. By accepting deviations occuring in these varieties as innovations, codifing these innovations, making pedagogial materials like dictionaries and textbooks more available and establishing proficiency tests to assess the learners' achivements, these countries will no longer need native speaker models in pedagogy. In the case of English as an international language pedagogy, however, there are different views about what characterizes English as an international language. The general concensus, however, is that native speaker norms of use are no longer appropriate for intercultural communication and in international interactions accomodation and mutual intelligibility are the desired goals. Kubota (2001, 50) argues that

> In a community that promotes monoculturalism and monolingualism, the dominant group forces the dominated group to accomodate and acquire the dominant way of life. However, a multicultural society affirms cultural and linguistic differences and rejects one-way accomodation. In communication between inner circle mainstream English speakers and other WE speakers, the accomodation should be mutual with both parties exploring ways to establish effective communication.

"The need for intelligibility in international communication has already motivated the learning of English as an international language" (Yano, 2001, p.125) and there have been several attempts to provide a common standard for mutual intelligibility in international interactions. Seidlhofer's (2001, 2004) corpus based project, Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), focuses on the collection and analysis of speech samples to determine the characteristics of English as an international language, which would serve as codification and help materials written in it. Gimson's 'rudimentary international pronunciation' (1978 in Jenkins, 2003) aims at devising a model of pronunciation by simplifying the phonemic system of English. Jenkins' 'common core' (1998) for pronunciation focuses on specifiying the phonological features that do not cause intelligibility problems and they are included in the common core. Quirk's 'Nuclear English' (1981 in Jenkins 2003) calls for a simplification in morphology and syntax.

However, such attempts, more or less, fall in the domain of prescriptivism in that such ways of standardization ignore the natural development of a language as it is used quite intensively and extensively in the domestic daily lives of individuals. In the expanding circle countries, "for the most part English has no special administrative status, while linguistic creativity is more commonly realized in mass media, advertising copy, slogans and catch pharases, and names for shops and products, for instance" (Berns, 2005: 87). Such a variety of English as an international language has not developed yet and the imposition of standards in a topdown manner cannot escape the charges of prescriptivism. Even the emprical efforts, though they seem to have some merit, seem to be an early attempt in the description of English as an international language since English in the expanding circle has not yet been institutionalized unlike the outer circle varieties of English.

For the most part English functions as an international language in such domains as science, commerce, technology, and tourism and those bilingual speakers will use English for cross cultural communication. Widdowson (1997) proposes that English as an international language comprises varieties of Engish for specific purposes, 'autonomous registers which guarantee specialist communication within global expert communities' (p. 114). Griffler (1998, p.382), on the other hand, opposes such a stance by claiming that "'register' does not supersede the category of language. It subdivides it. As such, registers remain 'registers of a language', and they cannot thereby be called 'autonomous'." Furthermore, Le Ha (2005, p. 5) finds Widdowson's use of the term 'register' "unrealistic when Widowson suggests ESP (English for Specific Purposes) away from the issues of "community and identity" and viewing it in terms of "communication and information". While Widowson takes the domain of use of English as an international language as a point of departure in his conceptualization of EIL, he neglects the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of speakers as naturally reflected in their use of English for crosscultural communication. The bilinguals' use of English as an international language shows variations in their pragmatic and discourse comptences (Mckay, 2002, 2003; Nunn, 2005) and the focus of attention is the recognition of these norms in their right without comparison to native speaker norms.

Another possibility is to adopt a prestigious standard English as a model to provide mutual intelligibility in international interactions. Strevens (1992, p. 39) argues that

> For throughout the world, regardless of whether the norm is native-speaker or non-native speaker variety, irrespective of whether English is a foreign or second language, two components of English are taught and learned without variation: these are its *grammar* and its *core vocabulary*. There may be embellishments in the way of local vocabulary and expressions, and there will certainly be great differences of pronunciation, but the grammar and vocabulary of English are taught and learned virtually without variation around the world.

Strevens argues for the avoidance of the various local grammatical patterns and expressions not because they are "“wrong” nor inferior or substandard but because they are used and accepted only in that geopraphical area and among that community (and hence) they would be unaceptable elsewhere" (p. 40). To the question which English should I learn, or teach? Strevens (1992) gives an answer in two parts: "First, learn educated / educational English; second, if you have a choice of an American or a British model, choose the one that will be most useful" (p.40). Though Strevens' claims are strong on the part of the acceptability of the core grammar and vocabulary of a prestigious educated variety, the language knowledge of the bilingual users of English as an international language remain to be addressed adequately. Adopting an American or British variety at all levels of language would raise the problem of ignoring the bilinguals' full language capacity.

Indeed, Cook (1999) argues for going beyond the native speaker as the model in language teaching. He claims that "because L2 users differ from monolingual native speakers in their knowledge of their L2s and L1s and in some their cognitive processes, they should be considered as speakers in their own right, not as approximations to monolingual native speakers" (p. 185).

Moreover, Rajadurai (2005) criticizing the historical and geographical bases of Kachru's three circle model and drawing on the works of Ramton (1990) and Modiano (1990), proposes proficient English speakers be taken as a point of reference in the representation of English as an international language. Thus, native speakers will no longer be in a previliged position over L2 users in English as an International language.

All these studies prioritizing L2 users and their competence or proficiency indicate the importance and necessity of defining competence in relation to English as an international language. Nunn (2005, p.65) argues that "EIL competence, then cannot be reduced to a single, limited, monolingual or monocultural concept. It is composed of a set of interlocking and interdependent competences that sometimes compensate for each other, sometimes counteract each other and sometimes reinforce each other." Alptekin (2002) has already indicated that the traditional notion of communicative competence is an unrealistic goal for EIL learners and Nunn (2005, p.65) further argues that "transitional views of competence are inapproprate in so far as they imply replacing one monolingual competence with another, whereas SL, FL, IL learners are adding to and maintaining their existing competences (Baker, 2000 and 2002)". Thus pragmatic, rhetorical, strategic and discourse competences that focus on mutual intelligibility, raise important components of the knowledge of bilingual speakers. Linguistic comeptence, on the other hand, remains an important issue in teaching English as an international language. Quirk's Nuclear English (1981), which calls for a simplification in the morphologoy and syntax, aims to provide a common standard in linguistic competence but beside its prescriptive nature, as Nunn (2005, p.62) argues "there is a danger of international becoming a byword for reduced linguistic competence". Following Strevens (1992) I argue that the core grammar and vocabulary of the educated inner circle varieties (British or American) are the best possible models of linguistic competence for English as international language pedogogy. As Strevens (1992, p. 40) argues "it is not because other varieties are "wrong" nor inferior or substandard but because they are used and accepted only in that geographical area and among that community (and hence) they would be unacceptable elsewhere". Having a larger linguistic repertoire EIL learners will naturally reflect the characteristics of the linguistic competence of their L1s and this would be better considered as a natural language transfer much in the case of code mixing and code switching. The same is true of the pragmatic and discourse competences. However, it is difficult to establish standards for these variations since crosscultural communication occurs among non-native speakers from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Yet lingustic competence remains an essential component in EIL competence. Acar (2005) argued that linguistic competence has largely been neglected throughout the communicative era and Nunn (2005, p.72) "contends that there is an increased potential for neglecting linguistic competence to an even greater extent in the field of EIL."

Thus the concept of competence holds an important place within the discussions of EIL pedagogy. This issue, along with the others, necessitate a re-examination in the common assumptions of one of the most commonly discussed ELT traditions, namely, task based language teaching and learning. The issues that remain to be addressed are; what should be the place of tasks within the curriculum, should tasks be viewed as the center of the syllabus or as methodological procedures, and what should tasks emphasize in teaching practice.

English as an international language pedagogy and task based language teaching and learning

Task based language teaching is generally characterized as a development within the communicatice approach. It takes tasks defined in a variety of ways as central elements in syllabus design and teaching, in other words, task based language teaching advocates the view that syllabus content might be specified in terms of learning tasks. Thus, the focus is on the process rather than product. "However processes belong to the domain of methodology" (Nunan 1989, p. 12). Thus with the rise of task based language teaching the traditional distinction between syllabus design and methodology becomes problematical.

Traditionally syllabus design is concerned with the selection and sequencing of content and methodology relates to how learners will learn. In my reconsideration of task based language teaching within the framework of English as an international language pedagogy I maintain this traditional distinction and claim that the specification of learning tasks should be considered as part of methodology and not of syllabus design. The main reason for this claim is that replacing methodological procedures with the language content, along with other syllabus elements, would be problematical in English as an international language pedagogy.

EIL pedagogy prioritizes the L2 user, bilingual or mulitingual competence and mutual intelligibility as a goal in cross cultural communication. Thus any EIL syllabus design should be informed by the nature of such a competence along with the learners' purpose in learning the language. Taking EIL competence as a point of reference would necessitate a consideraion of linguistic, pragmatic, rhetorical, discourse and strategic competences of these bilingual speakers. One essential point to be noted is that bilingual speakers will add up to their existing competencies rather than replacing them. Thus syllabus design won't be transitional in nature, that is, aiming to replace the learners' L1 competence with native speaker competence. Native speaker norms of use, native speaker context of language use, native speaker cultural topics, native speaker discourse stategies and authentic texts should no longer inform syllabus design and teaching. Altogether what is authentic for native speakers may not be authentic for non-native speakers. Essentially, in terms of pragmatic and discourse competencies, English users will reflect their own cultural norms of appropriateness. The notion of appropriatness will remain a relative term and concept in international communication. Thus, the domain of language use, various cultural topics, and crosscultural encounters in international contexts, seem to be important determinants in EIL pedagogy and hence topic, text and context selection, along with language content, seem to be impotant factors in EIL syllabus design. Taking learning tasks as a point of reference in syllabus design would then mean ignoring such determinants in EIL pedagogy.

Indeed, neglecting essential language content in task based syllabus design, the issue of focus on form, has caused problems in task based language teaching itself and the attempts to solve this problem did not go beyond the terminological changes. The most important characteristics of a task is its communicative purpose in which the focus is on meaning rather than form. However, some researchers (e.g., Estaire and Zanon, 1994, pp. 13-20) distinguish between two main categories of task "'communication task', in which the 'learner's attention is focused on meaning rather than form', and 'enabling tasks', in which 'the main focus is on linguistic aspects (grammar, vocabulary, prounciation, function, and discourse'" (in Littlewood, p. 320). However, Ellis (2003) calls for a distinction between "tasks" and "exercises". He classifies tasks as "activities that call for primarily meaning focused language use" and "exercises" as activities "that call for primarly form focused language use" (Ellis, 2003, p. 3). Thus, what Estaire and Zanon classify as 'enabling tasks' are 'exercises' for Ellis. Such terminological changes in the definition of tasks do not seem to fill the gap in the treatment of language content in task based language teaching. Furthermore, Ellis emphasizes that "the overall purpose of tasks is the same as exercises, learning a language- the difference lying in the means by which this purpose is to be achieved" (Ellis, 2003, p.3). Thus within the framework of EIL pedagogy it would be inappropriate to replace tasks with some important reference points like EIL competence, topic, context and aim in learning the language. This would, then, lead us to consider tasks as methodological procedures to practice the specified content for a specific aim (such as tasks aiming to develop strategic competence to enhance accomodation and mutual intelligibility). Thus I recognize the value of tasks as useful methodological procedures in EIL pedagogy since they promote meaningful language practice. However, tasks would best be viewed as a means to an end rather than an end itself.

Conclusion

With its global spread, English has now gained the status of an international language. The number of non-native speakers exceed the number of native speakers and most communication in English now occurs among non-natives. In terms of pedagogy, this reality of English has resulted in a re-examination of the traditional ELT assumptions which take native speaker competence as a point of reference. Thus L2 users or bilingual users have been increasingly recognized as English users in their own right, which necessitates a focus of attention on these English users' knowledge of language as well as their aim in learning the language. This paper re-examined task based language teaching and learning within the framework of EIL pedagogy. The consideration of the above factors necessitates taking EIL competence and learners' purpose in learning the language as a point of reference in EIL pedagogy. Thus, it is suggested, the place of tasks in the curriculum be reframed. Tasks are still valuable pedagogical tools but they should be best viewed as methodological procedures to practice the specified content.

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EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching: With a Focus on Korean Secondary Classroom Practice

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in a Korean secondary school context. The data for this study were collected through questionnaires from a total of 228 teachers at 38 different middle and high schools in Korea. The survey was conducted from August through October of the 2005 academic year, and the data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The overall findings of the survey show that the majority of respondents have a higher-level of understanding about TBLT concepts, regardless of teaching levels, but that there exist some negative views on implementing TBLT with regard to its classroom practice. Additionally, some useful implications are proposed based on research findings in order to help teachers and teacher trainers to construct and implement TBLT more effectively.

Key words: Task-based language teaching (TBLT), teachers' perceptions, classroom practice, task-based activities, task performance, small group work

Introduction

The task-based view of language teaching, based on the constructivist theory of learning and communicative language teaching methodology, has evolved in response to some limitations of the traditional PPP approach, represented by the procedure of presentation, practice, and performance (Ellis, 2003; Long & Crookes, 1991). Thus, it has the substantial implication that language learning is a developmental process promoting communication and social interaction rather than a product acquired by practicing language items, and that learners learn the target language more effectively when they are naturally exposed to meaningful task-based activities. Such a view of language learning led to the development of various task-based approaches in the eighties (Breen, 1987; Candlin & Murphy, 1987; Nunan, 1989; Prabhu, 1987), and during the nineties, has developed into a detailed practical framework for the communicative classroom in which learners perform task-based activities through cycles of pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task feedback through language focus (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). Specifically, Ellis (2003) indicates that TBLT has been re-examined in recent years from different perspectives including oral performance, writing performance, and performance assessment.

Within the varying interpretations of TBLT related to classroom practice, recent studies exhibit three recurrent features: TBLT is compatible with a learner-centered educational philosophy (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2001); it consists of particular components such as goal, procedure, specific outcome (Murphy, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998); it advocates content-oriented meaningful activities rather than linguistic forms (Carless, 2002; Littlewood, 2004). Specifically, in an Asian EFL environment where learners are limited in their accessibility to use the target language on a daily basis, it is first of all necessary for language learners to be provided with real opportunities to be exposed to language use in the classroom. In his study based on interviews with teachers, teacher educators, and ministry officials, Nunan (2003) indicates that TBLT emerged as a central concept from a study of curriculum guidelines and syllabi in the Asia-Pacific countries including Japan, Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Korea and Malaysia.

Unfortunately, however, a quick review of task-based literature shows that despite its pedagogical benefits surrounding the participatory learning culture, TBLT has not yet been sufficiently researched or proven empirically in terms of its classroom practice in school foreign language learning contexts (Carless, 2004; In-Jae Jeon, 2005). In light of this, this study's aim is to explore Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of task-based instruction based on investigating their understandings of TBLT concepts, positions on TBLT implementation, and reasons they choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT in the classroom. This will provide insight for teachers to design and implement any real communicative tasks, which are critically important for EFL learners in order to experience meaningful language use. It will also contribute to facilitating EFL teachers' practical use of TBLT techniques, thereby improving the learners' communicative abilities.

Research Design

The Research Questions

1. How well do teachers understand TBLT concepts?
2. What are the aspects of teachers' views on TBLT implementation?
3. For what practical reasons do teachers choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT?

The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument, a three-page questionnaire, was devised to measure Korean EFL teachers' perceptions of TBLT in classroom setting. The questionnaire, composed of 15 Likert-type items and two open-ended items, was divided into four sections. The first section contained demographic questions in order to gain information about the teacher's teaching level, gender, age, and teaching experience. The second section (items 1-7) dealt with the basic concept of task and principles of task-based instruction in order to review teachers' practical understandings of TBLT. The third section (items 8-15), related to teachers' positions on classroom practice of TBLT, was partly adapted and modified from Nunan's (2004) checklist for evaluating communicative tasks. In the second and third section, teachers were asked to answer each question using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree. Finally, in the fourth section, teachers were asked to rate their own reasons for choosing or avoiding the implementation of TBLT, with reference to a total of 11 qualitative statements.

The Participants

The population for this study was Korean EFL teachers working at the secondary school level. From the 38 different schools, a total of 228 teachers participated in this survey. Specifically, the 228 participants were composed of 112 middle school teachers (49.1%) and 116 high school teachers (50.9%). All of the participants have had at least two or more year's experience teaching English as a foreign language. 153 teachers were female (67.1%) and 75 teachers (32.9%) were male. The teachers ranged in age from their twenties to fifties and 51.8% of them were in their thirties and forties. The number of years they had taught English varied, ranging from less than 6 years (15.4%), 6 to 10 years (19.7%), 11 to 19 years (43.0%), and more than 20 years (21.9%).

Data Collection and Analysis

Two different methods were used for data collection. First, while visiting 17 different middle and high schools for seven weeks in August and September of 2005, the researcher contacted 69 middle and 78 high school teachers who have taught English, explained the pedagogical goal of the survey, and asked them to answer the questionnaire. A total of 141 teachers, including 65 middle and 76 high school teachers, completed the survey giving a response rate of 94.2%, 97.4% respectively. Next, written questionnaires were mailed to 120 middle and 130 high school English teachers. Out of 250, a total of 87 questionnaires from 47 middle and 40 high school teachers were returned, giving a response rate of 39.2% and 30.8% respectively. The large gap of response rates in data collection may be the result of the two different approaches for data collection, namely visiting or mailing.

The data analysis process consisted of two methodologies, Likert-type and open-ended item analysis. The Likert-type items, which were designed to identify teachers' understandings of TBLT conception and teachers' views on TBLT implementation, were given a numerical score (e.g., strongly disagree =1, disagree =2, neutral=3, agree=4, and strongly agree=5). Open-ended items, which were constructed to capture the reasons teachers choose, or avoid, implementing TBLT in their classrooms, were first categorized and then coded by the researcher in terms of the teachers' responding rates. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 11.0 for Windows was used to analyze the data.

Data Analysis Results

Teachers Have a Higher Level of Understanding of Task and TBLT

Table 1 presents a percentage comparison of teacher responses to each of the seven items on the key concepts of task and TBLT. For the convenience of comparison, the five-point scale responses were merged into a three-point simplified scale (strongly disagree & disagree, neutral, agree & strongly agree).

Table 1 - Teachers' Understandings of TBLT Concepts (n=228)

Questionnaire Items		Strongly disagree / Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree / Agree (%)	M	SD
1. A task is a communicative goal directed.	MT	9.8	17.9	72.3	3.81	0.34
	HT	10.3	21.6	68.1	3.76	0.36
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.	MT	11.6	25.0	63.4	3.57	0.43
	HT	7.7	21.6	70.7	3.71	0.37
3. A task has a clearly defined outcome.	MT	10.7	21.4	67.9	3.55	0.31
	HT	6.1	23.7	70.2	3.65	0.34
4. A task is any activity in which the target language is used by the learner.	MT	5.4	33.0	61.6	3.45	0.35
	HT	3.4	32.8	63.8	3.56	0.37
5. TBLT is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching.	MT	6.3	22.3	71.4	3.74	0.36
	HT	6.9	25.9	67.2	3.64	0.39
6. TBLT is based on the student-centered instructional approach.	MT	10.7	23.2	66.1	3.69	0.42
	HT	7.8	24.1	68.1	3.65	0.45
7. TBLT includes three stages: pre-task, task implementation, and post-task.	MT	10.8	32.1	57.1	3.48	0.28
	HT	9.5	35.3	55.2	3.51	0.31

Note: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher, M=mean sore, SD=standard deviation

In responses to item 1 through 3, which asked for some key concepts of task, the vast majority of respondents understood that task has a communicative purpose (MT 72.3%, HT 68.1%), a primary focus on meaning (MT 63.4%, HT 70.7%), and a clearly defined outcome (MT 67.9%, HT 70.2%). In response to item 4, most teachers (MT 61.6%, HT 63.8%) considered task as a kind of activity in which the target language is used by the learner. This implies that most Korean EFL teachers generally agree with the definition of task as discussed in the section on theoretical background. In response to item 5, a clear majority of teachers (MT 71.4%, HT 67.2%) reported that they believed in the relevance between task-based instruction and communicative language teaching. This partially indicates that teachers approving of the communicative approach are likely to adopt the basic nature of TBLT in their own language classrooms. The findings in items 6 and 7, related to the instructional philosophy and stages of task-based learning, suggest that most teachers (MT 66.1%, HT 68.1%) held a conviction for student-centeredness, and that more than half of the teachers (MT 57.1%, HT 55.2%) recognized three different stages including pre-task, task implementation, and post-task.

Teachers Have Some Negative Views on Implementing TBLT in the Classroom

Table 2 presents the aspects of teachers' positions toward implementing TBLT in their language classrooms. First, in response to item 8, unlike a higher level of teachers' understandings of TBLT concepts, about half of the teachers (MT 49.1%, HT 55.2%) responded negatively when questioned about implementing TBLT in the classroom. This indicates that teachers' conceptual understandings of TBLT do not necessarily lead to the actual use of task in the classroom. Items 9 through 11 explored teachers' beliefs in TBLT as an instructional method. While less than half of the teachers responded that TBLT provides a relaxed atmosphere to promote the target language use (MT 44.6%, HT 46.7%) and therefore activates learners' needs and interests (MT 47.8%, HT 43.1%), more than half of the teachers (MT 51.8%, HT 53.4%) showed some negative responses regarding TBLT's pursuing the development of integrated skills in the classroom. This suggests that EFL teachers who want to implement task-based instruction successfully are required to have some knowledge of the integration of the four language skills based on the principles of social interaction. The findings of items 12 and 13, which explored the teacher's role and preparation time in implementing TBLT, revealed a common feature regardless of teaching level. More than half of the teachers believed that TBLT will give teachers an undue psychological burden as a facilitator (MT 50.9%, HT 56.9%) and that it would require much more preparation time (MT 52.7%, HT 54.5%). The findings for item 14 indicate that few teachers (MT 22.3%, HT 31.0%) believed TBLT is proper for controlling classroom arrangements. For item 15, most teachers (MT 56.3%, HT 55.2%) answered that TBLT materials in textbooks are meaningful, purposeful, and based on the real-world situations.

Table 2 - Teachers' Views on Implementing TBLT (n=228)

Questionnaire Items		Strongly disagree / Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree / Agree (%)	M	SD
8. I have interest in implementing TBLT in the classroom.	MT	49.1	31.3	19.6	2.78	0.53
	HT	55.2	29.3	15.5	2.86	0.57
9. TBLT provides a relaxed atmosphere to promote the target language use.	MT	19.7	35.7	44.6	3.12	0.45
	HT	22.4	30.9	46.7	3.16	0.48
10. TBLT activates learners' needs and interests.	MT	30.3	21.9	47.8	2.98	0.66
	HT	23.3	33.6	43.1	3.07	0.61
11. TBLT pursues the development of integrated skills in the classroom.	MT	51.8	32.1	16.1	2.65	0.32
	HT	53.4	27.6	19.0	2.68	0.34
12. TBLT gives much psychological burden to teacher as a facilitator.	MT	24.1	25.0	50.9	3.25	0.36
	HT	19.8	23.3	56.9	3.31	0.31
13. TBLT requires much preparation time compared to other approaches.	MT	19.6	27.7	52.7	3.17	0.43
	HT	20.5	25.0	54.5	3.23	0.39
14. TBLT is proper for controlling classroom arrangements.	MT	33.1	44.6	22.3	2.57	0.55
	HT	29.4	39.6	31.0	2.53	0.58
15. TBLT materials in textbooks are meaningful and purposeful based on the real-world context.	MT	14.2	29.5	56.3	3.28	0.41
	HT	18.1	26.7	55.2	3.23	0.38

Note: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher, M=mean sore, SD=standard deviation

Teachers Like to Use TBLT for Its Group Work Basis and Motivational Traits

In response to whether or not teachers implement TBLT in the classroom, while 117 teachers (51.3%) among a total of 228 respondents answered they were currently using task-based methods or techniques in their classrooms, 111 teachers (48.7%) responded negatively. Table 3 presents the aspects of teachers' responses to the open-ended question asking them to identify some reasons why they decide to use TBLT in classroom practice. Data analysis revealed that the three major reasons teachers used task-based methods concerned appropriateness to small group work (70.1%), improving learners' interaction skills (67.5%), and encouraging learners' intrinsic motivation (54.7%). In contrast, few respondents agreed that TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment (39.3%) and promotes learners' academic progress (27.4%). The "others" category (11.1%) concerned classroom arrangements, promotion of target language use, controlling large classes, and so on.

Table 3 - Reasons Teachers Use TBLT in the Classroom (n=117)

Statements	Frequency	Total (Percent)
TBLT is appropriate for small group work.	MT 48 HT 34	82 (70.1)
TBLT improves learners' interaction skills.	MT 42 HT 37	79 (67.5)
TBLT encourages learners' intrinsic motivation.	MT 36 HT 28	64 (54.7)
TBLT creates a collaborative learning environment.	MT 21 HT 25	46 (39.3)
TBLT promotes learners' academic progress.	MT 17 HT 15	32 (27.4)
Others	MT 8 HT 5	13 (11.1)

Note: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher

In response to the specific reasons teachers gave for using task-based techniques in the classroom, there were some meaningful differences according to the teaching level. While most middle school teachers, for instance, valued its appropriateness to small group work, most high school teachers placed an importance on improving interaction skills and encouraging intrinsic motivation. This partially implies that as an instructional method, TBLT is currently preferred for its group work potential in middle school settings, and its motivational aspects in high school settings.

The Biggest Reason Teachers Avoid TBLT Lies in Lack of Confidence

Table 4 presents teachers' responses to the open-ended question that asked them to pick out their own reasons for avoiding the implementation of TBLT in their classrooms. Data analysis showed that lack of knowledge of task-based instruction (75.7%), among a total of six plausible reasons, is the main reason teachers are reluctant to implement TBLT. Their self-perceived inability to use the target language (73.0%) was the second major reason, followed by difficulty in assessing learners' task-based performance (64.0%) and finally, the problem of dealing with learners who are not used to task-based learning (45.9%). Materials in textbooks not properly designed and large class size were less frequent reasons given (30.6% & 21.6%, respectively). Other responses (10.8%) involved ineffectiveness in grammar instruction, holding bright students back, taking too much preparation time, etc.

In response to the specific reasons teachers avoid using task-based methods in the classroom, it is noticeable that there existed a clear feature regardless of teaching level: more than 70% of the teachers among a total of 111 respondents believed that they had little knowledge of task-based methods and limited target language proficiency.

Table 4 - Reasons Teachers Avoid TBLT in the Classroom (n=111)

Statements	Frequency		Total (Percent)
I have very little knowledge of task-based instruction.	MT 45	HT 39	84 (75.7)
I have limited target language proficiency.	MT 38	HT 43	81 (73.0)
I have difficulty in assessing learner's task-based performance.	MT 35	HT 36	71 (64.0)

Learners are not used to task-based learning.	MT 24 HT 27	51 (45.9)
Materials in textbooks are not proper for using TBLT.	MT 13 HT 21	34 (30.6)
Large class size is an obstacle to use task-based methods.	MT 9 HT 15	24 (21.6)
Others	MT 5 HT 7	12 (10.8)

Note: MT=middle school teacher, HT=high school teacher

Discussion

The findings of items 1 through 7 showed that teachers had a comparatively clear understanding of the linguistic features of task, thus approving of the pedagogical benefits of task in second language learning classroom. More importantly, it is believed that teachers, regardless of teaching levels, convey a considerable amount of practical understanding about the key concepts of TBLT. This could result from the fact that the current Korean national curriculum for English, which was first introduced and applied within secondary schools in 2001, has been characterized by a definite shift toward the application of task-based learning and activity-oriented language use aimed at improving learners' communicative competence.

The findings of items 8 through 15 indicated that despite the comparatively higher-level understanding of TBLT concepts, many teachers actually hesitated to adopt TBLT as an instructional method in classroom practice. This may result from the fact that most Korean EFL teachers still use the traditional lecture-oriented methods, which they are accustomed to, and more than that, they have the psychological pressure of facing some new disciplinary problems in using TBLT. In relation to task participants' roles and classroom arrangements, it might be true that Korean EFL teachers have become accustomed to working in teacher-centered classrooms, thus adopting a one-way instruction method rather than two-way interaction. A teacher, however, needs to be flexible and dynamic in controlling the language learning environment, because the nature of language learning substantially demands that learners actively participate in language use activities.

The findings of the two open-ended items revealed that teachers may have different reasons for choosing or avoiding the implementation of TBLT. While some teachers decided to use task-based methods as a basis for group work, or because of its motivational potential, others had fears of being confronted with problems on account of a lack of knowledge and confidence. Yet many problems that teachers face in implementing TBLT can be successfully reduced when teachers make an effort to understand its pedagogical benefits and increase positive attitudes toward TBLT as an instructional method. In light of this, it is first of all necessary for teachers to have the opportunity to learn both the strengths and weaknesses of a task-based methodology, and understand its basic principles, as well as its various techniques.

Now let's turn to the challenges teachers may encounter in trying to use task-based methods. Given the fact that difficulty in assessing learner's task-based performance is one of the major reasons teachers avoid implementing TBLT, attention needs to be given to performance assessment. In relation to assessment for group work, for example, awarding equal grades to all members of the group may serve as one of the crucial weaknesses for ensuring a level of fairness in assessment, particularly in high achieving learner groups. Therefore, the teacher needs to consider both inter-group and intra-group evaluations together in terms of enhancing the participation and quality of involvement in task-based cooperative work (Lourdusamy & Divaharan, 2002). While the inter-group assessment involves using the group's products as part of the course evaluation and thus giving equal grades to all members of the group, the intra-group assessment involves individual evaluation.

For learners not trained in task-based learning, one of the reasons they avoid participating in task-based activities may be related to a lack of confidence in performing tasks. This is why it is necessary for the teacher to help learners build confidence by encouraging them to learn how to deal with tasks and use collaborative skills in task-based performance. Once task participants realize that learning in tasks is only one of several ways of learning in the class, they will be able to overcome such challenges as fear of assessment, competition, and the difficulty of the task. Thus, the improved confidence of less assertive learners may lead to more equal participation and sharing of the workload (Burdett, 2003).

For task-based materials, few teachers answered that materials in textbooks were one of the reasons they avoid using task-based techniques in their classrooms. This partially indicates that the current EFL textbooks in Korean secondary school settings, all of which allegedly follow the principles of the communicative theory of language learning, properly reflect the task-based syllabus which chiefly concerns communicative skills and social interaction. It also reveals that teachers are often required to redesign individual work-oriented materials in textbooks to be in accordance with the principles of promoting interaction and collaborative learning.

Finally, for large classes, which have often been considered to be problematic with regard to disciplinary situations in task-based group work, the teacher needs to take group formation and presentation procedure into consideration. Basically task-based techniques can be used the same way in large classes as in small ones, except that large classes need more time and preparation.

Conclusion and Implications

In the Korean EFL context, in which learners don't have much contact with native speakers of English, the focus of language teaching has been placed on changing the classroom practice from the traditional passive lecture to more active group learning so that learners can be more easily exposed to target language use. Thus, many teachers have had an increasing amount of interest in using TBLT as an instructional method, chiefly because they believe task-based learning has specific benefits for increasing learners' communication skills and interaction.

The overall findings of this study revealed that despite a higher level of understanding of TBLT concepts, many Korean EFL teachers retain some fear of adopting TBLT as an instructional method because of perceived disciplinary problems related to classroom practice. It also turned out that teachers had their own reasons to use or avoid implementing TBLT. Based on the overall findings, three important implications for teachers and teacher trainers are proposed. First, since teachers' views regarding instructional approach have a great impact on classroom practice, it is necessary for the teacher, as a practical controller and facilitator of learners' activities in the classroom, to have a positive attitude toward TBLT in order for it to be successfully implemented. Second, given the research finding that teachers lack practical application knowledge of task-based methods or techniques, teachers should be given the opportunity to acquire knowledge about TBLT related to planning, implementing, and assessing. To this end, it is suggested that teacher education programs, which aim at in-depth training about language teaching methodologies, should properly deal with both the strengths and weaknesses of TBLT as an instructional method ranging from basic principles to specific techniques. Third, when taking into account that one of the major reasons teachers avoid implementing TBLT is deeply related to a lack of confidence, much consideration should be given to overcoming potential obstacles that teachers may come across in a task-based classroom. It is also recommended that teachers consider alternative solutions for classroom management such as leveled tasks, peer assessment, and a variety of various task types including two-way information gap activities as well as one-way activities, such as simple asking and answering.

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The Limited Effect of PBL on EFL Learners: A Case Study of English Magazine Projects

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Abstract

The limited effect of Project-based Learning (PBL) as a realization of Communicative English Teaching (CLT) on EFL learners was investigated in a case study of an English course that was designed to help EFL develop learners speaking and writing abilities. The projects were based on designing an English language magazine. The researchers first described the English magazine projects and examined the effect of the projects on the students' learning using questionnaire surveys and observations of students' communication in the classroom. The study found that the English magazine projects were an enjoyable experience for the students, but they did not have a strong positive effect on their learning English, contrary to the findings of the previous literature. The reasons of the projects' failure were discussed in terms of issues of CLT in EFL: the priority of task over tool in the same L1 classroom and lack of natural contact with L2 speakers outside of the classroom. A solution using IT technology was suggested for the future research.

Keywords: Communicative English Teaching, Japanese English learners, project-based language learning (PBL)

I. Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes interaction as opposed to grammar instruction, has been an influential approach in English education in Japan (Cross, 2005). Introduced to Japan in the 1990's in response to the poor performance of Japanese English learners, the curriculum guidelines for secondary English education defined the goals of English education as "to develop students' ability to understand and to express themselves in a foreign language, to foster students' positive attitude towards communication in a foreign language, and to heighten their interest in language and culture, thus deepening international understanding" (Wada, 1994). In 2003 the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced an Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" (MEXT, 2003). CLT is so dominant in language teaching that "no one is willing to assert that they do not belong to the family (Nunan, 2004).

Among various realizations of CLT1, project-based language learning (PBL) seems to have the potential to provide foreign language learners with essential conditions for language learning. PBL is a goal-oriented teaching method effective in enhancing student motivation. It can offer English learners exposure to authentic materials, opportunities to use the target language, and motivation to learn, which are all considered to be essential conditions for language learning (Willis, 1996). Moss reported PBL helped ESL learners develop various skills because PBL creates situations where learners need to communicate to get the job done (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998).

However, there is a lack of evidence to support the positive effect of PBL in the field of foreign language education. There are only a few studies that dealt with the effect of PBL on EFL leaning. For example, Machida et al reported improvement of English abilities and increased exposure to English materials among Japanese English learners after an English video production project in a Japanese university (Machida (Torikai), Watanabe, & Shimazaki, 1991). Onoda also reported that an English news program production project enhanced students' listening ability and critical thinking

(Onoda, 2000). Although these studies reported positive effects of PBL in the context of EFL, the subjects of their studies did not include low level students, nor considered characteristics of EFL that might minimize the above mentioned potential of PBL: less exposure to authentic materials due to the monolingual environment of EFL countries and temptation to use L1 to complete tasks in classroom where the students share the same L1.

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first was to describe an English course that focused on English magazine production projects at a Japanese university in the Fall Semester of 2005. The second was to examine the effect of the magazine projects on the learning of low English level students.

II. Overview of the English Magazine Production Projects

a. Course

Two English magazine projects were undertaken in an English course called English IVB. English IVB is a compulsory course taught by five English teachers at the University of Shimane, a small-scale public university in Japan. There were 245 sophomores in 2005 and they were placed into 10 classes from A to J with three levels: low 20%, middle 60%, and high 20%, based upon their placement test scores at the beginning of Spring Semester in 2005. The students met twice a week for 45 minutes over a period of 15 weeks. The average number of the students in one class is approximately 24 to 25, and each teacher is in charge of approximately 49 students.

The goal of English IVB is loosely defined as developing students' speaking and writing abilities in English using authentic materials from mass media. Each teacher has freedom to select teaching methods and textbooks.

b. Participants

The participants of the classes where English magazine projects were carried out were the 44 sophomores placed in the lowest classes: E & J. There were initially 48 students in the two classes, but 44 students successfully registered in English IVB. There were 22 registered students in E and J classes, respectively. Their estimated TOEIC scores were between 200 to 350. Some of those students have little love of learning English and take English courses simply to earn credits to graduate. Table 1 is the students' demographics of this study.

Table 1

Class	male	female	TOEIC takers	TOEIC average
E	13	9	none	none
J	16	4	4	240

However, their low English proficiency and motivation do not mean they are less intellectual. Majoring in Policy Studies, their academic strength lies in understanding social and historical issues. The University of Shimane is considered to be a good public university in Japan, having 98% of graduates achieve employment in the year of 2005.

The students in those classes were taught by the same teacher in the previous semester in 2005. It is customary for one teacher to be in charge of the same students throughout the whole academic year at the University of Shimane, because the faculty, especially native English teachers, consider that one year commitment of a teacher to the same students facilitates teacher-student relationships.

c. Researchers

The first author took the initiative of the projects, designing the course and research methods. She has taught Creating an English Magazine in her English IVB since the Fall of 2003 at the University of Shimane. Having been an editor-in-chief of a campus magazine when she was a university student in Tokyo, she has skills of magazine publishing, designing graphics and using desk-top publishing software. She has taught a variety of general English courses at Japanese universities for fifteen years.

The second author is a Ph.D. student of the Graduate School of Social Science of Hiroshima University. He helped the first author develop the questionnaire surveys and conducted data analysis using MS Excel.

d. Rationale for the English Magazine Projects

The English Magazine Projects are based on the rationale of Project-Based Learning (PBL). PBL is a learning model that organizes learning around purposeful activities, first developed by William Heard Kilpatrick at the beginning of the 20th century (Wolk, 1994). Projects are "complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities; give students the opportunity to work relatively autonomously over extended period of time; and culminate in realistic products or presentations" (Thomas, 2000). Research has shown that PBL is effective in raising motivation, enhancing critical thinking, and deepening understanding of the subject matter, because PBL emphasizes student-centeredness, authentic materials and collaborative learning environment. (Sidman-Taveau & Milner-Bolotin, 2001; Thomas, 2000)

e. Process of the English Magazine Projects

The English Magazine Projects consisted of a series of tasks that students were required to perform to produce an English magazine. The students were asked to engage in a variety of tasks, such as finding a partner, greeting each other, exchanging their cell phone numbers and email addresses, making a commitment to cooperate with his or her partner and brainstorming topics and sub-topics. The students then worked on deciding their topic, scheduling appointments, planning data collection, taking pictures, looking for images on the Internet, writing topic sentences and supporting details, writing a magazine article with more than 300 words, laying-out text and images using Microsoft WORD, sending files to the teacher, and rewriting and sending their files again.

Since there was not a good textbook suited for production of a magazine for EFL learners, the first author prepared handouts to cover topics and sample conversations necessary for EFL learners to produce magazine articles. The handouts covered topics such as the definition of "magazine," kinds of magazines, production processes, roles of reporters, laying-out techniques, basic English writing rules as well as model conversations to perform the tasks, and samples of magazine articles that they were expected to imitate.

The participants were able to complete two magazine projects in Fall Semester in 2005: Project 1 and Project 2. Project 1 took two months to complete, starting in October and completing in November. The students met 16 times until they finally sent their final WORD files of their articles and pictures to the teacher. Out of the 44 registered students, 39 students were able to turn in their final files to be included in the magazine. The teacher then combined their WORD files using Acrobat Professional in PDF and printed their articles by a color printer and binded them in a book of 24 pages. The product was published as *Real Reporters Campus & Community* No. 6 on December 6, 2005.

Project 2 took one month to complete, starting in December and finishing on the second week of January, during which there was a two-week winter break. The students met only 8 times, since they learned the steps of magazine article writing in the previous project. 38 students out of the 44 registered students were able to turn in their final WORD files. The teacher again combined their WORD files in PDF and printed by a color printer and binded them in a book of 24 pages. The product was published as *Real Reporters Campus & Community* No. 7 on January 16, 2006.

The first author considered the two projects satisfactory. The completion rate of the students was 88% for Project 1 and 86% for Project 2. Not all the students turned in their papers, but it is normal for a small percentage of the lowest group of students to drop out of the course. Given that they belonged to the lowest group, their participation in the projects was satisfactory. Figure 1 is a picture of the two magazines.

Fig. 1

III. Research Methods

a. Questionnaire surveys

The students' subjective evaluation of the course and their learning were investigated by questionnaire surveys and observations. The first one, Survey 1, was conducted in December, 2005 after Project 1. The second one, Survey 2, was conducted in January, 2006 after Project 2. The questionnaire sheets were distributed by the first author fifteen minutes before the end of class and the students were requested to drop the anonymous answering sheets in a box when they left the classroom.

Both questionnaire surveys investigated four categories: Attitude to English, Satisfaction with Class, Learning, and English Use. Attitude to English was measured by their responses to a statement "I like English." Satisfaction with Class was measured by their responses to three statements: "I enjoyed the class," "I enjoyed working with my partner," and "I enjoyed using computers." Learning was measured by their responses to two statements: "I learned something," and "I learned English." English Use was measured by their responses to a statement "I used English in class."

A Likert rating scale was employed to indicate the subjects' responses to these statements with 5 "Strongly Agree", 4 "Agree," 3 "Neither Agree of Disagree," 2 "Disagree," and 1 "Strongly Disagree."

b. Observation of the students' communication

The students' behaviors both in and outside of the classroom were observed by the first author as she taught them in terms of the interaction of the students in the classroom, their activities outside of the classroom, and their interaction to the teacher.

IV. Results of the questionnaire surveys

36 and 32 students' responses were obtained in the first and second surveys respectively, out of 44 registered students. To examine the responses of the students regarding the four categories, graphs were created using MS Excel as follows.

a. Attitude to English

This concept was measured by the students' answer to the statement of "I like English." Approximately 40% of the students have a positive attitude to English both in Survey 1 and Survey 2. The students who had a negative attitude to English were reduced to 3.1%. 36.1% of the students answered "Neither Agree or Disagree" to the statement of "I like English" in Survey 1 after Project 1, but 53.1% of the students answered so in Survey 2 after Project 2. The slight increase could be interpreted that the students who had a negative attitude to English changed their mind to a more moderate attitude to English, although this does not seem to have statistical significance.

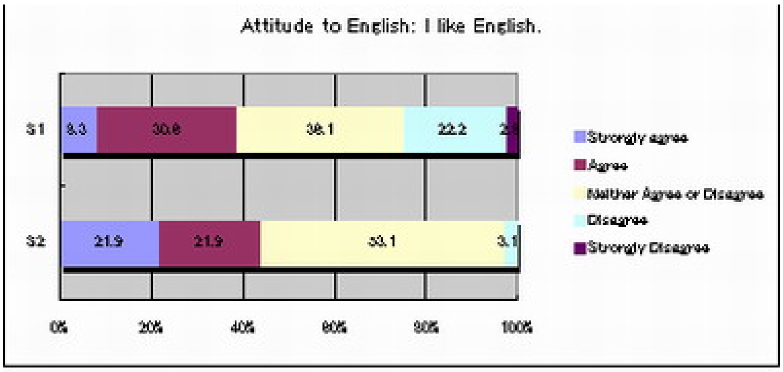


Fig. 2

b. Satisfaction with Class

This concept was measured by the students' answer to the statement of "I enjoyed the class," "I enjoyed working with my partner," and "I enjoyed using a computer." Approximately half the students were satisfied with the class. The dramatic increase of positive attitude toward working with their partner in Survey 2 was probably due to an extra lesson provided after Project 1. The teacher included an activity of exchanging commitment cards between the partners after she observed instances of some students unable to do their pair work due to their partner's frequent absences from class. Their attendance to class improved after the lesson and more students were able to engage in productive pair work.

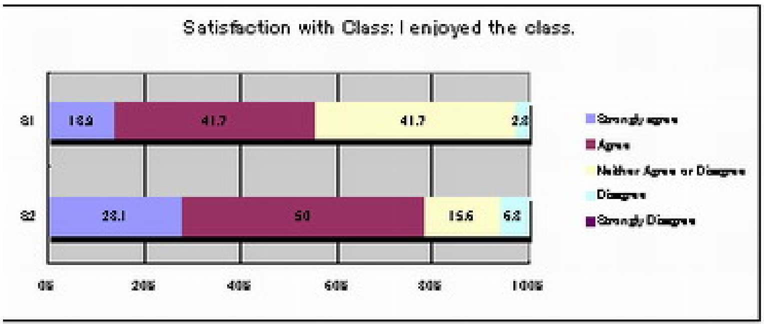
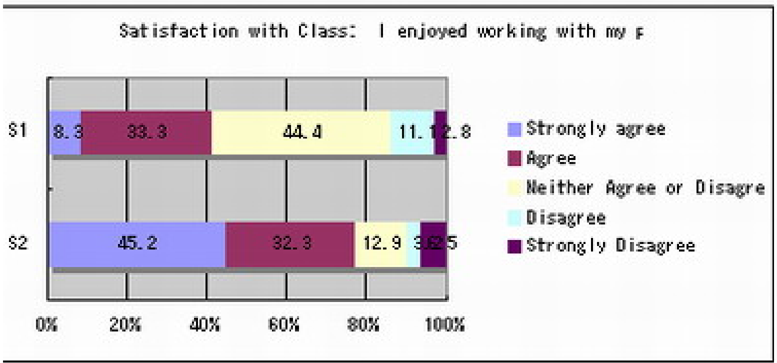


Fig. 3



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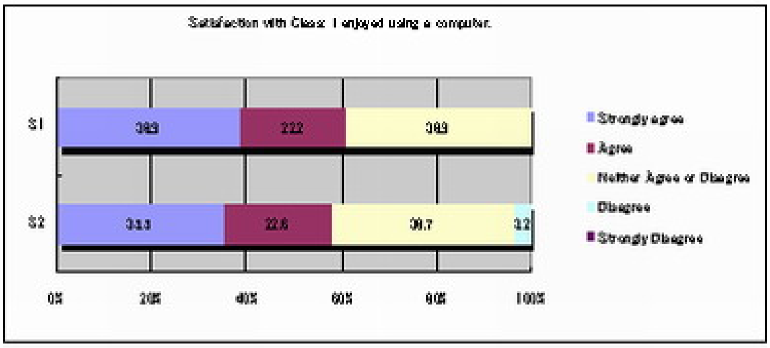

Fig. 5

c. Learning

This concept was measured by the answer to the statement of "I learned something" and "I learned English." Approximately 60% of the students answered they learned something in Survey 2. However, less than half of the students answered that they learned English (6.3%+37.5%). More than half of them are not sure if their English ability has increased or not.

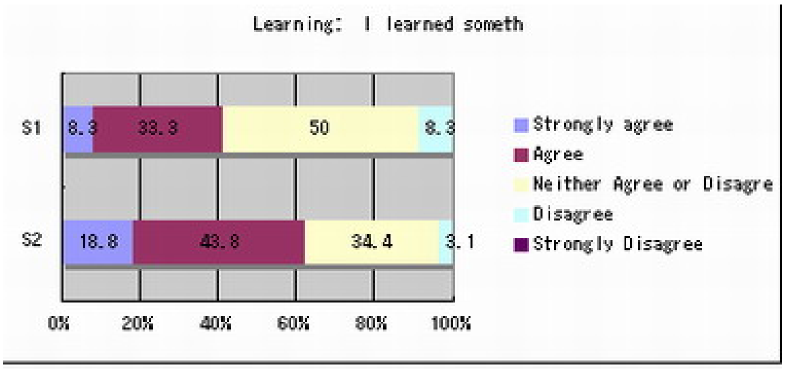

Fig. 6

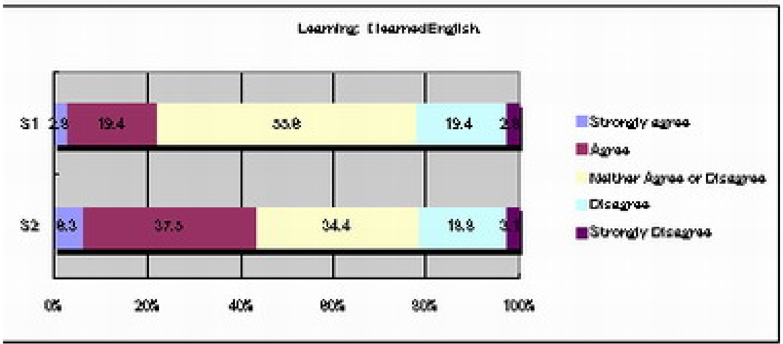

Fig. 7

d. English Use

This concept was measured by the answer to the statement of "I used English." 46.9% of the students (6.3%+40.6%) reported that they used English in Survey 2, showing increase of English use from 27.8% (2.8%+25%) of those in Survey 1. However, the students who did not use English also increased from 22.3% (16.7%+5.6%) in Survey 1 to 28.2% (18.8%+9.4%) in Survey 2.

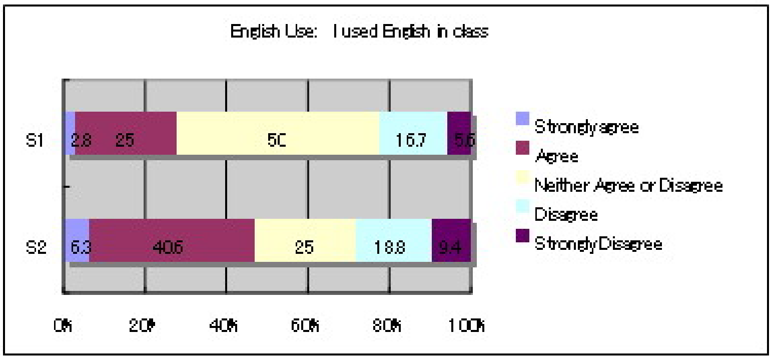

Fig. 8

V. Results of the observation of the students' communications

a. Classroom interaction

Contrary to the typical teacher-centered classroom, the interaction of students in this magazine project was active. The class experienced more interaction patterns than a typical English class for speaking and writing in Japan. There were instances of one-way interaction of T-S-T and S-S, and a spontaneous series of T-S-T-S and S-S-S-S interaction. T-S one-way interaction occurred at the beginning of each lesson, when the teacher explained the goal of a lesson, specific procedures of an activity, repetition of key expressions. Then the students interacted with each other most of the time. Also the students asked questions to the teacher more often than ordinary classes and the questions were real, not display questions.

During the series of the tasks, there were a few lessons where the students initiated a lot of questions to the teacher spontaneously. It is rare for Japanese students to initiate interaction in classroom except asking for test coverage or excusing themselves for going to bathroom. They were lessons in which the students used their PC's. They raised their hands asking the teacher how to use WORD, such as how to insert a section marker, how to change the margin, etc. The interaction of the students and the teacher was genuine. For example, a student needed to rotate a picture at 90 degrees to the right, but he did not know how to do it, or how to say "rotate" in English. He asked the teacher how to rotate an image in Japanese. The teacher said to him: "You can rotate it this way," when the teacher observed a flash in his eyes that indicated his understanding the word and the technique. Doing something using a PC definitely increased the number of spontaneous genuine utterances among the students.

b. English Use

The students' spontaneous utterances in English were rarely seen in the classroom. Despite the teacher's English directions, model conversations, and English handouts, they did not use English when they needed to use those examples. They repeated model conversations after the teacher, but they lapsed into Japanese even when they had opportunities to use the models. When they spontaneously asked questions, they did not use any of the models and spoke to the teacher in Japanese. Some students insisted the teacher to answer in Japanese, which she found hard to refuse, because they knew she knew Japanese.

In terms of writing, they first wrote sentences in Japanese and then translated them into English. The influence of the translation-method on Japanese English learners is deep-rooted. Since they were taught to translate English into Japanese in junior and senior high school English classes, they wrote Japanese translation in the handouts. They depended on English-Japanese dictionaries when they looked up words. They also used Japanese to send their files on-line to the teacher, which the teacher found so disappointing because she showed how to send email to professors in English in the previous semester. Figure 9 is what most of the students wrote when they sent email to the teacher. Only two students wrote messages in English.

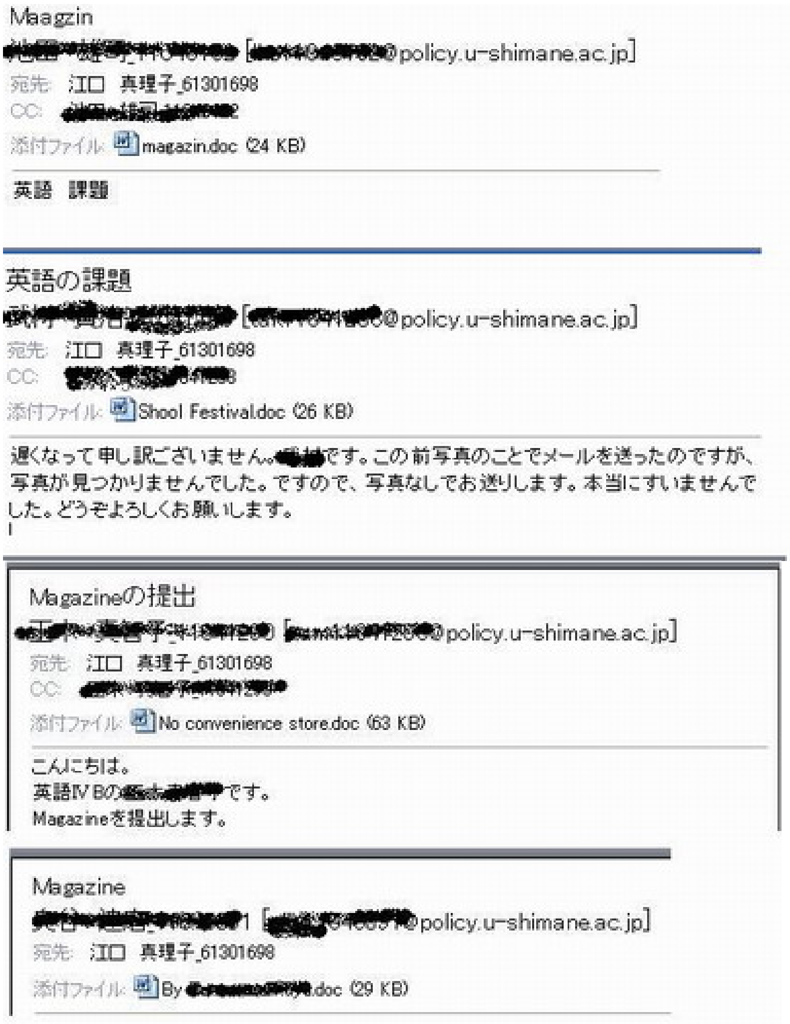
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Fig. 9

VI. Discussion

The limited effect of the projects on students' learning English is re`lated to the difficulty of using English in the EFL class that is composed of the same L1 with limited contact among natural English speakers. The difficulty stems from priority of task over tool in the homogeneous classroom as well as lack of natural contact to English speakers.

a. Priority of task over tool in the homogeneous classroom

Priority of task over tool in the homogeneous classroom CLT gives priority to the content of communication rather than the form, which leads to the view that language is a mere tool to achieve a task. Priority of achieving a task over language form is considered to encourage learners to use the target language without worrying about making mistakes, by having them focused on the content of communication. Therefore, in the goal-oriented projects, language becomes somewhat less important than the goal of communication.

However, priority of task over tool creates a serious problem in the classroom of English as a foreign language. When a class consists of homogeneous learners who share the same L1, the L2 becomes a very inefficient tool of communication. Speaking English is like using an old computer when a new one is available. Why use English when they can finish the job in their native language in a snap?

Japanese teachers of English fall into temptation to use L1 to Japanese English learners, too. Although it takes longer to explain English concepts in English, it is quick to translate it in L1. Take an example of explaining "government." A teacher may explain that it is a group of people who controls policies of a state. However, his or her learners must understand beforehand those words used in the teacher's explanation. Otherwise, the teacher must explain the words used for the definition to clarify the meaning of "government." Since a language is a closed system, the definition of a word is circular. If the concept the teacher is trying to explain is a key word or the target of the lesson, he or she may continue to elaborate it. If it is not crucial to achieve the goal of the lesson, he or she should stop dealing with the subject halfway. The teacher may be able to carry on explaining in English until her student understands it, but it is nearly impossible in a situation where there are many students waiting for her instructions.

The tendency to use L1 is especially apparent when the students' English level is low. Since both of them are not good at English and share the same L1, they lapse into using their L1 in their pair work to satisfy their communicative needs. Thus, the view of language as a tool of communication by CLT is a dilemma in the homogeneous classroom whose participants share the same L1.

b. Lack of natural contact with English speakers outside of the classroom

Perhaps the most significant problem for the limited effect of the magazine projects on students' English use is the lack of natural contact with English speakers in EFL countries. The students went out of the classroom to find information, which is a method of PBL, but once they were out of the classroom they were bombarded with L1. Their friends, professors, library and administrative staff, almost all people in campus speak L1. In the community the medium of communication is L1 wherever they go.

Figure 10 compares the different layers of communication surrounding language learners. The turtle is the learner of EFL and the rabbit is the learner of ESL. The personal environment symbolizes the sphere of communication at home characterized with intra-personal and inter-personal communication. The local environment stands for the sphere of communication in the local community characterized with face-to-face communication with others, such as meeting friends on campus, going shopping, working part-time and going to the hospital.

The small circles written as "L2" are impressionistic representations of one's target language. In EFL countries, English (L2) use is most likely to occur in the personal and local spheres when learners do their homework at home and attend English class. The area of English use is limited and the boundary with the surroundings is definite. On the other hand, in ESL countries where English is spoken everywhere, the boundary of the English use is indefinite and ESL learners have natural contact to the target language.

The global environment is the sphere of communication beyond the local level such as mass-mediated communication. "L1" and "L2" are written in the respective global environment, but it is not limited to L1 or L2 only, because other languages are used in the global environment. Today it is possible for language learners to expose themselves to their target languages in the global environment using mass media and IT technology. Seeking exposure to the target language through mass media is an indication of a good language learner. However, not all students of foreign language are willing to take full advantage of their exposure to the target language unless they are forced to do it.

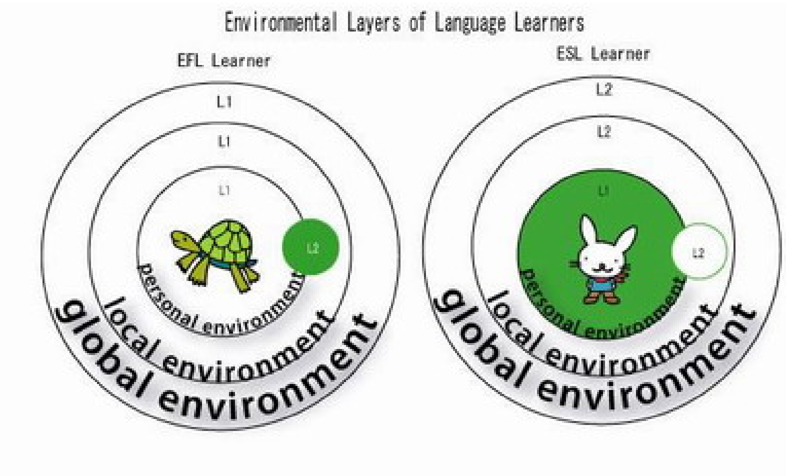

Fig. 10

VII. Conclusion

Based on the results of the questionnaire surveys and observation of the students' classroom interaction and email samples, it can be concluded that the English magazine projects were positive in terms of their satisfaction, but the projects did not have a significant effect on English learning for low level students, due to their extensive dependency on their mother tongue to achieve the goals or tasks. The findings of this study shed light on the issues of PBL English teaching in EFL: priority of task over tool in the homogeneous EFL classroom and lack of natural contact to native English speakers outside of their classroom.

Considering characteristics of EFL minimizing the PBL English teaching, it is necessary to design a course that encourages EFL learners to use more English and to seek exposure to English. It is true that English teachers may penalize students who speak Japanese in class, or conduct English-only instruction and fail students who can not live up to the teacher's expectation. However, instead of being so tough, we believe it is possible to create a positive environment where English becomes a necessity if EFL teachers and learners in Asia cooperate with help of IT technology. The Internet can provide EFL learners in Asia with a community where learners can be engaged in real communication in English. English has already become the international language when Chinese, Koreans and Japanese people meet. We have started such a collaborative EFL teaching and learning using Moodle, a free open source course management system designed to help teachers create on-line courses. We would appreciate it if you could contact us at ma-eguchi@u-shimane.ac.jp and visit http://gsv.u-shimane.ac.jp/ma-eguchi/moodle/.

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Genre-based Teaching and Vygotskian Principles in EFL: The Case of a University Writing Course

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Dr. Benedict Lin has recently joined the Nanyang Techonological University, Singapore. Prior to this, he was Associate Professor at the Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, Japan. He also previously taught postgraduate courses in Applied Linguistics and TESOL, as well as in-service courses for English teachers, at the SEAMEO Regional Language Centre in Singapore, and was a secondary school teacher for 19 years. Currently, he serves on the editorial boards of the Asian EFL Journal and the RELC Journal, a leading journal for language educators in Southeast Asia.

Abstract
This paper documents an initiative in introducing a genre-based approach to EFL teaching in the Japanese university context, in a third-year writing program. Its aim is to illustrate how and why such an approach may be extended to EFL teaching. Principles based on the learning theories of Lev Vygotsky are first outlined, before the notion of a Curriculum Cycle deriving from them is introduced. Consequently, a lesson unit based on this Cycle, as well as the process and experience of designing and implementing the course, is described. Particular attention is paid to the roles played by model texts as well as contextual and textual exploration involving both teachers and students in the co-construction of knowledge and skills. The place of a functional view of language – in particular, grammar – in the course of instruction will also be briefly discussed, as will the limitations and inadequacies of more prescriptivist approaches. Although the focus is on the teaching of writing, it will be contended that such an approach and its principles are applicable to the effective learning of other language skills.

Introduction: Genre-based ELT

Genre-based approaches, where teaching and learning focuses on the understanding and production of selected genres of texts, have been identified by Rodgers (2001) as a major trend in English language teaching (ELT) in the new millennium. Such approaches are, of course, not "new". English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are early examples, arising from pioneering work in genre analysis by Swales (1981, 1990) and others. However, teaching and learning around text genres has become increasingly influential in mainstream ELT in a number of situations, including "primary, secondary, tertiary, professional and community teaching contexts" involving "native speakers of English as well as ESL and EFL learners", and "in countries as diverse as Singapore, South Africa, USA, Italy, Hong Kong, Australia, UK, China, Canada, Sweden and Thailand" (Derewianka, 2003). Nevertheless, their influence in EFL in East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea still appears limited, as a trawl through ELT-related journals in the region indicates. For instance, between 2001 and the present, one finds only one article (Kim & Kim, 2005), in the Asian EFL Journal discussing or alluding in a direct way to genre-based teaching in these countries.

This paper gives a brief overview of genre-based language teaching, and then documents one initiative in extending it to the East Asian EFL context, specifically within a Japanese university context. It describes the third-year writing program developed by the author while at the Nagoya University of Commerce and Business, and explains the theoretical and practical considerations involved. In so doing, the paper aims to suggest how and why genre-based teaching may be introduced in similar contexts.

Overview of genre-based approaches

Genre-based approaches have varied theoretical bases in linguistics, such as Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) in North America (Mann & Thompson, 1988), and Generic Structure Potential (GSP) theory in Australia (Halliday & Hasan, 1989), in fields such as genre analysis and discourse analysis. They also take on various forms and guises. However, some key features are common to all of them.

To begin with, genre-based approaches begin with the whole text as the unit in focus rather than the sentence. The preoccupation is thus the creation of meaning at the level of discourse and not the acquisition of syntactical forms: "(r)ather than dealing with discrete instances of language, there is recognition that meaning accumulates and evolves over a stretch of text" (Derewianka, 2003). Here, a "text" refers to "a piece of language in use", which is a "harmonious collection of meanings appropriate to its context" and hence has "unity of purpose" (Butt et al. 2001, p.3). In other words, texts are stretches of language that may be considered complete in themselves as acts of social exchange. Length and mode of communication are immaterial: each text may be long or short, written or spoken. Thus, a brief exchange of greetings as two acquaintances pass each other is as much a text as is a 600-page novel.

Closely related to this, genre-based approaches are concerned with the social macro-purposes of language, and not just the semantic micro-functions of individual words and sentences: the genres in focus are generally defined according to the broad social purposes of communication. The classification and labeling of genres may vary, depending, among other things, on the theoretical influences behind each approach. For example, in some instances, writing genres are defined in terms of familiar broad categories such as 'Narratives', 'Description', 'Persuasion and Argumentation' and so on. Another approach, elaborated on later, makes a distinction between six or so text prototypes called *text types*, and more specific genres that employ each or combinations of these text types. Whatever the differences, categorization is based on what the discourse seeks to achieve or to *do* socially, for example, to tell a story ('Narratives' in many typologies) or to argue an opinion ('Argument' in some typologies, 'Exposition' in others).

Finally, the focus on whole texts implies recognition that there is a higher level of order and patterning in language than just the sentence – grammar at the level of discourse organization and meta-patterning of grammatical features. Genre-based approaches emphasize that this higher order must be attended to for effective language use: "all texts conform to certain conventions, and that if a student is to be successful in joining a particular English-language discourse community, the student will need to be able to produce texts which fulfill the expectations of its readers in regards to grammar, organization, and context" (Kim & Kim, 2005, citing Muncie, 2002). It must be noted that sentence-level grammar is not seen as unimportant: rather, its importance is seen in terms of the part it plays in the overall patterning of whole texts (e.g. what sorts of sentence patterns tend to pre-dominate in a particular genre). Indeed, close attention is paid to sentence- and word-level grammar in many current approaches, but without such grammar being treated separately from the business of communication, unlike in older grammar-focused approaches or in many forms of communicative language teaching. Thus, genre-based approaches can be seen as being at once both whole-to-part and part to whole.

Third-year English Writing Courses at the Nagoya University of Commerce and Business

The third-year English Writing courses at the Nagoya University of Commerce and Business (NUCB), titled *English Writing V* and *English Writing VI* for the first and second semester respectively, exemplify a genre-based framework in its curricular design and pedagogical focus. Developed over the academic year April 2005 to March 2006, it is now a fully formed program, with explicit goals specified in terms of genre outcomes and fully written teaching and learning materials following a specific and consistent pedagogical pattern.

The specification of genres to be taught is based on the classification used by many systemic functional linguists, especially in applications to classroom teaching of English (e.g. Butt et al, 2001; Derewianka, 1990). The classification involves a distinction between *text types* and *genres*. Text types refer to text prototypes defined according to their primary social purposes, and six main text types may be identified:

- *NARRATIVES tell a story, usually to entertain*
- *RECOUNTS (Personal, Factual) tell what happened*
- *INFORMATION REPORTS provide factual information*
- *INSTRUCTIONS tell the listener or reader what to do*
- *EXPLANATIONS explain how or why something happens*
- *EXPOSITORY TEXTS present or argue viewpoints*

Genres, on the other hand, refer to more specific classes of texts, such as newspaper reports or recipes. Texts of each genre may be purely of one text-type (for example, a bus schedule is purely an Information Report, while most recipes are purely of the text type ‘Instructions’) or they may be a blend (for example, sermons often include stretches of narratives or recounts, as well as explanations, while usually expository in intent). Genres may also be written or spoken.

The rationale for adopting a genre-based framework is that it facilitates clear links to the students’ purposes for writing beyond the writing classroom. Thus, the primary factors in curricular selection are ensuring a balance of text types, to enable students to perform a broad range of social purposes for writing in English in future, and selection of specific genres based on the students’ most immediate academic needs. With respect to the latter, the programme seeks to support the writing of a graduation essay, an extended research-based thesis that is a university-wide requirement for graduation, and that, for the English majors, is the most major piece of writing in English demanded of them. Since the research essay is a genre that potentially incorporates sections in its various sections all the main text types apart from ‘Narratives’, the curriculum covers all the text types except ‘Narratives’, which is also excluded because few students are likely to ever need to tell stories in English. Thus, the six units covered (three in each semester) comprise the following:

English Writing V (1st Semester):

- Information Reports (Survey & Interview Reports)
- Factual Recounts (Company Histories)
- Instructions (‘How to’ Essays)

English Writing VI (2nd Semester):

- Explanations (How or Why Something Happens)
- Information Reports (Classification & Categorization)
- Exposition (Arguing for a Position)

It might be noted that the specific genres realizing each text type are, where possible, those that approximate potential sections of the graduation essay. For example, one genre of ‘Information Reports’ selected, Surveys and Interview Reports, can evidently be adapted for the ‘Findings’ section, while the specific genre of ‘Recounts’, Company Histories, might be used by students doing research on a business in the ‘Background’ section of their essays. These possible applications to their graduation essays are made explicit to the students in the introduction to each unit.

The teaching and learning material for each unit are fully written up in a form akin to textbook units, printed, and distributed to the students. They are also made available online through the university's Blackboard Learning System. Each unit follows a similar pattern and learning cycle, and is completed over three to four 90- or 100- minute lessons. The principles on which this cycle is based, as well as a description of what a unit of learning includes, is described in the sections that follow.

To supplement the work done in the genre-based units, students are also required to submit a one-page response or comment on newspaper articles of their choice once a fortnight. This is to provide sustained opportunities for free writing by the students.

Vygotskian principles & pedagogical application

Genre-based ELT may be allied with a variety of pedagogical practices, and there is no single teaching/learning approach associated with it (Derewianka, 2003). However, genre-based teaching runs the inherent risk of becoming (and has indeed sometimes become) overly product-focused in a prescriptive way, since the curriculum is usually defined in terms of products – texts in various genres. It may thus "undervalue skills needed to produce a text, and see the learners as largely passive" (Badger & White, 2000). As Kim and Kim (2005) argue, good genre-based teaching needs to incorporate a process focus as well, so that it is at once both product- and process-oriented. The socio-cultural learning theories of Vygotsky (1978) provide a basis for this, and have been applied in a number of contexts, for example, in Australian educational contexts, as noted by Derewianka (2003). The design of the teaching material in the NUCB third-year courses is also based on Vygotskian principles.

Much of ELT in the last few decades has been based on largely cognitivist theories of Second Language Acquisition (or SLA as the field is commonly known) that view learning as pre-dominantly psychological in nature, dependant largely on what happens in the mind. For Vygotsky, however, learning is both social and psychological in nature. *Mediation* through the use of *tools* plays the key role at every point, with *sign systems* being the primary tools, and language being the key sign system, and hence, key tool for mediation. Vygotksy proposes the notion of Zones of Proximal Development (ZPDs), zones between what he calls 'actual' development (what the learner can do independently) and 'potential' development (what the learner can do in the future, with the help of others now). Every act of learning occurs within a ZPD, building on what the learner already knows and can do, and is first *inter-psychological* (social) before it is *intra-psychological* (psychological). Learning begins by being *object*-regulated, and then is *others*-regulated, before it is *self*-regulated. As the stages of *object*-regulation, *others*-regulation, and *self*-regulation are crucial to understanding the pedagogical design of the NUCB third year courses, they are further elaborated below.

By *object*-regulation, Vygotsky was referring to the role played by concrete manifestations of culture in the environment – objects and artifacts, rituals, routines and daily practices, documents and valued texts, and so on – that function as sign systems that mediate learning. The learner's starting point is thus social, in the first place, because he or she begins by taking cues from the environment. Thus, the value of some rituals, for instance, is that they enact in physical terms values of central importance to the culture, for example, filial piety through the ritual of offering tea to one's elders, and thus form a visible means of transmitting those values to succeeding generations. Children's playground activities, in the Vygotskian perspective, are also of value not so much because they provide the children opportunities to manipulate, explore and discover the environment, as in Piaget's view of human development, but more because the role-playing that often dominates such activities is a form of object-regulation of the child's understanding of his or her immediate society.

One's potential development, however, cannot be manifested, however, if learning stops at object-regulation. The key to such a manifested is the role played by significant others in mediating learning – the stage of *others*-regulation. Such significant others may include, for instance, parents, elders and teachers, as well as more expert peers, who through talk and other means provide explicit or conscious as well as implicit or unconscious guidance to the learner. Returning to the examples of rituals and playground activities, this guidance may take the form, for instance, of explanations of the meanings of rituals, or of a child with wider experience telling another his or her version of how, for instance, a real doctor would act. It is at the stage of others-regulation that language becomes important, not only facilitating the transactions between 'expert' and learner, but also enabling key concepts to be captured and retained.

For the potential development manifested by what the learner is able to do with the help of others to be translated eventually into actual development, *self*-regulation is vital. This is the stage in which the learner processes and manipulates by himself or herself the knowledge and understanding gained, and/or begins to be capable of working independently. As opposed to the Piagetian view of the phenomenon of self-talk by young children as indicative of ego-centricity, whose reduction as the child becomes increasingly aware of others is what is responsible for its eventual disappearance, self-talk is seen by Vygotsky as a manifestation of self-regulation. Its disappearance as children grow up is simply a matter of it becoming internalized and silent: this internal self-talk, again made possible only because of language, continues to be a vital part of learning through self-regulation.

Vygotsky's ideas on learning have been operationalized in genre-based ELT through the notion of the Curriculum Cycle, proposed by systemic-functional linguists such as Derewianka (1990) and Butt et al (2001) and influential in school settings in New South Wales and other parts of Australia, as well as in Singapore. This is a simple model for developing complete lesson units or cycles around text types or genres to be taught, and has as its ultimate aims helping learners to *do* things with language independently through mastery of text types and genres.

Each lesson unit or cycle has as its central focus a chosen text type or genre, and consists of a fixed sequence of stages. Descriptions of the cycle (e.g. in Derewianka, 1990 & Butt et al, 2001) vary in minor ways, but four phases essential for developing control of a genre may be identified, namely:

1. *Context Exploration*
2. *Text Exploration based on Model Texts*
3. *Joint Construction of a Text*
4. *Individual Application*

This is captured in Figure 1:

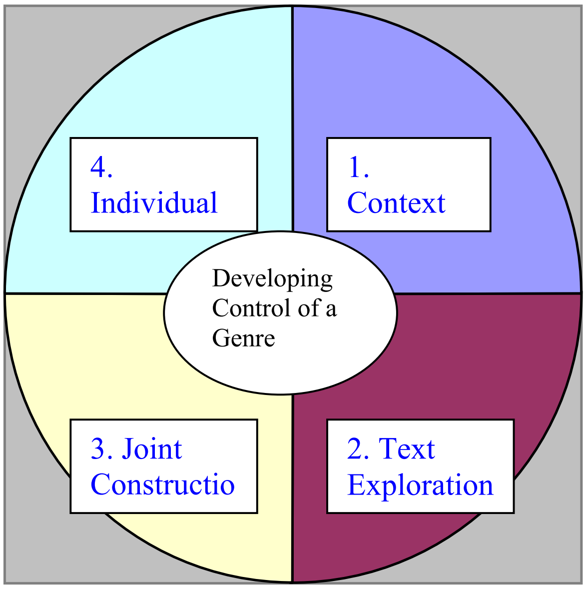

Figure 1: The Curriculum Cycle

Every cycle begins with *context exploration*, 'context' referring to the possible contexts of situation in which the chosen text-type or genre may be used. This phase resembles the pre-listening/reading/speaking/writing phase that has come to be typical in communicative language teaching, and the activities that may be carried out do indeed resemble typical pre-activities in skills-based teaching. However, where traditional genre-based activities have aims ranging from mere warming up to activation of mental schema, one primary aim of the genre-based Curriculum Cycle is to help students to become aware of and understand the social purpose of the chosen genre, as well as other contextual factors influencing the production of the texts that they will examine as models, and the texts that they may be required to produce in speech or writing. Based on Vygotskian principles, another important aim of the context exploration phase, from the teacher's point of view, is to establish the learners' 'actual development' or starting point.

The next stage, *text exploration*, is the first of two perhaps distinctive key phases in the Curriculum Cycle that demonstrates how a genre-based approach founded on Vygotskian principles is set apart from other forms of communicative language teaching. The aims of this phase are to familiarize the learners with the target text-type or genre, and to draw attention to organizational and linguistic features commonly found in texts belonging to it. *Model texts* play a crucial role in this phase, providing, in Vygotsky's terms, the necessary object-regulation. Using such model texts, pedagogical activities to make explicit the features of the text-type are carried out. These may include a gamut of established 'communicative' activities, such as the re-assembling of 'jigsaw' texts or information gap exercises, but the tasks are deliberately constructed in such a way as to highlight the salient lexical and grammatical features. Thus, the tasks aim to be at least implicitly 'analytical' in nature, and not just to facilitate interaction as an end in itself. Of course, more explicitly analytical work is also possible: for example, students may be asked to 'hunt' for and highlight all instances of a specific grammatical form. Direct teaching by the instructor is also an option, in order to make the features obvious to the learners. How the formal features work to help the text-type or genre achieve its purposes are also discussed or explored, the teacher playing a key role in *others-regulation* throughout this phase.

Others-regulation continues and takes centre-stage in the next stage, *joint construction.* Here, referring to the model text or texts, and making use of the knowledge and awareness gained from the exploration of the text, the students work with the teacher to construct their own texts (spoken or written) in the text-type or genre (or, in the case of listening and reading, to construct an *understanding* of the new text). This can take forms varying from teacher-fronted whole-class co-construction of a single text on the board, to small-group or pair construction with the teacher helping each group or pair by turn, to teacher conferencing with individual students. In the case of writing, as with process approaches, the texts may go through a few rounds of drafting, editing, and re-drafting. The model texts continue to provide object-regulation, while others-regulation comes from not only the teacher but also from other students, as more expert peers guide others, or as students refer each other to features in the models, and to points raised in the text exploration stage.

What is to be noted in both the text exploration and joint construction phases is that while there is much oral interaction taking place, its nature and intention is different from that of most forms of communicative language teaching. Where the interactive activities in the latter are often designed to simulate real life interaction, directed at providing opportunities for talking *in* the language, the talk here is *about* using language, and is focused on a collaborative effort to learn to accomplish a purpose in the language.

The last stage in the Cycle, *individual application*, as the name suggests, requires learners to work individually and independently, for example, in the case of writing, to produce individual essays. Ideally, this is carried out only after the students have successfully produced a jointly constructed text or understanding of a text. This phase then provides the opportunity for *self-regulation*, the crucial final stage in Vygotsky's model of learning. What each learner produces can, of course, be further re-cycled through further others-regulation (e.g. peer editing, teacher feedback), until the learner attains a desired level of attainment.

Lesson unit example

Each lesson unit in the NUCB third-year courses is constructed based on the Curriculum Cycle model. As an example, the first unit in the first semester, 'Survey and Interview Reports', is described.

The entire lesson unit is completed over the course of three to four 90-minute lessons, the pace depending on the students' progress, and was designed to serve secondary purposes of allowing the instructors insights into the students' attitudes to and extent of writing in English, and getting the students to reflect on their own attitudes and learning strategies.

The Context Exploration stage that begins the unit opens with the students working in small groups to simulate a survey. Using a prepared questionnaire on 'Attitudes to Writing' (see Figure 2 below) provided to them, the students interview each other, collate the results in their groups (calculating the percentages for each response), and then report what they think are the most significant figures, through appointed group representatives. Still working in their groups, the students then discuss and write down answers to the following questions: *Why did your teacher ask you to do this survey? Who would be interested in knowing the results? Why? Where are some places where the results can be reported? What are the most important points to include?* On the basis of their answers the instructor then explores with the class why surveys are carried out, draws attention to the fact that the results need usually to be reported in writing, and then discusses possible purposes and audiences that survey reports may be written for.

Survey: ATTITUDES TO WRITING

Name of Interviewer: ______________________________

Name of Respondent: ______________________________

Date of Interview: ________________________________

Q 1: When do you write in English?

a.	*Only* when I am studying English (during lessons, or for homework)	
b.	When I am writing in my diary	
c.	When I am at my part-time job	
d.	When I communicate with foreigners (through letters, e-mail or Internet chat)	

e.	When I write my graduation thesis	
f.	At other times (please tell when):	

Figure 2: Extract from Survey Questionnaire Used by Students

Now prepared for the Text Exploration phase, the students are directed to read the model text 'Reading Materials in the SAC (Self-Access Centre)' found in Appendix A. Salient features of text organization, grammar and vocabulary are highlighted in the margins of the model text in this unit, but in later units, students are gradually guided to make similar notes on the model texts. This is to encourage students to learn to observe texts and learn on their own from their reading. Before the students proceed to examine the textual features more closely, the instructor ensures that they understand the content of the text, and the students then write answers to questions in the unit to reflect on the purpose and audience of the report, discussing this subsequently as a class.

Text exploration begins in earnest with the organization of the text. A jigsaw activity on another survey report similar to the model text is used to heighten the students' awareness of the possible parts of survey reports, and how they may be ordered. Once the students have re-assembled the new report, they are asked to compare it with the model text, and identify the organizational features common to both. These features include both the macro-structure of the texts, as well as organization of content at the level of the paragraph.

Exploration then moves downwards to the lexico-grammar, that is, both grammar at the level of cohesive devices, the sentence, and the word, as well as vocabulary central to the text. One of the features explored in this unit is the use of reported speech, which is often prominent in survey reports. The instructor gives examples of reported speech sentences, and teaches the basic syntax of reported speech sentences explicitly. Following an example by the instructor, the students are then directed to look for and highlight all instances of reported speech in the model text, marking out the 'reporting' clauses (e.g. "80% of the students said…") and the 'reported' clauses (e.g. "…that they could not understand most of the magazines and articles") clearly.

This draws their attention to the common use of reported speech in the genre, as well as provides them further examples of the syntax of reported speech sentences. The students are also further asked to circle all the reporting verbs (i.e. verbs used in the 'reporting' clause) and classify them as either 'Saying' (e.g. "said", "explained") or 'Thinking/Feeling' (e.g. "felt", "thought") verbs. Thus, the vocabulary explored here is that of possible reporting verbs.

After this is done, the instructor leads a discussion on the *functions* of the observed features – that is, how do they help the writer to achieve his or her purposes in the text? For example, why do writers of survey reports use reported speech? Why are some findings reported using 'Saying' verbs, and others using 'Thinking/Feeling' verbs? It is important to note that the discussion should explore *possibilities* rather than make dogmatic interpretations as to the writer's intentions. What it seeks is to show that the grammar used is a motivated choice to help achieve communicative purposes, rather than a matter of prescription for the genre. Reported speech, and the range of reporting verbs, are, in other words, a set of resources that writers of survey reports can use. To help the students master this possible resource, they are then give sentence writing practice, using concocted figures for some of the items on the 'Attitudes to Writing' questionnaire used in the context exploration phase. Figure 3 shows part of this exercise:

Exercise 6

Below are statements based on the questionnaire on writing that you have completed. The percentage or number of students who have agreed with each statement is given in brackets. Write a reported speech sentence for each statement. Use a different reporting verb for each sentence.

Example

Statement (from Q1): "(I write in English) when I am writing in my diary." (60%)

Reported speech: "60% of the students said that they wrote in English when they were writing in their diaries"

1. "(I write in English) when I communicate with foreigners." (70%)
2. "(I write in English) only when I am studying English." (Only a few students)
3. "(I write in English) to help others to do something." (40%)

Figure 3

Apart from reported speech and reporting verbs, quantifiers for reporting numbers (e.g. "Most of the students", "80% of the students") as well as vocabulary often found in most survey reports are also explicitly highlighted and taught. The instructor can, of course, employ a variety of different activities and tasks for this, and has discretion as to the range of lexico-grammatical features to cover, but always, the teaching of the grammar and vocabulary is related to their function and use in the genre. In addition, the meta-language or grammatical terminology is also always introduced and used, as this facilitates discussion both during this phase and during the collaborative work in the joint construction stage. The students can also be asked, as homework, to look at more examples of survey reports (either provided by the instructor or to be found by themselves), and take down more examples of the various lexico-grammatical features at work.

Equipped now with an awareness of the organizational possibilities and lexico-grammatical resources at their disposal, the students are now prepared to carry out joint construction of their own survey reports. This they do in pairs or small groups, using their findings from the mini-survey in the context exploration stage. Alternatively, each student may write his or her first draft individually, then work with a partner to improve this draft. To provide scaffolding, the students are encouraged to constantly refer to the model text and their grammar work as they write, and the instructor plays an active role by circulating around the classroom and guiding the students in turn or when they are in need, reminding them constantly about the text organization, appropriate use of reported speech, how they can vary the reporting verbs, and so on. Each piece of writing goes through more than one draft, before it is submitted to the instructor, who then provides further feedback for a final draft to be submitted for grading.

Following the Curriculum Cycle, the students should then be given an opportunity for *individual application.* This can be done through students carrying their individual mini-surveys on a topic of their choice, using their own questionnaires, then writing individual reports. However, due to time constraints, the individual application is not carried out within the writing course. Instead, the course assumes that this is carried out in the students' writing of their graduation essay, which may include a section involving a survey. As mentioned, the possible application to their graduation essays is made explicit by the instructor, who may, in addition, advise individual students how the learning in the unit may be used. Efforts are also made to inform instructors supervising the graduation essays of the work done in this unit in the writing class.

A functional view of grammar

As can be from the description above, grammar instruction is an integral part of the teaching of the genre. The instruction not only is explicit, but also involves some degree of student analysis. However, it differs from more traditional forms of grammar instruction in some very fundamental ways.

To begin with, grammar is not taught in isolation from the communicative functions of the language. It is also neither taught as an end in itself, nor as the central focus of instruction, but as a means to an end – achieving the social purposes of the genre that is the overarching focus of teaching. The most traditional forms of grammar teaching focus on sentence analysis and the learning of prescriptive grammar rules, with the emphasis on producing 'correct' form at the level of the sentence, and little reference to the communicative functions of language. The structuralist approaches that developed in the late 1950's and early 1960's, emphasized sentence pattern drills, with less or no recourse to explicit teaching of 'rules'. However, while based on more descriptive linguistics, they continue this formal focus and emphasis on accuracy, although later forms of these approaches include attempts at fairly artificial 'communicative' practice around the chosen patterns. While of a broad church, the communicative approaches that followed, on the other hand, generally focus on the use of language, emphasizing communicative practice, with grammar either believed to be just learned implicitly in the course of receiving language 'input' or through interaction, or taught as a separate matter. This is reflected in the ongoing debates that still persist today in ELT and SLA (second language acquisition) literature about what the balance should be between 'focus on form' and 'focus on function'. The genre-based material in the NUCB course, on the other hand, views grammatical form as intrinsically linked to communicative function, and seeks to help students understand the links between particular aspects of English grammar and their functions. Moreover, the focus does not remain focused at sentence level, but moves beyond to how sentence-level patterns fit into natural whole texts in communication. In all these senses, the teaching of grammar is 'functional'.

The approach to grammar is influenced by the systemic functional linguistics of Michael Halliday and his associates, whose model of grammar is most definitively described in Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Matthiesen (2004). Butt et al (2000), amongst others, have also produced more teacher-oriented descriptions of the grammar. Essentially, the theory sees language as a system of resources for making meaning in context. Thus, the grammar of a language, or what systemic functional linguists call the 'lexico-grammar', is seen not merely as a set of rules or patterns of syntax, but a set of agreed-on conventions intimately related to possible meanings, determined by *contexts of situation* embedded in *contexts of culture* in which language is used.

To know a language then, is to know the set of grammatical resources – e.g. the range of sentence patterns or word-level grammatical features – that one may choose from, in a particular situation, to achieve a particular purpose. Thus, what is most important to know and teach about grammatical patterns or features are their functions and use in discourse – their meaning potential, what each can achieve in communication, in what contexts, both situational and cultural, and for what purposes, and, conversely, when and where each might be used. While accuracy of form remains a legitimate concern, the more critical focus then is to help learners develop knowledge of the range of specific grammatical resources that they may employ for particular tasks. This is illustrated in the focus on reported speech in the lesson unit described earlier: reported speech is often a resource used in such reports to attribute opinions to others (the respondents to the survey) in order to emphasize objectivity.

It should also be noted that the grammar instruction within the approach described does not seek to be comprehensive – what is taught is dependent on what is needed for the genres selected. Instructors are encouraged in their feedback to students' writing to focus mainly on the use of the features highlighted in each lesson unit, and aim at helping students master these aspects, rather than try to attend to all aspects of the students' grammar in their writing. Assessment criteria in mid- and end-of-semester examinations also focus on these as well as the larger organizational aspects taught, and this is made known to the students.

The tasks and exercises for grammar learning draw on established methods and techniques, in recognition that they have their place and worth. For instance, in some units, substitution tables to practice particular sentence patterns are used. This, of course, draws on a technique influenced by structuralist approaches, the difference being that the sentence patterns are now learned in the contexts of their natural use in particular genres, and the aim is for the students to put them into immediate use in producing writing in the selected genres. In addition, teachers also explain the functions of such patterns in achieving the purposes of the genres.

Finally, the instruction ideally aims at emphasizing that most of the grammatical features taught are likely and very useful, but not mandatory, resources for each genre. However, given that the students are relatively low-level EFL learners, there is insistence that they use the features taught in each unit in the production of their own texts. This is less out of dogmatic prescriptiveness, then of pragmatic consideration that the learners would otherwise not be in possession of appropriate grammatical resources. Moreover, for those who do possess other grammatical resources for achieving the genre's purposes, the insistence extends the range of resources they are capable of using. Nevertheless, what is emphasized in the course of instruction is that learning the grammatical features will help them produce writing in the target genre, rather than that failure to use the features constitutes wrong writing in itself.

Conclusion

Thus far, the courses have affirmed many of the claims of the merits of genre-based approaches, found, for example, in Paltridge (2001, pp. 7-10). The students, in their assignments and examinations, produce good coherent writing in the genres taught, usually relying on the model texts provided. The writing of the best students even under examination conditions is impressive, showing ability to adapt the features learnt for their own communicative purposes. Informal feedback from the students and instructors involved has been very positive. Students have reported that the third-year programme has given them more confidence and security in their own abilities to produce independent writing than their previous writing courses have. In particular, they point to the use of model texts and the teaching of particular grammatical features as very helpful in knowing how to go about writing texts of similar genres. Some have reported that specific learning units have helped them in writing their graduation essays, showing their ability to transfer the learning to other contexts. The instructors, on the other hand, appreciated the consistency of the pedagogical cycle, which at the same time allowed for a variety of tasks and activities. They also expressed much satisfaction at the visible progress of the students towards producing relatively competent writing in the genres taught.

While genre-based teaching is most readily applicable to writing instruction, and has most extensively been used for it, it may be and has been applied to the teaching of listening, speaking and reading, following a similar pattern to that described in this article. Paltridge (2001) discusses and demonstrates the ways in which this may be done. In terms of teaching conversation, for example (ibid, pp.33-40), he suggests that it may be based on work done by Eggins and Slade (1997), which demonstrates that casual conversation in English does follow schematic structures and generic patterns of openings and closings, turn taking, topic management and such, realized through particular grammatical features in the same way as written genres. Through using the Curriculum Cycle model, students may be helped in a similar way to managing particular genres of spoken conversation.

There are, of course, potential difficulties and limitations associated with genre-based approaches. Some of these are highlighted in various chapters in Paltridge (2001), and illustrated in Lin (2003), in relation to the implementation of the genre-based English Language syllabus in schools in Singapore. Among these is the potential for instructors to extend rigid prescriptivism to the level of the text, insisting for example, that all instances of writing in a particular genre must conform to one specific structure and set of grammatical features. This can tend to stifle individual expression and possible linguistic innovation. However, it has not been the intention of this article to explore genre-based teaching in full: hence, these issues will not be explored, although readers are reminded that like all approaches to ELT, genre-based approaches are not a panacea or final revelation, and the article does not pretend that they are. Rather, it is hoped that through its description of a writing programme and the considerations involved in its construction, the article has pointed a way towards how effective language instruction may designed through application of what is believed to be sound theory.

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APPENDIX A

II. LET'S LOOK AT A MODEL:

a. A possible article in a student magazine

Text Organization	Text	Grammar & Vocabulary
	Reading Materials in the SAC	
Introduction: Background – Why the survey was carried out Method of research Aim of survey: 2 Questions	Many students often complain that there is not enough interesting reading material in English at our university's Self Access Centre (SAC). In order to understand why they say this, and to help to improve the situation, my seminar group and I conducted a survey at the end of last semester. Using a simple questionnaire, we interviewed 30 second-year English major students. We wanted to find out what they were not happy about, and what they would like to have in the SAC.	Vocabulary for surveys & interviews: "conducted", "survey", "questionnaire", "interviewed"
Main body – Findings: Q1 – 1st answer: 'Biggest' finding first Q1 – 2nd answer:	The biggest problem seems to be that the magazines and printed articles found in the SAC are too difficult. 80% of the students said that they could not understand most of the magazines and articles. Only one student reported that he had no difficulty reading any of the magazines and articles. Another problem is that the storybooks are not suitable for our students. More than two	Topic sentences: Start with the topic ("The biggest problem…", "Another problem…", "Concerning what they would like to read…")

Next biggest finding Q2 – 1st answer: 'Biggest' answer first Q2 – 2nd answer: Next biggest answer CONCLUSION: ❑ Summarize what findings suggest – make recommendations ❑ Closing statement	thirds of the students felt that the books were too childish, and 50% reported that there were too many British 'classics' in simplified forms. Concerning what they would like to read, most of the students asked for more magazines and articles about economics and business. Some of them explained that there were very few of such magazines and articles, and since they were business students, they would like to read about these topics. About three quarters of the boys said they would like to have more detective or action novels, while most of the girls requested more romance novels. Nearly all the students agreed that there should be more storybooks set in Asian situations. In short, our survey suggests, firstly, that the SAC *should* replace the present magazines and articles with simpler ones. Secondly, the SAC *needs to* provide more magazines and articles about economics and business. Finally, there *should* be more detective and romance novels, as well as Asian novels in English, instead of only simplified British 'classics'. [If all this is done, students will find the SAC even more useful than now.]	Reporting findings: ❑ Reported speech: note sentence structure (e.g. "X said that …") & reporting verbs ("said", "reported", "felt", "asked" etc.) ❑ Quantifiers to indicate no. of respondents ("80% of the students", "Only one student" etc) Use "firstly", "secondly" etc to list Use modals ("should", "needs to")

An Integrated Approach to Teaching Academic Writing

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Abstract
This paper outlines an academic writing course that was taught in Japan to 100 students who took the course as a precursor to a study abroad program at the University of British Columbia, Canada. The steps taken to ensure that the students would be properly prepared for their academic life in Canada and their study abroad experience as a whole are also delineated. The results demonstrate that upon returning from an 8-month stay in Vancouver, the students showed a dramatic improvement in their writing abilities. Indeed, they displayed not only high writing abilities, but the ability to maintain solid grades in their other courses while in Canada. Finally, overall enjoyment of the course was deemed to be extremely high, further adding to the students' satisfaction with the program.

Keywords: Academic writing; preparation program; primary and secondary research.

Introduction

Teaching academic writing to Japanese EFL learners can be a tricky task: often neither the teacher nor the students are fully committed to it. Problems that exist in teaching academic writing to EFL university students include a general lack of knowledge of the requirements of writing research reports in English. This paper deals with some of the methods used to teach an academic writing course to 100

Japanese university students. Chiefly, this paper will address how to structure an academic writing course for learners who may not have the language skills and motivation to deal with a program of this nature. Although the course was conducted in Japan, it should not be considered exclusive to the Japanese setting. Indeed, the tactics employed here can be successfully used at other Asian universities.

The underlying reasons for teaching academic writing to Japanese students may be as varied as the techniques employed by teachers in such a course. The ones described in this paper were employed to benefit students going on an eight-month study-abroad program to the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada, as part of their four-year degree program at a top-tier private Japanese university. The steps outlined in this paper can be utilized by teachers at other universities to ensure they approach teaching academic writing courses with their learners' specific needs and goals in mind.

Background

It is well known that reading and grammar are given more importance than speaking, listening and writing in Japanese junior and senior high schools (Aiga, 1990). This poses a problem for students when they enter university, as they do not have the necessary skills to cope with the writing courses that will be part of the university curriculum. In fact, due to the great emphasis placed on writing at U.S. and Canadian universities (Fujioka, 2001), the conduct of writing classes in Japan needs to be reevaluated. Most Japanese learners learn how to write in junior and senior high school from Japanese teachers of English by using grammar and translation-based methods (Hirayanagi, 1998); methods that later pose problems for students when they enter either a Japanese or Western university. What results is that learners are woefully unprepared for the rigors of conducting research and putting together a well-balanced piece of academic writing that would conform to the standards of Western universities.

True preparedness for a study-abroad experience at a university where English is the medium of instruction – the goal of an increasing number of Japanese high school and university students in recent years (Drake, 1997; Heffernan, 2003, 2005, 2006a) – means that our curricula should include courses on how to prepare an academic style paper in English. It is certainly not an easy task, but if done correctly can be an exceptionally rewarding experience for foreign language learners.

In order to adequately prepare our students for the rigors of a study-abroad program, or merely for the opportunity to learn how to write an academic style paper, writing courses at Asian universities should reflect this type of instruction. In fact, if students are to become fully proficient in the target language, they need to successfully acquire all four language skills (Brown, 2000).

A specific example

The students involved in the course outlined here were required to take an academic writing course in preparation for an eight-month study abroad program at UBC. While at UBC, the students were enrolled in regular classes with other Canadian students, studying the same courses, and evaluated in the same manner as their Canadian (and international) counterparts. In preparation for this, if the students wanted to be successful at UBC, they also had to perform at a high level in the pre-departure writing course. The students were chosen for the UBC program based on a number of factors: a lengthy application process that included writing an English essay on why each student wanted to participate in the program; an interview with both a Japanese and a native English-speaking teacher; and a TOEFL score of at least 500 on the Paper Based Test. In all, more than three hundred applications are received annually for the program. However, only 100 applicants are successful in making the final cut, thus progressing on to the actual academic writing preparation course. The stated goal of this writing course was to prepare students to write well-researched academic papers that could stand up to the scrutiny of the standards used by the instructors at UBC.

The course ran twice a week for two 90-minute classes over a fifteen-week semester. One of the requirements for passing the course (and thus participating in the trip to Vancouver) was that students had to attend 90% of the classes, successfully complete three expository papers and make one oral presentation on the topic of the final paper. The purpose of completing these tasks was to prepare students for two of the courses they would actually be taking at UBC that would utilize similar methods.

From the beginning, students were encouraged to think outside of the traditional Japanese style of organization while writing. This style is known as the *ki sho ten ketsu* style of writing, and has marked differences between writing in English and writing in Japanese. It is an inductive style of writing that reflects the way Japanese students think and write in Japanese (Kaplan, 1996): illustrations and examples are presented in a paragraph before the main idea (Hirayanagi, 1998). Further, the Japanese style of writing is quite ambiguous in nature (Takagi, 2001), and thus, quite hard to understand for native speakers of English.

Conversely, writing an academic English paper involves following an expository writing model which includes a thesis statement in the introduction, followed by paragraphs that start with topic sentences, and examples that support the thesis, which are then followed by a logical conclusion. Lastly, students were taught how to support their arguments by using correct referencing conventions. Stylistic rules followed the conventions of the American Psychological Association (APA), since this was the guide they would be using at UBC.

Structure of the class

Some of the most important elements of academic writing revolve around choosing a thesis and using a format that includes having unity, support and coherence. These are usually new terms to Japanese learners of English. These points must be stressed accordingly. In order to demonstrate unity, students had to ensure that all parts of the essay would work together to develop the main idea of the essay. The goal of any English essay is to support a single point or thesis with supporting points, followed by specific examples and evidence. Secondly, support means that the essay has specific evidence or examples to illustrate the main ideas. Finally, a convincing essay must demonstrate logic and organization in its arguments in order to be successful.

The course described here used methods that ensured learners would remember how to properly structure their essays. First, students were asked to select a topic that was of interest to them. Naturally, it is easier for writers to write about what they are interested in, so students were encouraged to choose a topic in this manner. Second, students were taught to limit their topic so that they addressed a suitable theme or problem that needed to be dealt with. Students were encouraged to narrow their topic sufficiently so that it would be an interesting and useful addition to the body of knowledge that already exists on that topic.

Teachers on the course faced challenges in guiding students toward selecting thesis statements. The criteria for doing so should be outlined by instructors so that students fully understand how to choose one that matches their topic. Specifically, students focused on thesis statements that were of interest to them and their target audience (their classmates). Some examples of thesis statements students in this course wrote were:

"Part-time jobs are necessary for university students"
"Smoking should be banned in public places in Japan"
"Japan should limit its Official Development Assistance"

Third, teachers advised students to prepare a list of sources of information about their topics. In accordance with what would be required of them at UBC, students were encouraged to consult academic journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and of course, the Internet for sources of material for their work. Next, students were advised to do in-depth reading on their topics in order to make their point of view clear and concise. After organizing what they had read, learners started writing their papers.

Research methods

One key facet of teaching and learning academic writing is learning how to conduct both primary and secondary research. The former involves action research done by the students themselves. This entails designing, testing and administering a questionnaire and/or an interview to a number of people with the intention of testing an original hypothesis or thesis. The latter involves conducting research in a library or on the Internet of work that has been previously published. The point of both is to get students writing and researching in support of the thesis of their essay. When conducting either type of research, students were advised to be careful about the nature of information found on the Internet, as clearly, not everything one finds on the Internet is a reliable source. In the case of the course outlined here, secondary research was taught prior to primary research. If learners are capable of conducting secondary research first, they will be better prepared to carry out their own primary methods of research, which could then add some knowledge to their field of study.

The main elements in teaching how to conduct primary research included planning a questionnaire survey, selecting the survey sample, developing the survey design, constructing the questionnaire, and collecting and analyzing data. The learners on this course (and subsequent courses to it) needed to be given a step-by-step outline of how to perform the different types of research and the best method of analyzing the data collected from them.

Troubleshooting

Because of the inherent difficulties associated with teaching an academic writing course, teachers should be aware that problems are likely to arise. Strategies of eradicating problems can be formed before the course begins, so as to avoid causing confusion in class.

It is always advisable to be well organized in advance for a class of this nature. Problems can crop-up at any time and teachers are advised to prepare potential trouble spots in advance. For example, the learners in this course had difficulty deciding on a topic and thesis statement that was limited, unified and exact; narrowing the thesis statement; choosing materials that fit their topics and thesis statements; choosing support statements and examples; and using the correct methods of paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting and referencing. This last point is critical, as many Japanese learners are unaware of how to correctly paraphrase, summarize, quote and reference. Students in this course took a great amount of time in learning the finer points of how to accurately carry out these tasks. Teachers on the course noted that they spent quite a bit of class time actually practicing how to do each, giving the students specific examples and checking all work to ensure they fully understood these concepts.

Evaluation

Finally, students were required to give a 15-20 minute oral presentation on the topic of their third paper. The purpose of the presentation was to give students a chance to practice talking about the results of their study to an audience. Students were encouraged to give an organized and clear presentation on their findings, while using the usual array of visual aids if necessary.

The marking scheme for the course was based on attendance, the three essays and one presentation. Naturally, the students did numerous versions of each paper and had them all edited by the teacher, so the teacher was well aware of the amount of work each student put into the class.

At the end of the course, students demonstrated a clear improvement on their abilities to produce an academic style of writing. That is, the learners on this particular course showed their readiness for inclusion in the study-abroad program and academic life at UBC. Teachers on these courses repeatedly report that the learners are indeed capable of producing academic writing that conforms to pre-course expectations.

Results

Upon their return to Japan, student grades were obtained from UBC and discussed with the students in relation to their overall satisfaction with the program. This proved to be an interesting element of the program, as the learners did surprisingly well in their studies at UBC (Heffernan, 2006b). Indeed, 47% of the students who participated in the program maintained a B average in all of their courses while at UBC. Further, 36% of the students managed to achieve an A average, while 11% had a C average and 3% failed their classes. This final category included students who dropped out of the program midway through it, and students who admittedly did not give a full effort while in Canada.

Also upon their return to Japan, the students were given an exit interview. The purpose of the interview was to garner student attitudes toward the program and to measure their satisfaction toward the program. The interviews obtained some essential information on the workload expected of the students at UBC. Generally, the learners stated that the pre-departure writing course was very successful in preparing them for life at UBC. Most of the students were initially surprised to learn that writing academic papers was an integral element of all classes at a Canadian university. Since Japanese universities do not place a heavy academic burden on students, most of the students stated that although the preparation program gave them the necessary knowledge to get by in their life at UBC, they were still surprised by the amount of work at UBC. In fact, over 85% of the students in the program responded in this manner. This suggests that teachers should spend enough time preparing their learners for study abroad programs in order to better equip them for the rigors of academic life abroad.

Conclusion

Teachers in Japan – and indeed across Asia – who wish to conduct academic writing classes at their universities - must approach the task with the specific needs and goals of their learners in mind. As this course was a preparatory one for students going to study at UBC, it focused on how to write in an academic style and on primary and secondary research methods. This course overcame the specific problems encountered by the students, while adapting a step-by-step approach to teaching how to write in an academic style. It also centered on successfully preparing students for the complexities of living and studying in Canada alongside their Canadian counterparts. In the end, the program was a success, but there is always more work that can be done.

Finally, the students showed marked improvement in their writing styles and were successful during their 8-month stay in Canada. This implies that the preparation program was a qualified success; the goals of the learners were reached and they were satisfied with the outcome of the program.

Therefore, with the right amount of preparation, the end results can be rewarding, as students who have the motivation and willingness to learn about the form and process of academic writing will certainly benefit from competent, informative writing instruction.

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Globalization and History of English Education in Japan

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Abstract
This study investigates the history of English language education in Japan over the past 150 years. For this purpose, tabulated representations have been devised which illustrate the educational events in each historical era alongside key national and international events and trends. This is a means of illustrating how local education is a microcosm of the society and the world around it, and the manner in which globalization has an impact upon it. In tracing the inter-relatedness between education, society, politics and economics at the local and global levels, various issues are raised which explain why changes have been made in English language education. Among these issues are the periods of immense popularity of English in Japan, seen by some as "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992), yet in the early part of Japan's modernization as "a product of the struggle against imperialism" (Brutt-Giffler, 2002, as cited in Park, 2004, p.87). The tables clarify these two polarized stances and give insights into the fluctuating periods of popularity and decline over time in English language education in Japan.

Introduction

This study investigates the history of English education in Japan by describing and critically analyzing the historical changes over the past 150 years. It addresses the general history of English education in Japan and is organized according to the various eras of the Japanese Imperial Calendar, similar to literature which refers to the "Victorian age" or "Kennedy years" in British and American contexts. Looking back through history, I will attempt to trace the complex influences upon language education over the years and show how they may shape the current situation. It is argued in this combination of perspectives that influences upon general English education over the last 150 years may help to understand the current complexities of the language education. History is seen in this section as referring to not simply what happens in the English classroom, but what has happened socially, politically and economically around it.

In terms of the structure of this paper, it is divided into three parts. Firstly, the relationship between globalization and English language education will be explained from a wider perspective including not only in Japan but also all over the world. The second part will look at the world history from the aspect of the "Great Navigation" Period (Urabe, et al., 1995) and the colonial period from the end of 15th century in Europe. It also describes how Asian countries were influenced by Europe during this period of time. Finally, the third part will move on to the history of English education in Japan which mainly focuses on the following four eras: Meiji (1868-1911), Taisho (1912-1925), Showa (1926-1988) and Heisei (1989-today). Each era contains some significant social events which are not only domestic but also international in origin and investigates how those macro events influence English education in Japan.

1. Globalization and English Language Education

In this section, the history of English education in Japan will be investigated, focusing on the globalization of English language teaching and the position of foreign language education in Japanese society. According to Giddens (1990), globalization can be defined as follows:

> … the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens, 1990, p. 64 as cited in Block, 2004, p. 75)

In terms of language education, Imura (2003) expresses a similar view, saying that foreign language education and social events in the world are closely related to each other. The history of English education in Japan is, however, not the exception to this inter-connection between world, 'macro', events and the effects they have had on local education, the 'micro'. Looking back in history, according to Block (2004, p. 75), some researchers think that the clearest effects of globalization started in the 15th century "when Europeans began to map colonize the world". This process of colonization was accompanied by the globalization of the English language which Phillipson (1992) terms as "linguistic imperialism". However, Brutt-Giffler (2002) recently contradicts this connection between colonization and the enforced spread of English:

> …colonial language policy was not necessarily related to language spread, and that the spread of English was just as much a product of the struggle against imperialism (Brutt-Griffler, 2002 as cited in Park, 2004, p. 87).

Taking this alternative stance, the history of English language education in Japan may be viewed as being partly based on Brutt-Griffler's idea of a "struggle against imperialism", but also, I would argue, as a struggle for imperialism in which English, and its teaching, have been at various times in history regarded as positive and negative influences on society. To explain this apparently complex "struggle", it is necessary to outline how English education was introduced to Japan and how it has been operating in this country from the mid 1800s with respect to the inter-connection between world, 'macro' events and local Japanese 'micro' events. Consequently, such a detailed and reflective account of the history of Japanese language education requires, as Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) advocate, the supplementary description of a variety of macro and micro social, political and economic issues all influential upon language education. This creates a descriptive framework for the interpretation of the varying states of English language education through time, a seemingly inter-connected 'mesh' of events which show how educational trends and policy decisions have been porous to national and international events.

2. World History in the Great Navigation Period

Before giving a detailed description of the history from mid-1800s, I will briefly outline some significant incidents in the world before and around that period of time. Urabe et al (1995) term the few centuries from the end of 15th century as the "Great Navigation" Period in Europe. During this time, Europeans explored Africa, America and Asia and discovered new passages for global commerce. They also colonized vast areas of the world, creating economic zones, such as the establishment of East Asian

Company in India by Britain in 1600, which were primarily of benefit to European producers and consumers.

Nakano (2004) traces the historical relationship between Japan and western countries around this period. The Japanese government had banned commerce with other countries except Holland and China for almost 210 years from 1603 to the beginning of 1800. The government, called Tokugawa Bakufu (1603-1867), ruled Japan for more than 250 years, determining the political and economic stance, that of isolation of the country, towards the rest of the world. Due to various reasons, including pressure from the West, it returned this power to the Emperor, Meiji, in 1868. Although there had been relative domestic peace and stability in the Tokugawa Bakufu period in Japan, there were few opportunities to import innovations in science and technology from Europe and the United States. In contrast, while Japan was isolated from the world, the Industrial Revolution occurred in Britain at the end of the 18th century and after Britain started to export industrial machinery from 1825, this movement spread to other European countries and the United States (Urabe, et al, 1995).

Urabe et al (1995) also describes that in the 19th century, after European countries embarked upon their own Industrial Revolution, they began to invade Asia to find new markets. In South East Asia, for example, the colonization by Holland, Britain and France proceeded and only Thailand kept independence at that time. In East Asia, China lost the Opium War (1840-1842) with Britain and then the Arrow War (1856-1860) with Britain and France. Thereafter, China was forced to sign treaties with European countries which were fundamentally detrimental to their political and economic sovereignty. This is concisely described by Urabe et al (1995) who state that the most recent turning point in the modern history of Asian countries is the nineteenth century resistance against the European invasions and the subsequent struggle to overcome crises which were a result of that resistance. In essence, this period of resistance meant that Asian countries needed to adopt European civilization and reform their own traditional systems. Japan was faced with a similar situation to other Asian countries at the end of the Tokugawa Bakufu period, a time in which social, political and economic systems needed to undergo drastic internally-driven reform, yet were predominantly motivated by pressure from external, that is, foreign governments. The next section will describe English education in this period.

3. History of English Education in Japan

This section is divided into four parts according to the various Japanese Imperial Eras because Japanese commonly view history in these time blocks. In Japan, a new era is usually made when the new emperor succeeds the throne. The first part of this section is the Meiji Era lasting almost 40 years from 1868 to 1911. The second part is the Taisho Era from 1912 to 1925 which, at 13 years, is relatively short. The third part is the Showa Era from 1926 to 1988, at approximately 60 years, and the fourth is the Heisei Era, the current era from 1989 to the present.

To investigate the relationship between social, political and economic events (the 'macro' events) and English education in Japan, a table has been formed containing three items: (1) the year according to the western calendar, A.D., (2) its equivalent Japanese Era, (3) events related to English Education in Japan and (4) social, political and economic events. This table is an adaptation of Imura (2003) from the Japanese, simplified according to my purposes. Before the Meiji Era (1868-1911), there was a crucial incident in 1853 for the Tokugawa Bakufu government. Nakano (2004) describes how Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry came to Japan bringing a letter from American President Millard Fillmore asking for the establishment of a commercial relationship with Japan. The technology and the military power of the United States seemed to be far more advanced compared to Japan at that time. The huge gap between the two countries can be imagined from the following quotation:

> There was Perry with his four "black ships of evil", thundering an ominous salute at the Japanese coast by firing his cannon. And there were the Japanese, lined up on the shore, armed with swords and old-fashioned muskets. (Buruma, 2003, p. 11).

The gap between the two countries can be also seen in the presents which they exchanged after Commodore Perry was allowed to come ashore. The gifts from Japan to America were "finely worked treasures" such as "rich brocades, porcelain bowls, lacquer boxes" and "fans" (Buruma, 2003, pp. 12-13), whereas the presents from America to Japan were "a telegraph and a miniature train" (Buruma, 2003, p. 13). Buruma (2003) compares these presents and comments:

> The Japanese gifts were clearly those of a "partially enlightened people", while the American presents showed "the success of science and enterprise" of "a higher civilization" (Buruma, 2003, p. 13)

Ishikawa (1997) considers the visit of Commodore Perry to have been a trigger to the opening of Japan, since in 1854 he succeeded in concluding the treaty. However, Gakken (1999) states that this treaty was unilateral, favoring the United States and containing many disadvantages for Japanese international trading rights. Some examples of this were that Japan was not authorized to determine the customs duties by itself. Also, westerners residing in Japan were exempt from local prosecution if they committed a crime due to a clause in the treaty stating "extraterritoriality" for foreign nationals. In 1858, Japan concluded similar treaties with Britain, Holland, Russia and France but, after the change of government in Japan, it was quickly realized that a renegotiation of the original terms was necessary for the long-term development of the Japanese economy. In order to revise the treaties, the Meiji government sent selected Japanese to Western countries to study because it was important for Japan to have a similar standard of technology, politics and education (Gakken, 1999), as well as linguistic competence. Foreign language education in Japan itself was closely related this project as well since foreign languages were introduced to the university curriculum and subjects themselves were taught in English.

3-1 English Education in the Meiji Era

English education in the Meiji Era can be divided into two stages: the first stage from 1868 to 1881, and the second from 1883 to 1905. The reason is that the first and the latter halves contain different characteristics in foreign language education. The first stage can be summarized as being an 'English boom', whilst the second stage a 'backlash' to the English boom. The detailed description of each stage is explained in the next part.

The first stage of the Meiji Era contains the first English boom in Japan and is closely related to government policies. In 1868, Tokyo was adopted as the capital of Japan from Kyoto and the Meiji Era started. Buruma and Margalit (2004, p. 3) highlight the feature of this era as being a "radical transformation" in society, politics and commerce. This transformation is called the Meiji Ishin, or Meiji Restoration, which was mainly directed by the government (Gakken, 1999). It entailed the whole country embarking on a process towards westernization, referred to as Bunmei Kaika, "Civilization and Enlightenment" (Buruma and Margalit, 2004).

Table 1: The First Stage of English Education History in the Meiji Era （Imura, 2003, p. 288, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1868	Meiji 1		Tokyo became the capital of Japan Meiji Restoration
1871	4	Foundation of Ministry of Education First female Japanese students to U.S.	English boom
1872	5	Report by Mori "The use of English as the official language in Japan" English became the medium of instruction in Kaisei School for all subjects Murray (U.S.) became the consultant of the Ministry of Education	
1881	14	6 foreign language lessons per week in Junior High Schools	

In terms of education in this era, the Ministry of Education was established in 1871, one of their first decisions affecting English language education being to send students abroad. Significantly, this move towards acquiring foreign knowledge also entailed sending female Japanese abroad, among whom was an eight-year-old girl called Umeko Tsuda, the future founder of a famous Japanese university later in her life. Around this time, English language education entered into its boom period because of the government policies. In addition, in 1872, a report called "The use of English as the official language in Japan" was written by Mori who was the first Minister of Education in Japan. At that time English became the medium of instruction for all subjects in Kaisei School which is the current Tokyo University. In a move which further showed the government's desire to catch up with educational practices in the West, David Murray (1830-1905), a mathematics professor from the United States, was invited to Japan to be the consultant of the Ministry of Education.

According to the Kojien Dictionary (as cited in Imura, 2003), many other westerners were invited in Japan in the beginning of the Meiji Era to teach about their advanced knowledge such as technology, science, architecture, and medicine. The total number of the invited westerners was almost 3,000 in total in the Meiji Era. Imura (2003) suggests that in the education field, for example, approximately one third of the budget of Tokyo University when it was founded was spent on the salaries for western lecturers. After eight years in 1881, six foreign language lessons per week were taught in junior high schools.

However, in the second stage of the Meiji Era, the stance towards English gradually changed and a 'backlash' towards English education arose. Two years later, in 1883, Japanese became the teaching language in Tokyo University because, according to Imura (2003), around this time, many of the students sent by the government to western countries came back to Japan to teach in the university. He also stresses that the academic books written in European languages were translated into Japanese, so it was no longer necessary to teach the subjects in English (Imura, 2003). Imura (2003) also suggests that this then led to a sense among Japanese that English was no longer the required means to gain access to western culture and knowledge. Consequently, the status of English changed to that of a normal school subject, Japanese replacing it as the access to knowledge of the outside world.

Moreover, the Japanese Imperial Constitution which took its model from the Prussia Constitution (current Germany), was established in 1889 to show the outside world that Japan was catching up with the West since it had its own constitution. Then they renegotiated a revision of the unilateral treaty with western countries and succeeded in repealing the extraterritoriality of foreign forces in Japan in 1894 just before the Japan-China War. Still, however, Japan could not achieve the recovery of the right to determine the level of customs duties at that time (Gakken, 1999). In terms of the establishment of the constitution, it ironically also encouraged patriotism within Japan. This nationalistic fervor led to the foreign wars of 1894, with China and with Russia in 1904. The victory in these two wars, especially the Japan-Russia War would be a significant influence upon revising the treaty (1911), whereby the right to determine customs duties on imported goods was finally granted. It was believed that this was achieved due to Japan's advances in technology and its ever-increasing strengthening military presence in the region. After this revision of the treaty, Japan received equal trading rights almost 60 years after it had opened its country to the outside world (Gakken, 1999).

Education from this point stressed a return to learning the value of Japanese and its linguistic origin of Chinese, a movement which was energetically led by the Education Minister, Inoue (Ministry of Education, 2002). This turn-around in the status of English was relatively quick, a result of both the practical consideration of returning Japanese lecturers from abroad wishing to teach Western knowledge through Japanese, and of the perhaps more politically-driven government initiative to regard the Japanese language as the language of instruction for nationalist purposes. This was a combination of educational pragmatism in terms of the transfer of knowledge from the West and perhaps a more sinister political movement which later ultimately led to ultra-patriotism, in essence "occidentalism" (Buruma and Margalit, 2004), an Eastern rejection of western values and knowledge. In brief, the new era was one of greater closeness to the outside world, yet one in which the Japanese sense of identity, both in terms of language and nationality, were uncomfortably trying to assert themselves in the world.

Table 2: The Second Stage of English Education History in the Meiji Era （Imura, 2003, p. 288, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1883	16	Japanese became the medium of instruction in Tokyo University	
1889	22		Japan Imperial Constitution
1893	26	Revival of Japanese and Chinese language education by Inoue, Education Minister	
1894	27		Repeal of extraterritoriality treaty Japan-China War
1901	34	Swan (U.K.) spread Gouin Method in Japan	
1904	37		Japan-Russia War
1905	38	Nanbi, How to analyse English sentences	
1911	44		Recovery of customs rights

Returning to the events related to English education in Japan at the end of the Meiji Era, two enduring streams in foreign language education started around this time: one being the government's policy to import modern methodologies, and the other called "juken-eigo" which is English education to prepare for the entrance examinations of universities and secondary schools. An example of the former was in the government's invitation to the scholar, Swan, from the UK in 1901 to spread the "Gouin Method", a forerunner to the Audio-Lingual Method. As an illustration of the popularity of "juken-eigo", there was a new body of literature focusing on the examination practice, notably through the publication by Nanbi (1905) of "How to analyse English sentences" specifically written for students taking entrance examinations. Sakui (2004, pp. 155-163) notes how these "two forms of curriculum" still exist today: one is the national curriculum made by the government and the other the implementation in the actual classrooms focusing on "serious test-taking preparation". This phenomenon has been in existence for more than 100 years, showing clearly the continuing dichotomy between policy formulation at the government level and its implementation in the classroom.

3-2 English Education in the Taisho Era

The main feature of English education in the Taisho Era (1912 to 1925) was the continuation of the backlash towards the English boom of the early Meiji Era. Also, the two streams emerging in English education during the Meiji Era appeared more prominently in this next era. In its first eleven years, more and more publications came on to the market related to examination preparation, for example, Ichikawa (1912) who wrote a book about English grammar and Yamazaki (1912) who published a book called "Official Applied Analysis of English sentences". This trend continued with publications by Hosoe (1917) who also wrote a book about English grammar and Ono (1921) who published a book entitled "Interpretation of English sentences – an Analysis and how to translate into Japanese".

Table 3: English Education History in the Taisho Era
（Imura, 2003, p. 289, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1912	Taisho 1	Ichikawa, Study of English Grammar Yamazaki, Official applied analysis of English sentences	
1914	3		First World War
1917	6	Hosoe, General English Grammar	
1921	10	Ono, Interpretation of English sentences – an Analysis and how to translate into Japanese	
1922	11	Palmer (U.K.) became the consultant of the Ministry of Education	
1923	12	Establishment of English Teaching Research Institution (Headed by Palmer)	
1924	13	First conference of English Language Teaching	New immigration law in U.S.

1925	14	Argument of abolition of teaching English	First radio broadcasting

Looking at the social, political and economic events in the Taisho Era, the First World War started in 1914 in Europe. Although it was war time in Europe, the Japanese government invited Palmer from the U.K. as consultant to the Ministry of Education. The following year, he established the English Teaching Research Institute. According to Imura (2003), Palmer made great efforts to spread the Oral Method in Japan for more than ten years. In 1924 the first conference for English Language Teaching was held but whilst there was an increasing awareness about the methodology of teaching English and linguistic analysis, there was, at the same time, a growing movement advocating the abolition of teaching English. Imura (2003) suggests that this anti-English feeling was closely linked with the new immigrant law in the U.S. which forbade Japanese immigration. The law led to widespread political and social antipathy toward the U.S. and, in turn, to calls to abolish English language education in Japan. The following year, in 1925, the first radio broadcasting started in Japan, a huge technological advancement which later was seen as helping education despite anti-English language sentiment.

3-3 English Education in Showa Era

The Showa Era, from 1926 to 1988, can be divided into three stages according to the three core events: (1) The period from 1926 up to the Pacific War time in 1941, (2) the end of the Second World War from 1945 to 1963, and (3) the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 up to the start of the JET scheme in 1987. The possible connections and influences of the social, political and economic events upon events related to English language education will be analyzed for each stage.

The first stage was from 1926, starting with the 'Primary English Programme' on radio just after the first radio broadcasting started in 1925. This appeared to be the peak of the anti-English language period at that time. In 1927, Fujimura, a professor of Japanese literature in Tokyo University wrote a paper entitled "Urgent, abolition of English education" creating a sensation (Imura, 2003). According to Imura (2003), Fujimura criticized the apparent wholesale copying of ideas from western countries and suggested that foreign language education had become a burden for Japanese students. Then four years later, in 1931 the first reduction of English lessons at schools was implemented.

Table 4. The First Stage of English Education in the Showa Era
（Imura, 2003, p. 289, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English Education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1926	Showa 1	Starting of 'Primary English Programme' by Kataoka on radio	
1927	2	Fujimura, 'Urgent, abolition of English Education'	
1931	6	First reduction of English lessons at schools	The Manchurian Incident
1933	8		Withdrawal from League of Nations
1936	11	Palmer went back to U.K.	
1937	12		Japan-China War
1938	13	Fujimura, 'Abolition of English Lessons in Junior High Schools'	
1940	15		Japan joined the Axis Powers
1941	16		The Pacific War
1942	17	Dismissal of U.K. and U.S. lecturers in all Japanese universities	

In terms of the wider political events of that time, there was the Manchurian Incident was occurred in the same year (1931), which was the start of aggression upon China by the Japanese military (Gakken, 1999). The Japanese Prime Minister, Tsuyoshi Inukai tried to stop the expansion of the military action but he failed and was assassinated in 1932. Afterwards the military took over the government and Inukai became the last democratically elected prime minister of the government before the Second World War (Click 20 Seiki, 2005). Due to the Manchurian Incident, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933 (Buruma, 2004). Consequently, the Japan-China War broke out in 1937 and in 1940 Japan joined the Axis powers of Germany and Italy.

In terms of English education around that time, in 1936 Palmer went back to the U.K. after working for 14 years in Japan (Imura, 2003) and two years later Fujimura published another article entitled "Abolition of English lessons in Junior High Schools". Eventually, in 1941 Japan attached Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War started. The following year in 1942, all the U.K. and American lecturers in Japanese universities were dismissed.

In brief, this first stage leading up to the Second World War showed the peak of anti-English language education sentiment, resulting in dismissals of foreign academics and the abolition of English language provision in Japanese education. The effective military take-over of government in the mid-1930s led to stricter rules against anti-patriotic expression. Teachers were required to follow the more nationalistic government education policy and English was seen as a negative, foreign influence in society. Nationalistic sentiment was at a high and Japanese identity was re-conceptualized as being unique in character and spirit. This is outlined by Yoshino (1992) as the origin of the "nihonjinron" theory of Japanese uniqueness, broadly summarized by Buruma and Margalit (2004) as representing a Japanese form of "Occidentalism". This led to a rejection of previously imported western culture, knowledge and, significantly, English.

The second stage of the Showa Era began in 1945, the year marking the end of the Second World War and the start of the U.S. occupation. General Douglas MacArthur arrived in Japan as the head of General Headquarters (GHQ) organized by the U.S. military. It was approximately one hundred years after Commodore Perry arrived in Japan with his black ships (Buruma, 2003). The political, economic and education systems had drastically changed after Commodore Perry came to Japan, as was seen in the Meiji Restoration, but this was internally directed by successive Japanese governments themselves. The difference between Commodore Perry and General MacArthur was that MacArthur himself and GHQ in the form of an external occupying force which supervised the reform of the political, economic and education systems in Japan.

Table 5. The Second Stage of English Education History in the Showa Era （Imura, 2003, pp. 289-290, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English Education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1945	20	U.S. occupation	End of WWII
1946	21	Start of "Come Come English" Programme by Hirakawa on NHK radio	English Boom
1947	22	Start of English Lessons again in Junior High Schools (compulsory education) The tentative plan of The Course of Study about English lessons devised	
1951	26		Peace Treaty Security Treaty
1952	27	U.S. Fulbright English teachers arrived in Japan	Independence from U.S.
1953	28	Egawa, Interpretation of English Grammar	First TV broadcasting
1955	30		
1956	31	Fries arrived in Japan and established ELEC	The Economic Miracle
1958	33	Bulletin of 'The Course of Study – Importance of basic English ability'	
1960	35	Argument for 'Practical English' by business leaders	
1963	38	Introduction of the first STEP test	

GHQ's missions were manifold, such as dismantling the Japanese military and reform of the political and education systems (Buruma, 2003). In addition, the U.S. occupation played a major role in influencing people's interest in English education creating a period termed as the second English boom, almost 70 years after the first one at the beginning of the Meiji Era. This was seen in various key events, among which was "Come Come English", a radio English conversation programme by

Hirakawa in 1946. This popular NHK broadcast encouraged many people to listen in and start to study English. Also, in the following year, English lessons started again in junior high schools and the tentative plan of The Course of Study, which was the National Curriculum for all subjects including English, was devised under U.S. supervision.

In 1951, when a peace treaty was concluded between Japan and the Allied Powers, Japan concluded another treaty with the United States related to the mutual cooperation and security between the two countries (Buruma, 2003; Wikipedia, 2004). Although in 1952 Japan was granted independence from the U.S., because of this treaty, the American military has had a presence in Japan for sixty years. This situation did, however, give Japan an opportunity to develop its own economy instead of being burdened by the expenses of protecting itself militarily in the region. This led to the so-called 'Economic Miracle' in which the Japanese economy grew rapidly from 1955 for almost twenty years until the 1970s.

Foreign language education also continued as it had under U.S. occupation. In 1952, the first Fulbright English teachers from the United States arrived in Japan. Also, according to Imura (2003, p. 226), C. C. Fries, a Michigan University professor specializing in the Oral Approach, was sent to Japan in 1956. Around this time, the two streams of foreign language education – the government propensity to import new methodological trends in English language education, and the entrance examination trend - which had first emerged in the Meiji Era started to become apparent again. In 1953, Egawa published a book entitled Interpretation of English Grammar for students to prepare for entrance examination purposes. Concurrently, the government introduced the new National Curriculum emphasizing the importance of basic English ability.

Then in 1956 there was a call by leading business leaders to improve the level of "Practical English" among company recruits so that the Japanese workforce could be better equipped to conduct international business (Imura, 2003). Effectively, although some investigations were then conducted by the Ministry of Education into the linguistic competence of graduating students, no great changes were made in the English curriculum at schools and public universities. However, in the private sector, in 1963 the "STEP Test", the Society for Testing English Proficiency, was introduced. This was the first nationwide English examination in Japan assessing the four language skills. This can be seen, in part, as being a reaction to the call for the introduction of more practical English made by business leaders some years previously. Of some significance is the fact that the STEP Test was introduced during the Economic Miracle period (1955-1970s), showing the strong connection between business leaders and English education.

Table 6: The Third Stage of English Education History in the Showa Era （Imura, 2003, p. 290, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English Education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1964	39		Tokyo Olympics
1965	40	Mori, English for Examination	English boom
1972	47	Controversy in English education between Hiraizumi and Watanabe	
1975	50		2 million people went abroad
1979	54	Introduction of the first TOEIC test	
1981	56	Objection campaign to the reduction of English lessons to 3 hours a week at Junior High Schools	
1985	60	Establishment of Association of Research for English teaching in the Classroom Communicative approach attracted the focus of attention	
1987	62	Start of the JET Programme	

The third stage of the Showa Era was marked by another English boom spearheaded by the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, though English education at schools was still examination-oriented, as can be exemplified by the publication by Mori (1965) entitled English for Examination. Looking back at the social events in the 1970s, almost two million Japanese went abroad, a factor which greatly influenced people's motivation to learn foreign languages. In the mid-70s, there was a significant debate about English education between two intellectuals, Hiraizumi and Watanabe. According to Imura (2003), in 1974, a politician of the ruling party, Wataru Hiraizumi, put forward a plan for future foreign language education in Japan proposing that English should only be taught to students who really needed it. This was, in effect, a proposal to restructure English language education in schools so that it became available only to an elite set of students. Hiraizumi's rationale was that most people simply did not require English. This move to create an elite was made despite the fact that more and more normal Japanese were now financially able to travel abroad. Imura (2003, p. 284) summarizes that this was "a sort of argument to abolish English education", ignoring the vast majority of students in Japan. In contrast, Shoichi Watanabe, an English linguist, was against Hiraizumi's plan stating that "English education for examination is valuable to train Japanese students' intelligence" (Imura, 2003, p. 284). Although this counter-argument to Hiraizumi was necessary to avoid the creation of an English-speaking elite, the rationale supporting it still failed to consider the ever-growing practical needs of the population.

In 1979, TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), the U.S. business English Test, was introduced, perhaps a belated addition to the STEP test from the 1960s, yet important in that it provided a means to compare linguistic competence of Japanese with students of other countries.

In 1980 the number of English lessons was suddenly reduced from 4 classes in a week to 3 classes at junior high schools. This was part of a general policy to change the whole nature of Japanese compulsory education from one which was purely focused on study to one which developed the student holistically. Despite these good intentions, however, in response to the government's policy, a campaign by teachers against this reduction of English lessons occurred in 1981. Fundamentally, this showed the teachers' strong support for English education in Japan. Also, in the mid-

1980s there was a growing awareness that research into classroom practice was needed and so the “Eigojigyo kenkyukai” (Association of Research for English Teaching in the Classroom) was established. At the same time, the communicative approach towards English language teaching became increasingly popular, attracting many teachers. Then, most significantly for Japanese Junior and Senior High Schools, in 1987 the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Programme, a government initiative started. Monbukagakusho (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2002, pp. 6-7) states that this programme was introduced “to improve foreign language education in Japan”.

3-4 English Education in the Heisei Era

The first year of Heisei was 1989, after the death of Emperor Showa, and is the current era. In 1989, an ‘Oral Communication’ lesson in the English language syllabus in Senior High Schools started. This shows that the government was directly trying to develop the students’ speaking ability for the first time. The significant social events in this era were the introduction of the internet and the growing popularity of the JET (Japan Exchange Teaching) scheme. This has led to the fourth English boom in Japan because in 1997 ‘globalization’, ‘cultural difference’ and ‘international understanding’ became official slogans for state-run English education. In addition, English lessons at some primary schools started on an experimental basis. Then, in 2003, the national plan to ‘cultivate Japanese who can use English’ was announced. This entails the creation of more than one hundred “Super English High Schools” by the year 2006 which places an emphasis not only upon English language studies, but also English-medium study of science and mathematics. This is similar to the Meiji Era initial trend towards English-medium instruction, yet is more significant this time, in that more students will be affected. The motivation seems to be the creation of Japanese who can communicate in general English and also in technological terms. The second part of the new policy is to provide a wide-ranging teacher-training programme to all Junior and Senior High School teachers in methodology and linguistic ability. Interestingly, the means to measure the teachers’ linguistic competence comes from the private sector through the STEP and TOEIC testing systems.

This current Heisei Era seems to have reached a new peak in English language education in Japan. English at schools, colleges, universities and the growing private language school market is enormously popular and appears to be responding to the practical needs of the business community, first voiced in the late 1950s. The introduction of the JET scheme in itself, despite problems, is an event unimaginable in previous eras since it brings native-speaking foreigners not only face-to-face with students, but also with teachers and administrators.

Table 7: English Education History in the Heisei Era
（Imura, 2003, p. 290, translated and adapted by Fujimoto-Adamson）

A.D.	Japanese Era	Events related to English Education in Japan	Social, political and economic events
1989	Heisei 1	Start of 'Oral Communication' in English class in Senior High Schools	
1994	5		First year of the Internet in Japan and U.S.
1997	8	Globalization, cultural difference, international understanding became slogans for the English education in Japan	Growing JET scheme
2002	14	Start of English lessons at some primary schools	Increase in foreign teachers
2003	15	National plan to 'cultivate Japanese who can use English ' for all schools	

Conclusions

Reviewing what has been covered so far concerning globalization, the world history of the Great Navigation period and the history of English language education in Japan, it is clear that there is a complex inter-play between the 'macro' events occurring in the world and the 'micro' events within English education in Japan itself. The tables have been translated and adapted to illustrate this inter-connected nature of the macro and micro, yet are basically flawed, firstly, in the limited space available to represent so many social, political and economic events and trends, and, secondly, in the subjective nature of the choice of those events and trends. Despite this potential limitation, the tables have outlined the varying booms and backlashes over history, illustrating that the most recent boom is not unique. Neither are the backlashes following boom periods.

Recapping the various historical boom periods in English language education, it can be seen that there are two significant aspects: that of the import of foreign methodologies (the Oral Approach) and teachers (famous scholars acting as consultants such as Palmer and classroom teachers in the JET scheme); and also, of the popularity of examinations (both for entrance to university and to measure linguistic competence as in the STEP and TOEIC tests).

The backlashes in the Meiji and pre-war eras seem to have been motivated by two criteria: firstly, the political movement towards nationalism, encapsulated by the occidentalist "nihonjinron" theory of Japanese uniqueness, in which English was seen as a representation of 'foreignness' and a potential negative influence on the purity of Japanese society. The second criteria, the reduced status of English in the curriculum, was seen in both the Meiji Era when Japanese returned to teach in universities using Japanese as the language of instruction, and later in the 1980s when English was regarded by some as just another subject burdening the more holistic development of the student.

In terms of these historical developments and the concept of globalization, it can be summarized that English has been viewed as, at times, a necessary vehicle to catch up with the West – its technology and commercial expansion – and also, at times, as a representation of the West, and therefore to be rejected. Of great interest is perhaps the concept that business leaders have forced the government at various times to integrate English more into the curriculum, and in doing so, have regarded English as a means to catch up with the rest of the world and lead it in technological areas. In summary, there have been times in which English has been seen as representative of a threatening form of globalization, as in the militaristic thinking of the 1930s, and of beneficial globalization, as in the Meiji Era, Showa Era and the current Heisei Era. In brief, English is, and has been, seen as the face of the outside world.

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Taking Advantage of Cognitive Difference of Asians and Westerners in the Teaching of English

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Abstract

Recent developments in cognitive psychology have suggested definite differences in the way Westerners and North-East Asians perceive and think about the world. This information suggests major reasons for L1 interference in L2 learning and also dictates how some teaching methodology may, in fact, hamper the way a student learns English. This paper will examine some of the findings of Nisbett (2003) and others in a way that can be applied to the EFL classroom demonstrating ways to use this difference in thinking to enhance student understanding of English and eliminate common errors.

1. Introduction

How a student views the world could influence the perceptions and learning strategies that a student adopts in the classroom and in their personal studies.

Though much has been made over the years to discuss, debate, refute and support the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis of the intertwined nature of language and culture with proponents and detractors on both sides of the argument (Kramsch, 1998; Hall, 1990; Nisbett, 2003; Sapir, 1929), recent developments in cognitive psychology have shown that there are at least some very dramatic differences between the way Westerners and Easterners conceive of the world we live in and approach that world.

It is not the intention of this paper to re-argue the question: Does language influence culture or does culture influence language? The author is content to assume that they are somehow related and to approach cultural/linguistic differences with the intension of exposing possible pedagogical errors in current teaching methodology in the teaching of English to Asian students.

In what is certain to become a seminal work, *The Geography of Thought*, Nisbett (2003) has laid out a convincing argument for the cognitive differences between North East Asians and Westerners. How teachers and textbook writers learn to interpret these differences in a positive way that can enhance learning is the focus of this paper.

There are detractors (Dash, 2003; Guest, 2000) to teaching with culture, of course:

> Reducing culture to a few generalized propositionally-stated ‘pegs’, while ignoring features of genre, parallels an outdated teaching methodology. Thus, it would seem that a cultural anthropology-based contrastive approach may be unsuited to the EFL/ESL classroom. (Guest, 2000)

However, this researcher believes that the recent cognitive psychological findings bear scrutiny as applied to second language acquisition. Drawing upon both existing research and practical classroom experience I hope to suggest some enhancements that can be made in current pedagogy and suggest other areas for future classroom based research.

2. How are you prepared for the world?

When a Japanese mother sits down to play with her child, she speaks mostly in relationship words (Fernald & Morikawa, 1993; Nisbett 2003), “I give the vroom

vroom to you. Now, give it to me. Thank you." An American parent would be more inclined to talk with object words "Here's the car. It has nice wheels" (Nisbett, 2003). Relationships become very fundamental in Asian thinking and influence a great deal of the way their world is created, where European/Americans tend to be prepared for a world of objects.

> Most Americans over a certain age well remember their primer, called *Dick and Jane*. Dick and Jane and their dog, Spot, were quite the active individualists. The first page of an early edition from the 1930s (the primer was widely used until the 1960s) depicts a little boy running across a lawn. The first sentences are "See Dick run. See Dick play. See Dick run and play." This would seem the most natural sort of basic information to convey about kids--- to the Western mentality. But the first page of the Chinese primer of the same era shows a little boy sitting on the shoulders of a bigger boy. "Big brother takes care of little brother. Big brother loves little brother. Little brother loves big brother." It is not individual action but relationships between people that seem important to convey in a child's first encounter with the printed word. (Nisbett, 2003)

In tests (Ji et al, 2004; Nisbett, 2003) both Western and Eastern subjects were shown pictures of a chicken and grass and were asked to group them with a cow. Most westerners have tended to group the chicken and the cow, and justifying their answers by thinking taxonomically, (both are animals); yet most Eastern subjects would group the cow and grass, thinking via relationships (cows eat grass).

3. What is the world made of, Verbs or Nouns?

It is the opinion of this researcher that this *verb/noun* tendency of the two linguistic groups can be exploited in the teaching of English as "considerable evidence supports the hypothesis that is enhanced through matching learning style to type of instruction" (Hansen-Strain, 1993). Currently most common EFL/ESL textbooks and lesson plans are filled with taxonomic teaching methodology, since, it could be assumed most textbook writers and EFL/ESL teachers are experienced speakers of English and therefore tend to think taxonomically. Yet research has shown that if language is instructed via relationships there are greater opportunities for vocabulary retention (Nation, 2000). At present, for example, when students encounter colours in English textbooks they are often taught all at one time, a wonderful taxonomical grouping. It should come as no surprise that days after instruction students sort-of know that "red" is a "colour" and "green" is a "colour" but which colour is red and which is green is hard to remember. By the instruction of one colour and another noun with a relationship "Green frogs live in a river," there is a far greater chance that students will retain the vocabulary (Nation, 2000) both of the target colour as well as the nouns frog and river, as opposed to collectively grouping "Animals" and "Bodies of water" or "Places to live" in another lesson.

Grouping things in a textbook or lesson is perhaps still useful in form of review and this is not to suggest that Eastern learners can't be instructed taxonomically however;

> There is direct evidence that Eastern children learn how to categorize objects at a later point than Western children. Developmental psycholinguists Alison Gopnik and Soonja Choi studied Korean-, French-, and English-speaking children beginning when they were one and a half years old. They found that object-naming and categorization skills develop later in Korean speakers than in English and French speakers. (Nisbett, 2003, p 152).

It would seem clear that using a "relationship-based instruction model" would have far greater success in the teaching of English to Asian students. That North East Asian languages tend to be driven by verbs can be demonstrated in Koreans ending a dinner out with friends with the single word "Go." To the more noun conscious Westerner, the phrase "Home, boys." would be equally comfortable.

> A difference in language practice that startles both Chinese speakers and English speakers when they hear how the other group handles it concerns the proper way to ask someone whether they would like more tea to drink. In Chinese *(as well as Korean and Japanese)* one asks "Drink more?" In English, one asks "More tea?" To Chinese speakers, it's perfectly obvious that it's tea that one is talking about drinking more of, so to mention tea would be redundant. To English speakers, it's perfectly obvious that one is talking about drinking the tea, as opposed to any other activity that might be carried out with it, so it would be rather bizarre for the question to refer to drinking. (Nisbett, 2003, p158 italic addition, mine)

This verb dominated linguistic structure can lead to L2 errors in Asian students (Moon & Vercoe, 2003). Although errors of accuracy not fluency (and ESL/EFL teachers would be well advised to allow the errors during fluency exercises) considerable student confusion can be cleared up by pointing out this different thought process. "Because the verb precedes the object in English but follows it in Korean, errors involving incorrect verb-object order arise in the production of the English learner, e.g., **Cigarette give me and *(You) pizza like?* (Shaffer, 2002).

Most research indicates that toddlers can learn nouns at the rate of up to two per day, much faster than they learn verbs. However, "developmental psycholinguist Twila Tardif and others have discovered that East Asian children learn verbs at about the same rate as nouns and, by some definitions of what counts as a noun, at a significantly faster rate than nouns" (Nisbett, 2003). It would be logical to assume that viewing the world via relationships would present an advantage in the acquisition of verbs in an L2, but more research needs to be done to confirm this.

4. Receiver vs. Transmitter

L2 listening can be one of the most frustrating and stressful parts of language learning. Though normally considered a passive language skill, explaining to students: that they may possess a different way of listening than the language they are learning requires; could do much to affect student study methods.

> The relative degree of sensitivity to others' emotions is reflected in tacit assumptions about the nature of communication. Westerners teach their children to communicate their ideas clearly and to adopt a "transmitter" orientation, that is, the speaker is responsible for uttering sentences that can be clearly understood by the hearer---and understood, in fact, more or less independently of the context. It's the speaker's fault if there is a miscommunication. Asians, in contrast, teach their children a "receiver" orientation, meaning that it is the hearer's responsibility to understand what is being said. If a child's singing annoys an American parent, the parent would likely just tell the kid to pipe down. No ambiguity there. The Asian parent would be more likely to say, "How well you sing a song." At first the child might feel pleased, but it would likely dawn on the child that something else might have been meant and the child would try being quieter or not singing at all. (Nisbett, 2003, p.61)

Having explained to my students this transmitter/ receiver role difference in our ways of seeing the world I have observed a far greater sense of relaxation in my students during listening activities. Similarly, I have noticed far greater production in pair work when the speaker is given greater responsibility in making themselves understood The transmitter/ receiver role may also be seen in writing styles of Easterners and Westerns for Duncan has found that “East-Asian compositions may comprise a “reader-responsible” organizational style of writing, while English composition constitutes a “writer-responsible” organizational style.” (Duncan, 2003).

5. Seeing the Individual vs. Seeing the Group

> To the Asian, the world is a complex place, composed of continuous substances, understandable in terms of the whole rather than in terms of the parts, and subject more to collective than personal control. To the Westerner, the world is a relatively simple place, composed of discrete objects that can be understood without undue attention to context, and highly subject to personal control. Very different worlds indeed. (Nisbett, 2003, p.100).

In a rather fascinating cognitive psychological test, Muttsumi Imae and Dedre Gentner (Nisbet 2003) presented Eastern and Western subjects with objects composed of particular substances and described them in neutral ways. For example, subjects were presented with a pyramid made from cork and subjects were asked to “look at this ‘dax’.” The subjects were then asked to choose another ‘dax’ from two trays. One tray would have similar shapes yet different materials (e.g. a pyramid made from plastic); and one tray would have different shapes yet the same substance (e.g. pieces of cork). Asian subjects were more likely to choose a piece of cork as their ‘dax’ yet Americans were more likely to chose the same shape. This indicates that Americans are coding for objects yet Asians were coding for what they saw as substance (Nisbett, 2003).

In a perhaps more telling example of the processes in the Asian compared to the Western mind, subjects were presented with an underwater scene involving fish, plant life rocks etc. and were asked to describe what they see. Most Western subject would begin their description by identifying a large individual fish and orienting their description around the fish (viewing the world from an individual perspective) where as most Asian subjects would begin their descriptions by declaring "it's a river (or pond etc.)." They view the collective whole as a starting point. (Nisbett, 2003).

> That Asians have a more holistic view of events, taking into perspective the orientation of other people, is also indicated by a study by social psychologists Dov Cohen and Alex Gunz. They asked North American students (mostly Canadian) and Asian students (a potpourri of students from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Korea, and various South and Southeast Asian countries) to recall specific instances of ten different situations in which they were the center of attention: for example, "being embarrassed." North Americans were more likely than Asians to reproduce the scene from their original point of view, looking outward. Asians were more likely to imagine the scene as an observer might, describing it from a third-person perspective. (Nisbett, 2003, p.88)

This collective vs. individual model of cognitive processes can be seen to influence error production in Asian students of English (Moon & Vercoe, 2003). Shaffer (2002) has identified specific areas of languacultral influences on error production in Korean students of English which he describes as the Macro-to-micro Principle and the Most-to-least Principle (Shaffer, 2002). Though these two different principles may be separate, it is the opinion of this researcher that both error productions stem from the collective vs. individual cognitive perspective. These errors can be demonstrated:

Names:
Kim (surname) Sung-Chul (given name)
(collective) →→→→→ *(individual)*
vs.
Todd (given) Vercoe (surname)
(individual) →→→→→ *(collective)*
Error: "It is nice to meet you, **Mr. Todd.**"

Addresses:
Gyeongnam (province) Gimhae (city) Obang Dong (ward) Siyoung Apartments (Building) Apt. #343 (apartment number)

(collective) →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→
(individual)

vs.

Apt. 343, Siyoung Apartments, Obang Dong, Gimhae, Gyeongnam

(individual) →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→ *(collective)*

Error: "I come from **Gimhae in Obang Dong.**"

Dates:

2005 Nyeon (year) 10 Weol (month) 15 il (day)

(collective) →→→→→→→→→→→ *(individual)*

vs.

15th of October, 2005

(individual) →→ *(collective)*

Error: "I was born **in 1975, February**."

Sales:

seil (sale) 80-50% halin (off)

(collective) →→→→→ *(individual)*

vs.

50% to 80% off

(individual) →→ *(collective)*

Error: "It is an **80 to 50%** discount sale."

Time:

O-Jeon (a.m.) 10 shi (hour)	or	O-Hoo (p.m.) 10 shi (hour)
(collective) →→ *(individual)*		*(collective)* →→ *(individual)*
vs.		
10 o'clock a.m.	or	10 o'clock p.m.
(individual) →→ *(collective)*		*(individual)* →→ *(collective)*

Error: "It's **a.m. 10 o'clock**."

Salutations:

Sinsa suknyeo yeoreobun (Gentlemen, ladies, everyone)

Error: "**Gentlemen and ladies**…"

Shaffer (2002) notes,

> In Korean society there has long been a tradition of respect for teachers, so the Most-to-least Principle predictably also applies to the formation of the lexical item, with internal bound morphemes, meaning "teacher(s) and students" Since the teacher has been thought of as the object of respect and as being in a position of more importance than that of the student, the morpheme *sa* (teacher) precedes the morpheme *jae* (student) in the lexical item *sajae*.
>
> Korean: sa-jae (teacher-student)
>
> English: Students and teachers

It has been my experience that by simply making students aware of our individual to collective (Western) vs. collective to individual (Eastern) cognitive styles I have been able to reduce the number of these types of errors that my students produce. By indicating that producing language from a different cultural group may require a shift in perspective is difficult to achieve (Boroditsky, 2001), but students have commented that understanding this difference has opened the door to understanding how to properly produce sentences in English.

6. Conclusion

Though understanding the cognitive differences between Easterners and Westerners may still be in its infancy, considerable advantage can be applied to the teaching of English, and modern ESL/EFL pedagogy would be wise to take advantage of the cognitive styles that Asian students have. Educators should make themselves aware of the *verb/noun* difference, *transmitter/receiver* difference, and *collective vs. individual* difference. By tapping into these processes it is my contention that better language instruction and retention can be achieved and a reduction in the production of errors would be a natural outcome of properly instructed cognitive differences.

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Book Review

***Top Notch 1: English for Today's World*,**
Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher
Pearson Education, Inc., 2006, Pp.x +128

Reviewed by Kevin Landry, Hong Ik University, Korea

Top Notch 1 is the second book of Pearson-Longman's six-level ELT course. This book, like the other books in the series, aims to provide opportunities for adult learners to learn natural language by offering teachers a well organized and fully supported, integrated skills text they can use to draw students into situations where they can interact with language in real world ways.

The book's ten units are titled Getting Acquainted; Going Out; Talking about Families; Coping with Technology; Eating In, Eating Out; Staying in Shape; Finding Something to Wear; Getting Away; Taking Transportation; and Shopping Smart. Each of the ten units offers integrated activities that are related to the overall theme of the unit. Unit 1, Getting Acquainted, for example, uses realistic and colorful photos that depict friendly people from different parts of the world in interpersonal settings to prompt students to exchange personal information and introduce someone else. The students are then lead through listening, multiple choice, conversation, grammar, pair work, pronunciation, vocabulary, reading, writing, and finally checkpoint activities to gauge their progress. Other units offer similar organization patterns on different topics: Unit 2 uses entertainment events as prompts for students to make invitations, talk about likes and dislikes, and give directions; Unit 3 has students explore similarities and differences by describing a family member and comparing their family to a celebrity's; Unit 4's goals include suggesting a brand, expressing frustration, describing features, and complaining; Unit 5 is organized around restaurants, menus and ordering; unit 6 has students discuss daily exercise and diet; Unit 7 focuses on shopping for clothes; Unit 8 examines types of vacations and travel problems; Unit 9 looks at different types of vacation transportation; and Unit 10 explores money, travel, and conversations about prices.

In addition to the book's well organized units, the book also offers a comprehensive reference section at the back which includes an alphabetic word list, a social language list, and a host of other relevant items.

One of the features teachers and students may find welcoming is the balanced way the book addresses grammar. In unit 1, for example, the Topic Preview encourages students to try out language they already know to motivate them to learn even if they have trouble expressing themselves before thinking about grammar. Grammar is then addressed two pages later. This gives students who do not need assistance the opportunity to move quickly through the grammar section and on to ones where they can expand on their opinions and contribute more deeply to class discussions while offering an additional explanation that can be comforting for students who need additional reassurance.

One possible drawback of the text is its conversation models. The models may appear simple and less than dynamic at first, but they can indeed help to warm up the group and get them ready to talk about their own experiences, engage in role plays, and answer questions. Another possible concern is that the book's organization may appear light, but teachers will find this uncluttered layout welcoming as they explore the full range of accompanying materials: a workbook, a teacher's edition which includes expansion activities, audio and video programs, placement and assessment packages, and a companion website (www.longman.com/topnotch).

Overall, ELT teachers who work with adult learners will find Top Notch 1, as well as the series it is a part of, to be an organized and well supported language learning package to help their students with their language needs. I would certainly recommend this book to ELT teachers who wish to ease learners into confidently developing international communication competence.

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