

Task Based Learning Framework

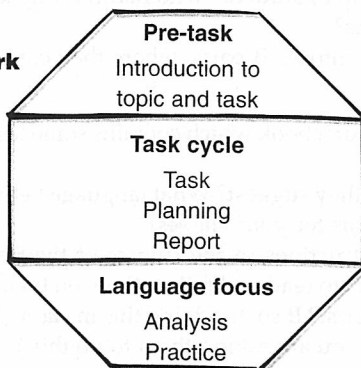
(Please answer in **full sentences** and **in your own words**)

1) How many language skills are there in English? What skills can we teach using the TBL Framework?

2) Please summarize your understanding of the framework. What happens in each of the stages? Please provide examples of techniques and strategies where appropriate.

Components of the Task Cycle

The TBL framework



Look at the three components of the task cycle. During which component(s)

- will students be communicating in a private setting/a more public setting? How might this affect the kind of language they use?
- might students find a dictionary most useful?
- will you, the teacher, be most active?
- is teacher correction most likely to be effective/least likely to be effective?

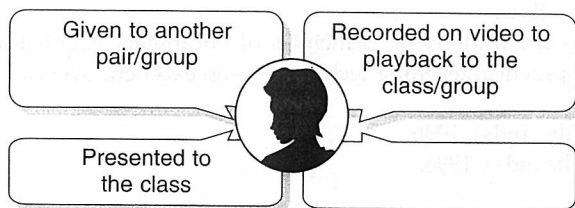
Task cycle

Task	Planning	Report
Students do the task, in pairs or small groups. Teacher monitors and encourages; stops the task when most pairs have finished; comments briefly on content.	Students prepare to report to the whole class (orally or in writing) how they did the task, what they decided or discovered. Teacher acts as linguistic adviser, giving feedback; helping students to correct, rephrase, rehearse and/or draft a written report.	Teacher selects some groups to present their reports of the task to the class, orally or in writing. Teacher acts as chairperson, linking the contributions, summing up. Teacher gives feedback on content and form, if wished.

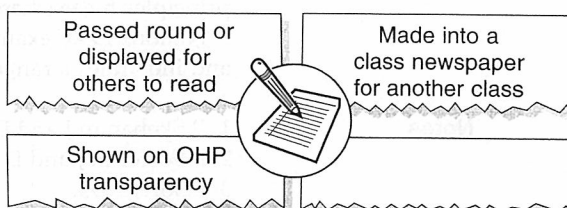
The task cycle may be based on a reading text or listening text. It may be followed by students hearing a recording of others doing the same task. These both give additional and related exposure.

Audiences for reports (Add your ideas for others.)

Oral presentations may be:



Written presentations may be:



Tasks with written outcomes

- In Focus 2, two tasks have written outcomes – 6 and 9. Choose one, and discuss briefly how you might use the TBL framework (pre-task and task cycle) to plan your lesson.
Which component in the task cycle might need to be longer, or be divided into two stages?
- Look for tasks in Appendix A that would naturally lead into written presentations. Select three and discuss who the audience(s) could possibly be.

4

The TBL framework: the task cycle

4.1 The task stage

4.1.1 The teacher as monitor

4.2 After the task

4.2.1 Why tasks are not enough

4.2.2 Creating a need for accuracy

4.3 The planning stage

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4.3.2 The teacher as language adviser

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4.6 ESL and one-to-one: task cycle adaptations

4.7 Summary

Reflection/Further reading/Notes

This chapter covers the second phase in the task-based learning framework – the task cycle. It describes in detail the three components of the task cycle, task, planning and report, and examines the role of the teacher in each. It emphasises the importance of writing in the learning process and shows how the stages of the task cycle can be adapted to different teaching situations.

4.1 The task stage

In Chapter 1, we considered various reasons why many learners left school or college without learning how to communicate in the target language. We emphasised that both exposure to and use of the target language are vital to its acquisition. We saw that output, i.e. use of language, is likely to help stimulate intake, i.e. acquisition of new forms. We saw in 1.3.3, that learners' confidence grows when they realise they can do something without the teacher's direct support. The task stage is therefore a vital opportunity for all learners to use whatever language they can muster, working simultaneously, in pairs or small groups, to achieve the goals of the task (see 2.1.2).

4.1.1 The teacher as monitor

If you are not used to TBL, the hardest thing to do at first is to stop teaching during the task stage and just monitor. You need to have the self-control and

courage to stand back and let the learners get on with the task on their own. Resist the temptation to go round and help (or should we say interfere?), for example, by correcting pronunciation or suggesting better ways of doing the task. Observe and encourage from a slight distance. If the mother tongue crops up in one group too often, quietly go over and suggest an English rendering. If one pair is hopelessly stuck, help them out, but then withdraw again.

Try not to stand too close to groups. If you do, they will tend to ask you for words they don't know, rather than trying to think of another way of expressing their meaning themselves. We must ask ourselves if providing information now helps them learn to communicate on their own. There are other times later in the task cycle when correction and language support are more valuable, and more likely to be remembered.

After working hard to set the scene in the introduction phase, the teacher's monitoring role during the task stage is less active, and should now be:

- to make sure that all pairs or groups are doing the right task and are clear about the objectives;
- to encourage all students to take part, no matter how weak their language is;
- to be forgiving about errors of form (remember how positively parents react to their young children's attempts to use new words and phrases);
- to interrupt and help out only if there is a major communication breakdown;
- to notice which students seem to do more talking and controlling, and if anyone seems to be left out (next time you might change these groupings, or give specific roles within groups to even out the interaction);
- to notice if and when any pairs or groups switch to mother tongue, and, later perhaps, to find out why;
- to act as time keeper.

Timing is important. Tasks can take from one minute to ten or more, depending on the type of task and its complexity. Set a time limit that is too short rather than too long – it is easier to extend it than to stop students before the limit is up. It is better to stop before anyone gets bored, even if some pairs have not finished. Give a one-minute warning before the end of the task.

Immediately after the task, it is a good idea to take up briefly one or two points of interest you heard while monitoring, and to comment positively on the way students have done the task. It is vital not to comment in detail or to summarise their outcomes or findings, because those will constitute the content and aim of the next two components, planning and report, which learners will also do for themselves.

4.2 After the task

After your brief comments on how the task went, the lesson will probably proceed smoothly into the planning and report stages, where students prepare to tell the class about their findings. These components are the focus of 4.3 and 4.4 below. But first, we should consider why there is a need for the task to be followed up in this way.

4.2.1 Why tasks are not enough

The task component, as we have seen, helps students to develop fluency in the target language and strategies for communication. To achieve the goals of the task, their main focus is on getting their meaning across, rather than on the form

of the language itself. So there could be problems such as those listed below, if tasks are the sole means of language development.

- Some learners revert to mother tongue when things get difficult or if the group feels impatient.
- Some individuals develop excellent communication strategies, e.g. miming and using gestures, but get by using just odd words and phrases and let others supply the more challenging language they need.
- Some learners tend to get caught up in trying to find the right word, and don't worry over much about how it fits into the discourse.
- There is naturally more concern for use of lexis and lexical chunks than for grammar and grammatical accuracy.

Through tasks, students may well become better communicators and learn new words and phrases from each other, but how far does the task situation stretch their language development and help with internalisation of grammar? In psycholinguistic terms, how far does this type of 'output' help 'intake'? To avoid the risk of learners achieving fluency at the expense of accuracy and to spur on language development, another stage is needed after the task itself. This is supplied by the report stage, where learners naturally strive for accuracy and fluency together and weaker students can get additional support.

4.2.2 Creating a need for accuracy

After completing the task in small groups, there is usually a natural curiosity among students to discover how others achieved the same objectives. The report stage is when groups report briefly in spoken or written form to the whole class on some aspect of their task, such as who won the game, how their group solved the problem, or two or three things they found out from each other. In doing this, students find themselves in a situation where they will be talking or writing for a more public audience.

In Chapter 2, we considered the differences between spontaneous and planned language, and saw that the language used in public is normally planned, final and permanent. For this public stage, students will naturally want to use their best language and avoid making mistakes that others might notice. They will feel the need to organise clearly what they want to say, use appropriate language and check that it is correct. They may try to find new wordings to express their meaning more exactly. They will be working towards a polished final draft which will normally be:

- presented orally, while the class takes notes of relevant points; or
- written down and displayed or circulated for others to read;

or, on occasions, it may be:

- recorded on audio cassette to be played back later; or
- recorded on video to be shown later.

The more public and permanent the presentation, the longer students will want for the planning stage. It is already quite daunting to stand up and speak in front of the class, but students preparing to be recorded will want far longer to perfect their work than groups who are not. If they are writing a letter for an outside audience, say for publication in a newspaper, they will happily do several drafts to make it good enough.

The report stage, then, gives students a natural stimulus to upgrade and improve their language. It presents a very real linguistic challenge – to communicate clearly and in accurate language appropriate to the circumstances.

Students cannot get by just tacking words and phrases together in an improvised fashion, as they could when they were speaking in real time. In planning their report, they have time to create anew, experiment with language and compose with the support of their group, teacher, dictionaries and grammar books. And it is this process that is likely to drive their language development forward and give them new insights into language use.

If students know at the beginning of the task cycle that they will be called upon to present their findings at the report stage, they are also more likely to think harder about their use of language during the task. They may also attempt to use more complex language, and try to be more accurate.¹

4.3 The planning stage

This section deals with the planning stage, which comes after the task and before the report, forming the central part of the task cycle.

It describes how to help learners plan their reports effectively and maximise their learning opportunities. It takes us back to the classroom situation we reached in 4.1.1 where most students have just completed the task, and you have commented on one or two interesting things you heard while walking round, observing from a distance.

4.3.1 Setting up the planning stage

After you have stopped the task, what you need to do is:

- 1 Explain, if you haven't already, that you will want someone from each pair or group to report their findings to the class. If you tell students this before they start the task, it may motivate them to take it more seriously.
- 2 Be very clear about the purpose of the report (see table opposite), i.e. what kind of information students are going to look or listen for in each other's reports and what they will then do with the information.
- 3 If the report is for an outside audience, explain who it's for and what students can hope to achieve through their writing.
- 4 Be clear about what form the report will take. Explain what facilities students can use (e.g. oral presentation with/without OHP, with written notes or a full script, or in written form for display).
- 5 Make sure students know what resources they have at their disposal – dictionaries, grammar books, other resource books. And, of course, you will be on hand to help, too. With types of task that lead into writing, you could assemble a wall display of previous students' work – sample written reports on similar topics – to give your students a clear idea of what they are aiming at.
- 6 Tell students how long their presentation should be. If it is an oral one, set a short time limit (a fairly fluent learner can say or read a hundred words in half a minute). With a written report, suggest the number of words, lines or paragraphs. Be very specific about what they should include.
- 7 Set them a time limit. Tell them you'll come round to help.
- 8 If you have observed that it is the same students who tend to do all the work, give specific roles to students within the pairs or groups. For example, ask the habitual non-participator to be the writer and the active student to be the 'dictionary person' (see also 3.3.1).

Purposes for reports

These often depend on the type of task (see Appendix A).

Here are some examples.

Listing Students can: • hear/read other pairs' lists and consolidate their own to see how many items they get altogether; • vote on the most comprehensive list.	Comparing Students can: • see how many have done the task the same way, or have things in common with the presenter; • find out how many agree/disagree with the content of the report and why.	Experience sharing Students can: • note points of interest and compare them later; • write questions to ask speakers; • set quiz questions as a memory challenge; • keep a record of main points or themes mentioned for a review or classification later; • select one experience to summarise or react to in writing.	Creative Students can: • say what they most enjoyed in the other groups' work; • write a review of another group's product for them to read.
Ordering, sorting Students can: • publicly justify their priorities to persuade each other.	Problem solving Students can: • compare (and list) strategies for solving the problem; • justify/evaluate solutions; • vote on the best/cheapest solution; • recommend one solution.		

4.3.2 The teacher as language adviser

During the planning stage, the teacher's main role is that of language adviser, helping students shape their meanings and express more exactly what they want to say. Here are some guidelines which apply to the planning of both oral and written presentations.

- Go round quickly at the beginning to check all students know what they are supposed to be doing, and why. If you have a large class and cannot help all groups in one planning session, decide which ones you will concentrate on, and make a mental note to help others next time.
- Unless one group is doing nothing, it is a good general rule to wait until you are asked before you offer help. Then you know you are responding to the learners' needs rather than your own interpretation of them. It is always worth bearing in mind that learners will learn best if they work

things out for themselves, rather than simply being told. The planning stage is a good opportunity to encourage learner independence.

- Comment on good points and creative use of language.
- If you are asked for advice, suggest positive ways learners could improve their work at a general level, e.g. *That's good. You might like to add a sentence signalling what you are going to talk/write about in this section – it may help the listener/reader to follow your ideas better.*
- If learners ask to be corrected, point out errors selectively – most important are those which obscure the meaning. Ask them to explain what they mean, and explore various options together; then finally suggest alternative wordings. Other errors you may want to point out are obvious ones that you feel other students may notice (and possibly comment on, though this is very rare) at the report stage.
- For other errors of form, try to get learners to correct themselves (you could just put a dot under a wrong preposition or verb ending). Don't be too pedantic and jump on strange wordings. It's more important to encourage experimentation than to penalise it.
- Make sure learners know how to use dictionaries for encoding, i.e. not just to check spellings and find words and meanings, but to look closely at the examples of how to use the new word, notice the verbs or nouns it collocates with and the grammar it goes with. This will help them write better themselves. Monolingual dictionaries may help most here. The Longman Activator and the Collins Cobuild dictionaries, for example, have been especially designed to help students use new words. You may need to devote some lessons to dictionary training.
- Encourage students to help each other, and to 'edit' drafts of each other's work, or to listen to each other rehearsing.
- Make sure they know who is to be the spokesperson or final-draft writer for the group well before the end of planning time.
- Remind them occasionally how much time they have left. If, at your original time limit, most students are still working well and fruitfully, you could consider postponing the report stage until the beginning of the next lesson. The advantage of this is that they may continue thinking about it and rehearsing it mentally until then. Such mental practice is, in fact, one of the strategies that successful learners use.

Stop the planning stage once most pairs or groups have more or less finished, then get students ready to make their presentations. This is the report stage.

4.4 The report stage

This section deals with the report stage– the natural conclusion of the task cycle. In itself it probably presents slightly less of a learning opportunity than the planning stage. But without the incentive of the report, the learning process of planning, drafting and rehearsing would not happen.

Depending on the level of the class and type of task, a report might last as little as 20–30 seconds or up to two minutes. So if you have twenty students in your class, producing one report per pair, you can calculate the time you will need. It will probably not be feasible or advisable to let every pair report in full.

Their reports will not resemble native-speaker language; there are bound to be strange wordings and grammatical errors. What is of vital importance is to

acknowledge that students are offering them as the best they can achieve at that moment, given the linguistic resources and time available.

Always be encouraging. It is extremely important not to devalue their achievements, for example by commenting or even thinking negatively (this may well show on your face and in your body language). Instead, focus on all the things they are getting right! Notice and comment on the areas in which they are showing improvement. Above all, take what they say and write seriously; respond and react to it. Positive reactions will increase their motivation, their self-esteem, and spur them on to greater efforts next time.

4.4.1 The teacher as chairperson

During the report stage, the main role of the teacher is that of chairperson, to introduce the presentations, to set a purpose for listening, to nominate who speaks next and to sum up at the end. Some guidelines follow, the basic principles of which apply to handling all types of presentations.

Oral presentations

- Make sure there is a clear purpose for listening (see page 57) and that everyone knows what it is and what they will do with the information after the report. Some specific examples follow.

Example 1: You've all found out how many girls/women and boys/men your partner's family has. You are now going to tell the class. Everyone should listen to each report and write down the numbers for each family. We can then add up the totals to do a class survey.

Example 2: You are now going to tell the class the story you've planned. Everyone should listen and at the end of each story I'll give you a minute to write the thing about it you remember best.

- Make a mental note of points that will be useful for your summing up while listening to the presentations. If you are expected to give language feedback, note down good expressions as well as phrases or patterns that need clarifying or correction. Do not interrupt or correct during the presentations; this could be discouraging.
- Keep an eye on the time. If you have a large class you could ask some groups to report this time, and others after the next task (without, of course, telling them at the planning stage which groups you will be selecting).
- Stop the report stage early if it becomes repetitive. But first ask the pairs who have not reported if they have anything different or special to add.
- Allow time for a summing up at the end.

Written presentations

Handling these differs only in the initial organisation. You will need to make decisions on the following before starting the report stage:

- Will you want students to remain seated while they read each other's work? If so, you will need to work out an efficient way of passing their writing round the class.
- Can students get up and display their writing on the wall, then walk round and read each other's?

- Do you want to keep the writing anonymous for any reason? If so, ensure each group/pair adds a number or letter code to their work. The readers can note these down for the pieces they have read and you can refer to specific pieces by their code.
- Even if the writing has been done for an audience outside the class, e.g. for another class (see 4.5.4 below), students should still have a chance to read what others have written. It is useful exposure and they could learn a lot.
- Purposes should initially focus on content, but could well have a linguistic focus too. Specific examples of purposes for reading written presentations follow.

Example 3: Read at least ten of the descriptions of teachers. Take down the numbers/names of the ones you read. For each, note whether the description gives a positive or a negative image of that person.

Example 4: Make a list of the similarities you find while reading about other people's experiences of school. Write down the name/number of the piece that you think is most memorable, and be ready to say why.

As your students read, you could join in with them, and make notes to use in your summing up.

Audio and video presentations

Here you will also have organisational decisions to take on the following:

- Will you record all the reports, or just a few each time? And will the recording be during the oral presentation, or will students record it in their groups to play back to the class?
- Could you get students to make the recording in their own time and bring it to class?
- Do you want to play back every recording, or just some?
- Will the whole class hear/watch or just the people who recorded? (Some people are very self-conscious about being watched on video.)
- What purpose will you set for listening/viewing? Students often pick on errors rather than good points during these presentations. Giving guidelines for their feedback, e.g. *Write down two or three good points/useful phrases you hear. Suggest one way to improve it*, will help to ensure they have other, positive, reasons for viewing and listening.²

Summing up and giving feedback

When summing up after all types of presentations, it is important (and natural) to react first to the content of the reports.

Example 1: OK, so let's see. Are there more men than women in all our families put together? How close are the numbers – nearly equal? Who was the person with eight sisters and no brothers? Who had the most men/women in their family?

Example 2: What interesting stories! Some were quite strange, especially yours, (Pedro)! Which story did you like best? Let's see which things some of you remembered about that one.

The question of language feedback in the report stage is controversial. In some classes, students will expect feedback on the quality of the language they have

used, even though you will have commented on it at the planning stage. Even if you believe that students actually learn very little from this, to frustrate this expectation may lead to a feeling of demotivation. Some people argue that while correction is unlikely to produce short-term benefits, it may well have a beneficial destabilising effect on a learner's fossilised system, and help keep other learners' minds open to alternative ways of expressing themselves.³ But public correction needs to be handled very carefully because it could also seriously undermine learners' confidence.

Make sure you give feedback tactfully and positively. Give examples of good expressions you have heard, or ones students have used for the first time, and mention other good points. When correcting (anonymously if possible) you may like to say or write the phrase but leave a gap where the mistake occurred. Ask students to suggest suitable ways of completing the phrase.

With written reports, you may want to postpone detailed language feedback until after you have had a closer look at students' work. When you do this, make sure you also tick some good bits, as well as advising on weak areas.

With audio and video presentations, it is important to find out what students think they have learnt and how they think they have benefited (or otherwise) from being recorded. Occasionally, with some classes, you could ask them to react privately by writing a note to you as an informal evaluation.

End the report phase on a positive note. It is important to acknowledge the effort students put into the presentations, as well as showing a keen interest in what they have said or written.

4.5 Writing in the task cycle

This section examines how writing helps learners, and begins by looking in greater depth at the processes involved in planning or drafting a piece of writing.

4.5.1 Meeting learners' needs

In real life, only a small proportion of the population do anything more than write personal letters and fill out forms, even in their first language. Most students need to write a foreign language only for examination purposes producing, for instance, essays, letters and summaries. A few need to write as part of their jobs, and those going on to further education in the target language will obviously need practice in academic writing. It's worth finding out what your students need or want to be able to write, then you can tailor some of their tasks and subsequent writing to suit their needs.

Some learners, especially those not taking written examinations, may benefit more from additional exposure and language-focused tasks. Remember that many people learn a language well without ever having written anything.

However, language students need to write for other reasons. It is well known that writing is in itself a learning process. It often helps people to clarify ideas and to create new ones. (I've learnt a lot through writing this book.) For learners this process challenges their current language system. Composing in the target language often demands a 'restructuring' of language form; it forces learners to examine aspects of their current grammatical knowledge and adapt and exploit it so that it will carry the meanings they wish to express.

In a task-based approach, writing constitutes a natural part of the cycle. Several kinds of writing are involved. Sometimes it is used for private notes, to help students remember what was said or read; sometimes for drafting and creating often in collaboration with others; sometimes for public consumption at a report stage.

A FRAMEWORK FOR TASK-BASED LEARNING

4.5.2 Planning what to write

Below are a number of stages most people go through when writing something important or difficult. They may not occur exactly in this order:

- think what to say / what not to say;
- discuss with someone how to approach the task;
- jot down some notes and ideas;
- write it out roughly to get more ideas;
- explain to someone what you've got to write;
- read the original item / reflect on the circumstances that led you to write;
- show someone your near-final draft and ask for comments;
- prune it back and tidy it up;
- think about layout and format – typed or word processed?;
- evaluate the feedback you've had and decide what to change;
- write a final draft;
- read it though to check for omissions and spellings.

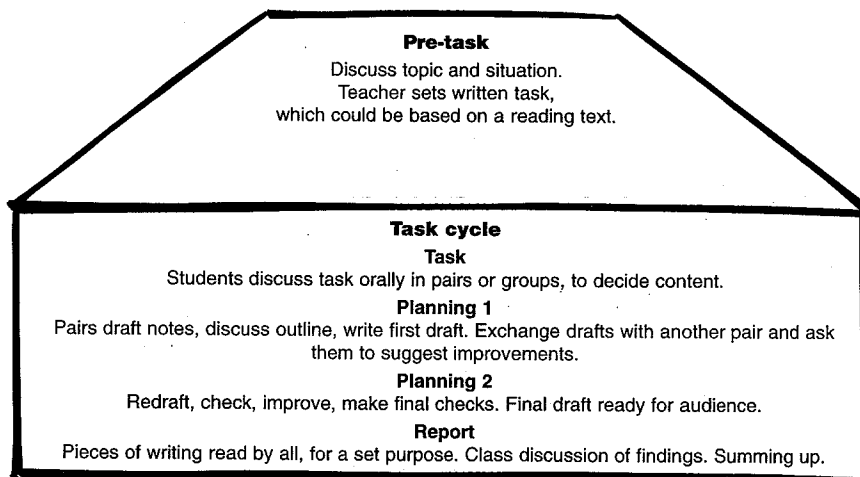
Even if you only go through half of these steps, it is still clear that writing is a lengthy process. It is not always easy to express in writing what we mean. But as we have seen, the process can promote learning and thus it is worth learners spending time on it. One interesting consideration is that only four of the stages above actually involve writing (as opposed to thinking, talking, etc. about it).

These stages (once ordered for teaching purposes) can also help with drafting a piece of writing in the classroom. Many of them are likely to happen naturally in the task-based cycle if the purpose of the writing and the audience are made clear.

4.5.3 Doing a written task

In some cases the end product of the task cycle must be a polished written document. It could take the form of a letter, a story ending or a list of recommendations, depending on the agreed outcome of the task. This end product will first be introduced orally or through reading in the pre-task phase, then discussed as an integral part of the task stage, drafted collaboratively at the planning stage and finalised for the report stage.

If the writing is to be read by most of the class at the report stage, it counts as a public document and must therefore be well written. The planning stage for a written report may well be longer than that needed for an oral presentation, and the pre-task phase and task cycle may look like this:



A similar amount of preparation, plus some rehearsal time, will be required if students are making a video recording.

4.5.4 Writing for a wider audience

In real life, we only write in order to communicate something to someone. Foreign language writing is often done for display, so that it can be graded rather than for any real communicative purpose. In the task above, the audience was the rest of the class.

To make a change, to give students a real sense of purpose and to raise motivation, it is sometimes possible to think of other audiences that might benefit by reading something your students have written. Could your class actually 'publish' something for other classes to read or listen to, or even for wider distribution outside school, possibly by email?

With computers and word-processing packages available in many schools and colleges, it is now easy to produce very professional-looking work.

Here are some projects that have been carried out successfully by teachers I know in different countries. Obviously not all would be suitable for your own teaching environment. In some cases parents took a great pride in these 'publications' even though they did not understand the target language.

There are some more ideas in Appendix A (see Type 6: Creative tasks).

What students wrote:

- a guide book to the village/town;
- brochures about local activities/amenities/sports/walks, etc.;
- a brief history of the school/village (from interviews with older residents);
- a class/school/college newspaper/magazine;
- letters and recordings;
- surveys on school/local attitudes;
- a diary of a holiday course.

Who for:

tourists, visitors

visitors, parents

other classes or students in another school, sometimes overseas

parents, friends at home

4.6 ESL and one-to-one: task cycle adaptations

We have already seen how the type of task can influence the nature of the cycle. Writing tasks and reports being recorded need longer planning stages, for example. The task cycle will also vary depending on the teaching situation where it is used. In 3.1.3 we saw how the reporting stage could be omitted at first with beginners. This section gives other examples of such adaptations.

If you are teaching English in Britain, Australia, the USA or any second language situation – your learners will probably have many opportunities for informal, private talk outside lessons, which is similar to doing tasks in them. They may already be quite confident speaking English in small group settings. What they will need is more emphasis and time on the planning and reporting stages, to help them see where and how their English can be improved. If they are really quite confident, set higher standards. Get them to take turns to record their reports to play back to the class – anything that will raise the linguistic challenge.

In one-to-one lessons, there is no class to act as audience for a 'public' report. So how can you stimulate a natural need for accuracy?

One way is to ask students to prepare their report which they then record on audio cassette for homework. They bring it to the next session, and play it to you. Listen right through the first time, and give a positive overall appraisal, then play

it through again, to give detailed feedback. Comment on the good bits, and select one or two areas for improvement each time. After this, they can erase and re-record it in their own time if they wish.

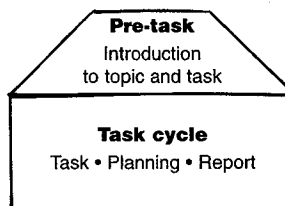
Students then keep the cassette with all their reports on. At the end of term, they can select the two or three best ones for you to listen to again.

Another way is to have one session a week where all one-to-one students meet and report to each other about something they've discussed in their lessons. Or they could play each other the recordings they have made.

Occasionally you could ask students to record themselves giving mini-presentations on video, with an audience in mind. This makes them work really hard and become aware of language areas they need to improve.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, we have described the complete second phase of the task-based framework. So altogether we have covered:



In moving from one component to the next, we are placing different linguistic demands on students, but they are demands which reflect natural language use.

In the task stage students gain fluency and confidence in themselves as communicators. But because it is a 'private' situation, where meaning is paramount, and communication is real-time, there is often little concern for grammatical accuracy.

The planning stage gives learners the time and support they need to prepare for the linguistic challenge of going public. Composing with the support of their group and the teacher, they have time to experiment with language and check on grammar. This is the process that drives their language development forward.

The report stage gives students a natural stimulus to upgrade and improve their language. It encourages them to think about form as well as meaning; accuracy as well as fluency and to use their prestige version of the target language. It allows other students to hear or read what they have done, which provides useful exposure.

We saw how the teacher's role changes with each stage of the cycle. By monitoring the task, teachers encourage learners to work independently to achieve the set goals. By giving language support at the planning stage, teachers help learners organise their conclusions into a form suitable for presentation in public. And by chairing the reports, teachers facilitate public use of language.

We then examined the importance of writing in language learning and showed how different kinds are practised naturally at different stages of the task cycle. We suggested that written tasks needed a longer planning stage and put forward a strategy for encouraging learners to write for a wider audience.

Finally, we looked at ways of adapting the task cycle to different teaching situations.

However, the task framework is not yet complete. In order to fulfil all the optimum conditions for learning, the element of language-focused instruction is still

lacking and we will deal with this in Chapter 7. In the next two chapters, however, we will analyse tasks and the materials they can be based on in more detail.

Reflection

- 1 How far, and in what ways, do the pre-task phase and task cycle now fulfil the four optimum conditions for language learning as outlined in Chapter 1? You might like to complete this table, marking each on a scale from 1 to 5:

		Exposure	Use	Motivation	Instruction
Pre-task	Task				
	Planning				
Task cycle	Report				

- 2 If you put a language practice stage before the task stage, what effect might this have on the way students perceive and carry out the task?
- 3 Think of a class you have observed or taught recently.
 - a) Appraise the balance between opportunities for private, small-group talk and more public, sustained talk.
 - b) What opportunities were students given to use a prestige version of the target language? Were they given sufficient planning time? At what stages?
- 4 Look at the 'Purposes for Reports' table on page 57. Think of tasks you are familiar with (or go through the tasks in Appendix A) and see if you can add some more purposes to the table.
- 5 Think of two ways you might encourage students to write quickly, spontaneously and without worrying about form, in order to increase their confidence and facility in writing.
- 6 Look at the tasks in Appendix A or find some in a resource book, and select two or three that you could adapt as suitable writing tasks for students you know. What pre-task activities might you do?
- 7 Find some suggestions for writing activities in a textbook you know. Evaluate them by deciding which of the optimum conditions for learning they fulfil. How would you adapt them to fit a task-based cycle as described here (see also 9.4.2)?

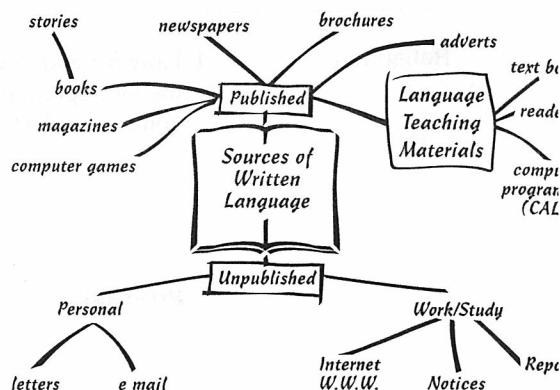
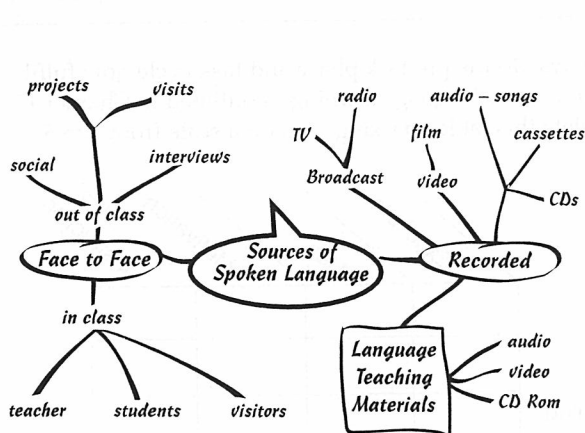
Further reading

For more ideas for writing tasks and games, see C and J Hadfield, 1992. For detailed guidance on handling the process of writing, try R White and V Arndt, 1994/5.

Notes

- 1 P Skehan and P Foster (in preparation).
- 2 For more on this see R Cooper, 1993.
- 3 P Skehan, 1994.

Exposure to language



Text A

Below are the headline and opening lines of a newspaper story.

What questions come to mind when you have read this opening? Write down seven.

How many do you think will be answered in the full story?

The boy who came out from the cold

A schoolboy who spent the night trapped in a butcher's cold store after being locked in accidentally ...

Finally, read the whole text on page 106.

How many of your questions were answered?

Discussion Points

- After looking at the mind-maps at the top of this page, draw your own mind-map of sources of written or spoken texts that you could tap.
- First, do the tasks based on texts A and B. Think of two Pre-task activities for texts A and B above.
- Can you suggest a second task for text A or B that would encourage the class to read the complete text for a second or third time?

Text B

One sentence has been missed out of the Spiders story below and written underneath. Can you find where it fits best?

Phobias make life a misery for thousands. A new organisation called 'Triumph Over Phobia' (TOP) has been formed by a pioneering group of volunteer to help people cure their phobias. Here is one successful story.

Spiders

One woman was so afraid of spiders she could not be left in a house alone. If she saw one she would climb on the table and not be able to get down until somebody came into the room and removed it.

During her first TOP meeting, she noticed doodles on a page which resembled spiders and she suddenly recoiled in horror.

She was eventually persuaded to look at photographs of spiders in books, then leave the pages open in a room so she saw them each time she walked in. Her husband began to move the position of the book and change the page so she saw a different one each time.

After three weeks she was given a plastic spider at a TOP meeting and took it home. She later agreed to take the real spider home and gave it the name Bernard.

Two and a half months after first going to the group her phobia had gone.

Lost sentence:

"One of the group took a real spider in a jar to the next meeting, where it was gradually moved nearer to the sufferer."

The Guardian

The Daily Telegraph