

## Activity 1 – Defining the Concept

### 1.1 – What is Task-based Learning (TBL)?

- Discuss with your partner or group what you know about it?
- Have you ever used it? What did you do?

### 1.2 – Beliefs About Task-based Learning

Read the following beliefs about task-based learning and state whether you think they are true or false.

Beliefs About Task-based Learning	True/false
1. Tasks in Task-based Learning (TBL) are used as extension activities to follow-up structure, function or vocabulary work.	
2. Tasks in TBL concentrate on one structure, function or vocabulary group.	
3. Language explored in TBL lessons arises from the learners' needs, not a decision made by the teacher or textbook instruction.	
4. Tasks are always pieces of text.	
5. Tasks in TBL are central to the learning activity.	
6. When doing tasks in TBL, learners focus on the task rather than the language they're using.	
7. It's believed that learners may learn less effectively if their minds are focused on the task rather than the language.	
8. TBL is suitable for all levels of learners.	

Compare your answers with a partner – don't forget to say 'why?'

Compare your answers with suggested answers in Course Book Additional Material Activity 1.2.

## Activity 2 – Interaction, Focus and Lesson Steps

### 2.1 – Maximize Interaction and Meaning-focused Language Use

Read the following and discuss with a partner what it means.

*‘Tasks need to maximize interaction and create opportunities for meaning-focused language use’*  
**(Willis & Willis 2007)**

Look at the following suggestion for a task. Highlight the words that help maximize both interaction and meaning-focused language use.

Pair-work gets learners talking to each other.

Brainstorming generates lots of ideas.

With a partner, brainstorm all animals you can see in a zoo. Agree and list the most popular 5, give reasons why you included them and be prepared to justify your decisions to others.

Instructions for TBL use some common verbs that help maximize learner focus and interaction. Look again at the task above. What verbs are used to help maximize learner focus and interaction? Can you think of other verbs that could be used to maximize learner focus and interaction for other TBL activity instructions?

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**2.2 – Complete a TBL Task**

Brainstorm all animals you can see in a zoo. List them below:

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Look at your list above then work with your group to list the 5 most popular zoo animals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Discuss the reasons behind your choices with your group, and prepare a short report to give to the class. Write two sentences for each of your five animals explaining why they are the most popular.

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Report to the class.

Look at your report/think back to your discussions and reasons. How many comparisons (...is better than ...) or superlatives (...is the best.) did you use?

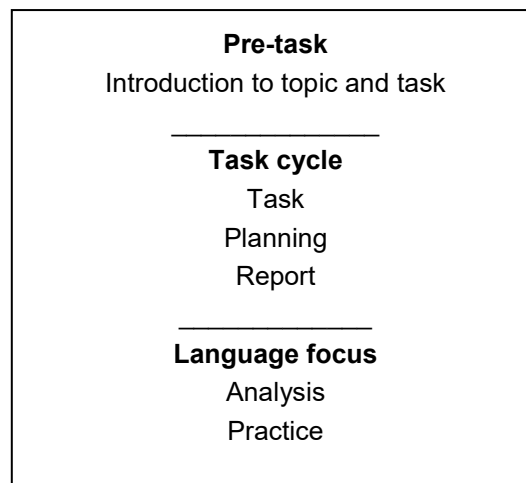
### 2.3 – Can you Remember the Steps/stages?

Discuss what you did for Activity 2.2. Can you remember the steps/stages?

Start with stage 1. The teacher or trainer reads *Edward the Emu* to learners.

### 2.4 – Task-based Learning Framework

The following diagram shows the Task-based Learning Framework (Willis 1996).



Match the lesson plan steps/stages with the TBL task stages:

TBL task stages	Lesson steps/stages
Pre-task (Introduction to topic and task)	
Task cycle (Task, Planning, Report)	
Language focus (Analysis, Practice)	

### 2.5 – Comparing TBL to Other Teaching Methodologies

How similar is TBL to the teaching methodology you currently use?

How different is TBL to more traditional methodologies like PPP (Presentation, Practice and Production)?

– Refer to article ‘A Task-based Approach’ in Course Book Additional Materials.

### Activity 3 – Authentic Tasks

#### What Would You Do?

Read the following and circle the letter that best describes what you would do.

1. If you read a newspaper article, would you...
  - a. read the whole article aloud or translate it for others?
  - b. summarize it orally for somebody?
  
2. After watching a movie you liked, would you...
  - a. ...complete a true/false task based on the movie's plot?
  - b. ...discuss the plot/storyline with your friends?

If your answer was 'b' for both of the above, then you are thinking about 'real' or authentic task types. This is what you would do as a native speaker so why not engage second language learners in similar tasks?

Form pairs (A and B)

#### Questions for A

Ask your partner the questions and take notes.

1. What would you do if your colleague is not at the office, but his lawyer calls and asks you to give him some important information?	
2. What would you do if you were given a credit card application?	
3. What would you do if you want to watch a movie on the weekend?	
4. What would you do if you have some friends coming to visit you in your town for a few days?	

**Questions for B**

Ask your partner the questions and take notes.

What would you do if you were in a restaurant or café with a friend?	
What would you do if you get a letter or email from your friend?	
What would you do if you want to go on a short break or holiday with a group of friends?	
What would you do if you are looking at photos of your family and holidays with your friends	

Prepare a brief role play of one of the above scenarios for presentation to the class.

What should be considered when designing a TBL task?

## Activity 4 – Task Analysis

### 4.1 – A New Café

Complete the following task:

- Think about PCC (or your school), and share with your class the facilities you have at PCC (or your school).
- You want to open a new café at PCC (or at your school). In order to be successful you need to carry out a survey to find out what learners and teachers prefer. Write at least 10 questions for your survey. Think about food, drinks, furniture, decoration, lighting, music etc.

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Carry out your survey – ask other members of the class your survey questions and note their answers above. Alternatively direct your survey questions to people from outside the classroom.

- Go back to your group and share your results.
- Produce a flyer for your café. Include a name, slogan, menu with prices and any other necessary information. Display your flyer and vote to choose the best one.

#### 4.2 – Is it a Good TBL Task?

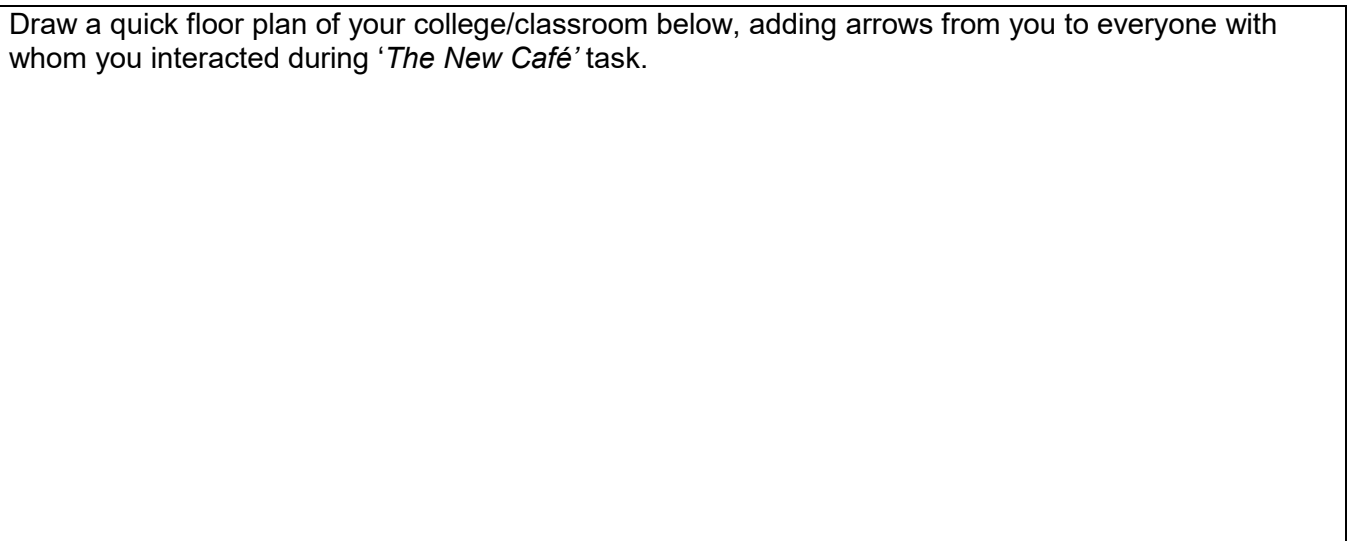
Look at the a set of questions that have been developed to help identify good TBL tasks.

With your class answer the following questions thinking about ‘the new café’ activity you have just completed.

1. Does the activity engage learner interest?	
2. Is there a primary focus on meaning?	
3. Is there an outcome?	
4. Is completion a priority?	
5. Does the activity relate to real world activities?	

#### 4.3 Was Interaction Maximized?

Draw a quick floor plan of your college/classroom below, adding arrows from you to everyone with whom you interacted during ‘*The New Café*’ task.





**Assignment (optional – for existing teachers and/or student teachers on practicum)**

Your assignment is to try out a new idea/activity from this workshop with one of your classes. You should then reflect on your lesson. Use the following guidelines for your assignment.

1. Where appropriate, make up materials for the new idea/activity you will be trying out, focusing on the particular language points and learning outcomes you are aiming for.
2. Write your whole lesson plan, including your new idea/activity on the lesson plan document, then teach the lesson. After the lesson, write a reflection including: i. What went well? Why?; ii. What didn't go well? Why?; and iii. What changes will I make next time?
3. Attach your lesson plan (including list of materials used) and your reflection.
4. Submit your assignment by handing/emailing it to your trainer. The deadline for completion of this assignment is .....

**Glossary**

Concept	Definition
<b>adapt</b>	To change your ideas or behaviour so that you can deal with a new situation
<b>consequence</b>	A result or effect of something
<b>cycle</b>	A series of events that happen again and again in the same order or at the same times or a set of things as part of a process
<b>evaluate</b>	To think carefully about something before making a judgment about its value, importance, or quality
<b>function</b>	The job that something is designed to do
<b>fuss</b>	A lot of unnecessary worry or excitement about something
<b>generate</b>	To make a lot of people express feelings or opinions about something
<b>integrate</b>	To make someone become a full member of a group or society and be involved completely in its activities
<b>justify</b>	To show that there is a good reason for something, especially something that other people think is wrong or to be a good reason for something
<b>priority</b>	Something important that must be done first or needs more attention than anything else
<b>structure</b>	The way in which the parts of something are organized or arranged into a whole

### Recommended Reading

- **How to Teach English**, Jeremy Harmer, Pearson Longman, 2007
- **The Practice of English Language Teaching**, Jeremy Harmer, Longman, 2001
- **Discussions That Work: Task-centred Fluency Practice**, Penny Ur, Cambridge 1981
- <http://www.englishraven.com/methodology.html> - information on English teaching methodologies
- <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/a-task-based-approach> – An article that looks at task-based learning and compares it to the traditional PPP approach
- <http://www.pearsonlongman.com/teaching-tips/task-based-learning.html> – definition of task-based learning
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5b9gHSPiB8> – a brief video that shows tips for teachers on the task-based learning approach
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdidE3DI9sw> – video of learners using task-based learning in a college ESL classroom
- <http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?docid=146502> – extra reading on task-based learning
- <http://www.willis-elt.co.uk> – website dedicated to task-based learning, containing ideas for teachers
- [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk) – tips and articles on task-based learning, especially <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/six-types-task-tbl>
- [www.learnenglish.org.uk](http://www.learnenglish.org.uk) – articles and ideas on task-based learning

## Additional Material

### 1.2 – Beliefs About Task-based Learning – Answer Sheet

Beliefs About Task-based Learning
<p><i>False.</i> Tasks in TBL are central, and looking at language structures, functions and vocabulary is a follow up, in language focus stage. (The Willis Task Based Learning Framework consists of three stages: 'Pre-task' – Introduction to topic and task, 'Task cycle' – task, planning and report and 'Language focus' – analysis and practice.)</p>
<p><i>False.</i> Tasks in TBL concentrate on many different structures, functions or vocabulary groups, as they are whatever learners produce or need to be able to complete the task.</p>
<p><i>True.</i> Language explored in TBL lessons arise from the learners needs, as it is language the need to be able to complete the task and therefore depends on individuals and their level.</p>
<p><i>False.</i> Tasks can be texts, discussions, games, experiences, role-plays etc.</p>
<p><i>True.</i> Tasks in TBL are central to the learning activity, and the focus of the lesson is the task.</p>
<p><i>True.</i> When doing tasks in TBL learners focus on the task rather than the language they're using.</p>
<p><i>False.</i> It's believed that learners may learn more effectively if they are concentrating on completing the task rather than looking at specific language.</p>
<p><i>False.</i> It is generally believed to be more effective with intermediate learners due to the style, and learners are thought to be able to contribute more during discussions and reporting. But if you consider small problem solving communicative TBL tasks then the answer is <i>true</i> as these can be used with all levels of learners.</p>

### Activity 2.1 – Maximize Interaction and Meaning-focused Language Use – Answer sheet

With a partner, brainstorm all animals you can see in a zoo. Agree and list the most popular 5, give reasons why you included them and be prepared to justify your decisions to others.

- ‘With a partner brainstorm’ - Pair-work gets learners talking, and brainstorming generates lots of ideas.
- ‘Agree and list’– learners are required to form an opinion to engage with each other
- ‘the most popular 5’ – learners need to choose/select what **they** think are the most popular – personalizes and therefore adds relevance/meaning
- ‘give reasons why you included them’ – learners need to justify their choices – personalizes and therefore adds interest, motivation and relevance
- ‘be prepared to justify your decisions to others’ – learners will be more willing to think more about and practice what to say if they need to tell others

**Common verbs for instructions in TBL include:** list, agree, organize, order, categorize, brainstorm, justify, rank, sort, compare, sequence, classify, match, explain and reason

### Activity 2.5 – Comparing TBL to Other Teaching Methodologies – Answer Sheet

Essentially PPP offers a very simplified approach to language learning. It is based upon the idea that you can present language in neat little blocks, adding from one lesson to the next, and then giving learners the opportunity to practice the language you have presented. However, research shows us that we cannot predict or guarantee what the students will learn and that ultimately a wide exposure to language is the best way of ensuring that students will acquire it effectively. Restricting their experience to single pieces of target language (like in PPP) is unnatural, and as such a more TBL styled lesson/ or tasks where learners use whatever language they can in more authentic and real life activities is more ideal.

**For further insight, see Course Book Additional Material article ‘A Task-based Approach’.**

#### 4.2 – Is it a Good TBL Task? – Answer Sheet

Suggested answers for 'The New Café';

<p>1. Does the activity engage learner interest?</p>	<p><i>Yes. The topic is intrinsically engaging for many learners and when doing the task learners will become engaged. Learners can easily relate to it and the topic of food and where you eat an everyday one.</i></p>
<p>2. Is there a primary focus on meaning?</p>	<p><i>Yes. There will be focus on meaning in the survey. Writing the questions together, asking and answering questions, exchanging opinions and supporting the group's choices (If time is spent looking at question forms and language then it would encourage learners to focus more on form).</i></p>
<p>3. Is there an outcome?</p>	<p><i>Yes. Completing the questions for the survey, getting answers for their questions and then incorporating these ideas into the flyer they produce....</i></p>
<p>4. Is completion a priority?</p>	<p><i>Yes. Learners should be encouraged to complete the task and be given enough time to do so. They also need to complete the survey questions to be able to ask others. Use the feedback to help produce the menu etc.</i></p>
<p>5. Does the activity relate to real world activities?</p>	<p><i>Yes. They will be talking about an area of general interest and using vocabulary that relates to the topic. They will be talking together asking and expressing opinions, which they would need to do in the real world, and they might take part in a survey outside the classroom.</i></p>

## A Task-based Approach

In recent years a debate has developed over which approaches to structuring and planning and implementing lessons are more effective. This article presents an overview of a task-based learning approach (TBL) and highlights its advantages over the more traditional Present, Practice, and Produce (PPP) approach.

- Present Practice Produce
- The problems with PPP
- A Task-based approach
- The advantages of TBL
- Conclusion

### Present Practice Produce (PPP)

During an initial teacher training course, most teachers become familiar with the PPP paradigm. A PPP lesson would proceed in the following manner.

- First, the teacher presents an item of language in a clear context to get across its meaning. This could be done in a variety of ways: through a text, a situation build, a dialogue etc.
- Students are then asked to complete a controlled practice stage, where they may have to repeat target items through choral and individual drilling, fill gaps or match halves of sentences. All of this practice demands that the student uses the language correctly and helps them to become more comfortable with it.
- Finally, they move on to the production stage, sometimes called the 'free practice' stage. Students are given a communication task such as a role play and are expected to produce the target language and use any other language that has already been learnt and is suitable for completing it.

### The Problems with PPP

It all sounds quite logical but teachers who use this method will soon identify problems with it:

- Students can give the impression that they are comfortable with the new language as they are producing it accurately in the class. Often though a few lessons later, students will either not be able to produce the language correctly or even won't produce it at all.
- Students will often produce the language but overuse the target structure so that it sounds completely unnatural.
- Students may not produce the target language during the free practice stage because they find they are able to use existing language resources to complete the task.

## A Task-based Approach

Task-based learning offers an alternative for language teachers. In a task-based lesson the teacher doesn't pre-determine what language will be studied, the lesson is based around the completion of a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it. The lesson follows certain stages.

### Pre-task

The teacher introduces the topic and gives the students clear instructions on what they will have to do at the task stage and might help the students to recall some language that may be useful for the task. The pre-task stage can also often include playing a recording of people doing the task. This gives the students a clear model of what will be expected of them. The students can take notes and spend time preparing for the task.

### Task

The students complete a task in pairs or groups using the language resources that they have as the teacher monitors and offers encouragement.

### Planning

Students prepare a short oral or written report to tell the class what happened during their task. They then practice what they are going to say in their groups. Meanwhile the teacher is available for the students to ask for advice to clear up any language questions they may have.

### Report

Students then report back to the class orally or read the written report. The teacher chooses the order of when students will present their reports and may give the students some quick feedback on the content. At this stage the teacher may also play a recording of others doing the same task for the students to compare.

### Analysis

The teacher then highlights relevant parts from the text of the recording for the students to analyze. They may ask students to notice interesting features within this text. The teacher can also highlight the language that the students used during the report phase for analysis.

### Practice

Finally, the teacher selects language areas to practice based upon the needs of the students and what emerged from the task and report phases. The students then do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language.

## The Advantages of TBL

Task-based learning has some clear advantages

- Unlike a PPP approach, the students are free of language control. In all three stages they must use all their language resources rather than just practicing one pre-selected item.
- A natural context is developed from the students' experiences with the language that is personalized and relevant to them. With PPP it is necessary to create contexts in which to present the language and sometimes they can be very unnatural.
- The students will have a much more varied exposure to language with TBL. They will be exposed to a whole range of lexical phrases, collocations and patterns as well as language forms.
- The language explored arises from the students' needs. This need dictates what will be covered in the lesson rather than a decision made by the teacher or textbook instruction.
- It is a strong communicative approach where students spend a lot of time communicating. PPP lessons seem very teacher-centred by comparison. Just watch how much time the students spend communicating during a task-based lesson.
- It is enjoyable and motivating.

## Conclusion

TBL offers a very simplified approach to language learning. It is based upon the idea that you can present language in neat little blocks, adding from one lesson to the next. However, research shows us that we cannot predict or guarantee what the students will learn and that ultimately a wide exposure to language is the best way of ensuring that students will acquire it effectively. Restricting their experience to single pieces of target language is unnatural.

Source: Teaching English, British Council, April 2004 <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/a-task-based-approach>