

Task-based Language Teaching (Ch11)

Introduction

In this lesson, students will learn about Task-based Language Teaching, or TBLT. TBLT is another example of a “strong version” communicative approach, where language is acquired through use. It was first used in Malaysia and Bangalore, India, but now it is used just about everywhere. TBLT emphasizes tasks, which are activities that primarily focus on language use in order to achieve a non-linguistic outcome.

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about Task-based Language Teaching and its techniques and principles.

Learning Outcomes

- **Principles:** Students will be able to describe key principles of Task-based Language Teaching such as its goal, what a “task” is, constructivism
- **Techniques:** Students will be able to describe and express their thoughts about the predominant techniques and resources used in a Task-based Language Teaching lesson.
- **Application:** Students will be able to create a task sequence (i.e., pre-task modelling, task phase, post-task phase) for a given set of resources (i.e., *An American High School Student's Typical Day*, *A New MTV VJ*) that follow the principles and techniques of Task-based Language Teaching.

Key Vocabulary

- Synthetic syllabi and analytic syllabi (p. 149)
- Task (p. 149)
- Task-supported teaching (p. 150)
- Task sequence (p. 156)
- Input enhancement (p. 150)
- Input flooding (p. 150)
- Focus on form (p. 151)
- Constructivism (p. 151)
- Pre-task modelling (p. 154)
- Post-task phase (p. 151)
- Recast (p. 157)
- Project work (pp. 157-158)
- Task types and characteristics: information-gap task, opinion-gap task, reasoning-gap task, unfocused task, focused task, input-providing task, output-prompting task (pp. 158-160)

Understanding Task-based Language Teaching

1. What is the goal of task-based language teaching?
2. Tasks have been defined differently by different researchers. Here are some prominent definitions:
 - A piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus examples of tasks are painting a fence, dressing a child. ‘Tasks’ are the things that people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists. **(Long, 1985, p. 89)**
 - 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. **(Prabhu, 1987, p. 24)**
 - An activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; 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. **(Skehan, 1998, p. 95)**
 - 1. A task is a work plan.
 2. A task involves a 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.
 6. A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome. **(Ellis, 2003, pp. 9-10)**
 - A task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning, through process or product or both. **(Samuda & Bygate, 2008, p. 69)**

What is similar about these definitions? Do the definitions above match the description of “task” given in the textbook?

Long, M. H. (1985). The role of instruction and second language acquisition: Task-based language training. In K. Hyltenstam, & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modeling and assessing second-language acquisition* (pp. 77-99). Avon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Samuda, V., & Bygate, M. (2008). *Tasks in second language learning*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

3. The Introduction (pp. 149-151) in the textbook describes three example tasks. What are they? Do they match the definitions and description of “task” given in question 2 above?
4. How does the textbook define the following terms:
- Input enhancement
 - Input flooding
 - Focus on form
 - Constructivism

Experience

5. Consider the sample lesson in the textbook (pp. 151-153), and the observations and principles of Task-based Language Teaching (pp. 153-158).
- a) Task-based language teaching often follows a “task framework”. Fill in the task framework below with the tasks described in the sample lesson in the textbook.
- Pre-task modelling: _____
 - Task cycle
 - Task 1: _____
 - Task 2: _____
 - Task 3: _____
- b) Prahbu identified three types of tasks. Can you identify each type in the sample lesson?
- Information-gap task
 - Opinion-gap task
 - Reasoning-gap task

6. How do Task-based Language Teaching and Communicative Language Teaching (Ch9) differ?

Reviewing the Techniques

7. Describe each of the techniques on textbook pages 158-160.

Task type	How does it work?
Information-gap	
Opinion-gap	
Reasoning-gap	
Unfocused	
Focused	
Input-providing	
Output-prompting	

What do you think?

8. Let’s find out what everyone thinks about Task-based Language Teaching. The textbook on page 160 asks several questions for reflection. First, **choose one question** that you want to discuss with your classmates. Second, **prepare a sample answer** to share with the class.
- a) What (if anything) appeals to you about task-based instruction?
 - b) What reservations do you have?
 - c) How would you go about choosing tasks?
 - d) Can you imagine challenges in managing your own task-based class? If so, how would you address them, or plan to make the most of the opportunities in task-based teaching while working effectively with the challenges?

In-Class Activity #1

9. In this question, you will apply what you have understood about Task-based Language Teaching. You have been asked to teach a **high school intermediate** language class. Use your understanding of task types and characteristics from question 7 above and your understanding of the task sequence in the sample lesson in the textbook (pp. 151-153) to **create a task sequence of three or four steps** for the following resource.

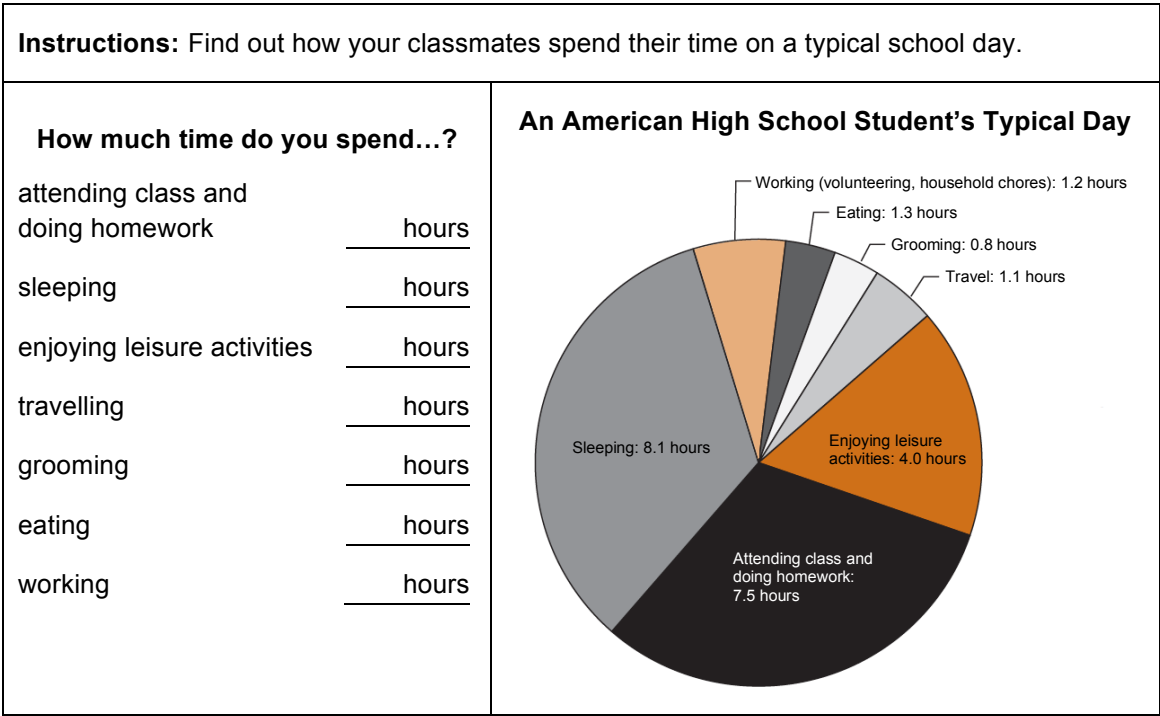



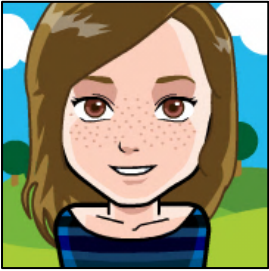


Image source: <https://www.bls.gov/home.htm>

- a) Is this a focused task or unfocused task?
- b) Does the task sequence that you create include an information-gap task, opinion-gap task, or reasoning-gap task?
- c) What other characteristics (see question 7 above) can you recognize in this task?

In-Class Activity #2

10. In this question, you will apply what you have understood about Task-based Language Teaching. You have been asked to teach a **university intermediate** language class. Use your understanding of task types and characteristics from question 7 above and your understanding of the task sequence in the sample lesson in the textbook (pp. 151-153) to **create a task sequence of three or four steps** for the following resource.

Instructions: A new MTV program needs a new VJ. Who do you think is the best choice? Why?

 <p>My name is David Kang. I'm 29 years old. I have lived abroad for several years, so I know foreign style very well. Two years ago, I worked as a model for a tourism company here in Korea. Additionally, I have worked at a television station. I worked at Arirang as an intern for three years when I was younger. I have never worked as a VJ, but I'm confident I can do the job well.</p>	 <p>My name is Eunmi Cho. I'm 25 years. I'm single. I have never lived abroad, but I have lived in different cities in Korea – Daegu, Gwangju, Suwon – so I know Korean culture well. For the past six months, I have worked as an intern for MBC. Before that, I worked for YTN for two years. I have received awards for my work as a reporter. Some day I would like to start my own media consulting firm.</p>
 <p>My name is Myounggyu Lee. I'm 32 years old, and I'm married. I don't have children yet. I have never practiced playing a musical instrument, but I am a very good singer. I have lived in several different cities in Korea – Busan, Jinju, Seoul. I have worked at several media companies such as MBC, SM Entertainment, and YG Entertainment as an intern. I was a public relations assistant.</p>	 <p>My name is Jiyoung Kim. I'm 35 years old. I studied classical music at Ewha Womans University. I have taught piano at a music institute for 10 years, and now I want to find a different job related to music. I have worked for a newspaper as a junior reporter. Some of my articles have won journalism prizes. I grew up in California, so I have experienced numerous international things.</p>

Images source: <https://www.faceyourmanga.com/>

- a) Is this a focused task or unfocused task?
- b) Does the task sequence that you create include an information-gap task, opinion-gap task, or reasoning-gap task?
- c) What other characteristics (see question 7 above) can you recognize in this task?