任务型英语教学法：
课堂研究与实践

Teachers Exploring Tasks
in English Language Teaching

Corony Edwards and Jane Willis 编著

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出 版 前 言

根据教育部大学英语教学改革的精神，《大学英语课程要求》提出要培养"学生的英语综合应用能力，特别是听说能力"，这其中包含了一些教学理念和教学模式的创新。要达到大学英语教学改革的预期效果，教师是十分关键的因素。大学英语教学改革的实践者是在教学第一线的广大英语教师，因此，针对目前我国大学英语教学师资短缺等问题，加强大学英语师资培训是摆在我们面前的一项刻不容缓的任务。为此，高等教育出版社策划引进出版了《外语教师教育与发展丛书——体验英语教学系列》。

这是一套开放性的大型系列丛书，收入多位世界级语言教学专家的作品，具有权威性；内容涉及到外语教学方法、测试、评估等多个方面。丛书不仅系统介绍外语教学相关理论，更结合作者多年的教学经验，提供了大量实践案例，希望能够开拓我国外语教师教学及科研视野，培养教师在教学问题上独立思考、研究和创新的能力，成为我国外语教师教育与发展的助力器。

《外语教师教育与发展丛书——体验英语教学系列》充分体现了体验式的教育理念，配合教育部大学英语教学改革推荐教材《大学体验英语》立体化系列教材及学习系统而出版，目的在于推荐新的教学理念，完成教学理念向教学实践的转化。

近期我社还将出版一系列为师范类学生、英语教师和英语研究者使用的英语语言教学丛书。我们由衷地希望这些教材的出版，对各高等院校的英语教学有所促进和帮助。

高等教育出版社

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Prepublication praise for *Teachers Exploring Tasks in English Language Teaching*

'Jane Willis' and Corony Edwards' edited collection of papers, *Teachers Exploring Tasks in English Language Teaching*, offers an excellent "making public" of the variety of ways in which teachers use tasks to better understand their teaching and their students' learning. The range of reports — focusing on students, on content, and on classroom communities in a variety of geographical and educational settings — is impressive. In adopting task-based teaching, as Willis and Edwards define it, the contributors to this collection write about their classroom practices from a common point of view, creating in a sense a shared "grammar" of the classroom. This approach then makes their accounts both very readable and, I would think, highly replicable by readers. Clearly, classroom teaching generally, and ELT teaching in particular, is coming of age as teachers explore what and how their students learn, and articulate the understandings that result from their explorations, as they do in this volume.'
— *Donald Freeman, Dean Language Teacher Education, School for International Training, USA*

'ESL teachers in the United States and other English-speaking countries can make effective use of every chapter in the book.'
— *Betty Lou Leaver, Dean, New York Institute of Technology in Amman, Jordan*

'High quality, extremely readable and accessible ... I anticipate that this volume will be extremely popular with classroom teachers. I found it refreshing, and even exciting, to read accounts of professional practice by people who have not hitherto been widely published. The volume will be useful not only on MA courses but also on a wide range of inservice course ... an exciting and innovative project.'
— *Professor David Nunan, The English Centre, Hong Kong*

'Classroom teaching and learning ordinarily center on specific language tasks. Instruction becomes more effective when teachers understand the role of language tasks, recognize their students' needs, and apply both types of information in a sound, creative way. With better task-based instruction as a goal, current and future teachers will benefit from the enlightening explorations in this book. In addition, researchers will find that this book can inform and enrich many classroom investigations.'
— *Professor Rebecca Oxford, University of Maryland, USA*

About the Contributors

Corony Edwards is from Britain and is a senior lecturer at the University of Birmingham where she is Director of Learning and Teaching for the School of Humanities, and a course tutor for their distance MA TES/FL programme. She has taught English language since 1986 and has run numerous EFL teacher training courses and workshops in the UK and many other countries. She is co-editor of *English Language Teacher Education and Development* journal, has published in academic journals and books, and has written conventional and web-based teacher development materials. In 2003 she was shortlisted for a National Teaching Fellowship Award.

Jane Willis is from Britain but has worked extensively overseas as an English teacher and trainer. She has written several prize-winning books including *A Framework for Task-based Learning* (Longman), and *English for Primary Teachers*, co-authored with Mary Slattery (OUP) and has edited, with Betty Lou Leaver, *Task-based Instruction in Foreign Language Education: practices and programs* (Georgetown University Press). She has recently retired from Aston University, Birmingham, UK, where she taught on their Masters in TESOL & TESP programmes. She continues to work as a writer and ELT consultant and travels widely.

Maggie Baigent is British, has an MSc in TESOL from Aston University and is currently working at the University of Bologna, teaching students of all levels. She carried out this research at the British Council, Bologna, Italy. She has contributed teaching materials to the coursebook series *Clockwise and Natural English* (OUP).

Gregory Charles Birch is from Canada and lives in Japan. He received his MSc in TESOL from Aston University. He currently works at Seisen Women's College. He completed this study while working at Nagano National College of Technology.

David Coulson is British (MA Japanese Studies, Essex University; MSc TESOL, Aston University) and works with lower intermediate levels and above in the British and American Studies Department of Niigata Women's College in north-west Japan. He is currently pursuing a PhD in vocabulary acquisition at Swansea University, UK.

David Cox is British and has an MSc in TESOL (Aston University). He has taught in Australia, Japan and the UK. He carried out the research for this paper when working for GEOS Language System in a school in Nara, Japan. He is now back in the UK where he is working on the opportunities offered by Webcam technology for language tuition.

Antigone Djapoura is Greek Cypriot and works in a Private Language Institute in Cyprus, teaching mainly 14–15-year-old learners. She holds an MA in TEFL/TESL from the University of Birmingham and loves being involved in anything that deals with the practical issues of teaching.

William Essig is from the USA and is currently teaching in a Japanese university in Osaka. He holds an MA TEFL/TESL from the University of Birmingham. His main interests include implementing TBL and developing practical materials for classroom use.

James Hobbs, from England, has an MSc in TESOL from Aston University. He now teaches at Iwate Medical University, but conducted this research while teaching lower-intermediate English major students at a private Japanese university. He is continuing research into various aspects of task-based learning.

Craig Johnston, from Canada, is working towards an MSc in TESOL from Aston University and teaches at Kansai Gaidai College in Osaka, Japan. He is interested in TBL and lexical approaches to language learning.

Patrick Kiernan is from Britain and has been an English teacher in Japan since 1990. He has an MA in TEFL/TESL from Birmingham University. He is now teaching at Tokyo Denki University and working on a cross-linguistic analysis of conversational narrative for his PhD studies in Applied Linguistics at Birmingham University.

Seung-Min Lee (Steve) is Korean and worked as a primary school teacher for 10 years. He has since become a teacher trainer and now works at the Korea National University of Education where he took his PhD in Primary English Education. He also has an MA in TES/TEFL (University of Birmingham).

Maria Leedham is from Britain. She has taught Japanese and mixed-nationality groups since working in Japan in 1989. She is now a teacher and teacher trainer at both Universities in Oxford and an MSc student at Aston University in Birmingham.

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Annamaria Pinter is from Britain. She has a PhD in the area of Teaching English to Young Learners from the University of Warwick, where she is currently working as a lecturer at the Centre for English Language Teacher Education (CELTE). Her previous experience was in Hungary, as an English teacher in the lower primary sector, and later as a teacher trainer.

Glen Poupore is a Canadian English Instructor, working in the Department of English, Konkuk University, Seoul, Korea and also for the Konkuk–Illinois Joint TESOL Certification Program, in Seoul. He is currently studying for a PhD in Applied Linguistics at the University of Birmingham.

Patricia Pullin Stark (MA TESOL London) is British. She works for Fribourg University in Switzerland, where she teaches undergraduates. Patricia is currently working on a PhD on social cohesion in workplace communication at Birmingham University.

Raymond Sheehan is from Ireland. He teaches at Higher Colleges of Technology in the United Arab Emirates. His learners are mostly beginner to intermediate level and have recently completed secondary education. He has an MA (NUI), an RSA Diploma in TEFL and an MSc in TESOL (Aston University).

Ali Shehadeh, from Syria, is associate professor at the Department of English, University of Aleppo, Syria, and currently at the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. His areas of interest include SLA, teaching methodology and task-based learning and instruction. His work has appeared in the *English Teaching Forum, English Teaching Professional, ELT Journal, TESOL Quarterly, Language Learning,* and *System.* He is an external MA dissertation supervisor on the Open Distance Learning programme of The Centre for English Language Studies at the University of Birmingham.

List of Abbreviations

CAE	Certificate of Advanced English (UCLES Examination)
DDL	Data-driven Learning
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FCE	First Certificate in English (Intermediate level UCLES examination)
IELTS	International English Language Testing Services (UK based language qualification)
L1	first language, mother tongue
L2	second language
NS	native speaker
OHT	overhead transparency/slide
PET	Preliminary English Test
PPP	Presentation, Practice, Production
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
STEP	Socio-cultural, Technological, Economic, and Political
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TBI	Task-Based Instruction
TBL	Task-Based Learning
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TESP	Teaching English for Specific Purposes
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language (ED PSE CHECK) (US-based language qualification)
TT	Team-Talking
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

Key terms are highlighted in bold where they first appear in the text, or where they are glossed or defined. The references for these items also appear in bold in the index where there are multiple page references.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Introduction: Aims and Explorations into Tasks and Task-based Teaching

Jane Willis

The aims of this book

This book was written by language teachers for language teachers, with a view to encouraging readers to use more tasks in their lessons, and to explore for themselves various aspects of task-based learning (TBL) and teaching. It gives insights into ways that tasks can be designed, adapted and implemented in a range of teaching contexts and will thus appeal to teachers with little or no previous experience of using tasks themselves. It also illustrates ways in which tasks and task-based learning can be investigated in order to make the whole experience richer and more rewarding. Teachers who are thinking of embarking on a Diploma or Masters course, either on-site or by distance learning, will find lots of useful ideas here for their own classroom-based projects and assignments. Each contributor ends their chapter with practical recommendations and/or advice for other teachers, and many list further ideas that can be carried out in language classes.

This book is not intended to be used as a manual of research techniques, nor is it a treatise on TBL. It makes no attempt to cover every type of task or research process. There are other books that do this. The strength of this book is that it illustrates a range of largely familiar tasks being implemented within various lesson frameworks, a variety of task-based programmes, and task investigations in action, all in normal classroom conditions. It also provides plentiful samples of data from task interactions. Its aims are to complement some of the more formal studies that have been conducted into the use of tasks, and to allow readers to see how other teachers have interpreted the concept of TBL within their own particular educational settings.

Nunan (1989b: 121) and Burns (1999: 181–213), as well as Freeman (1998), all recommend that teachers who carry out small-scale classroom research or action research projects should disseminate their findings. This collection is, in essence, doing just that. We therefore hope that it will serve not only to enrich readers' understanding of task-based approaches to language learning and teaching, but also to provide ideas and insights into exploring and researching classroom learning in a more general sense.

Who are the teachers?

All the teachers who have written for this collection began these particular explorations into tasks and TBL while studying, mostly by distance learning, on Masters programmes in TEFL or TESOL or TESP from English universities. Most contributors are from Aston University and Birmingham University, with one guest contributor from Warwick University. Being distance learners means that they remain in their teaching posts overseas while studying for their Masters degrees with guidance and support from their tutors, supervisors, colleagues and fellow Masters participants. This allowed them to explore their own classrooms as part of their normal teaching day.

Who are the learners and what are the tasks?

The learners taught by our contributors represent all ages and many different types of institution and educational backgrounds. To give an indication of this variety, here are some snapshot scenarios of the learners doing some of the tasks.

Primary age children in Hungary are looking at pictures of rooms in a doll's house and playing 'Spot the Differences' in pairs; others in Korea are listening to directions and drawing on to a street map the routes to various people's homes: a 'Describe and Draw' task. Groups of teenagers in Greece are designing a personality quiz in order to find out how brave people are. Japanese students in the UK, preparing for an oral examination, are doing a problem-solving task: they have a picture of a very bare student room and are deciding together the best way to embellish it. Business students in Switzerland are doing a web-based project: they have each analysed the strengths and weaknesses of an international company and are comparing results. Advanced learners in Italy share their experiences of storms and compare how they feel about them. Elementary adult students in Japan find out about their partner's

families and friendships; a class of shy university students exchanges stories about embarrassing incidents that have happened to them, others are researching into Japanese culture as seen through different types of restaurant. In a women's college in Japan, students describe to another group, who then have to draw it unseen, a picture of a cheerful magician sawing his wife in half.

Some of these learners are new to task-based learning, yet all are fully engaged in the tasks they are doing. They are getting their meanings across as best they can in English, trying to understand what others are saying, helping each other as they work towards the agreed goals of the task, and subsequently sharing their experiences of doing the task.

What do we mean by task?

Several different definitions and uses of the term 'task' exist throughout the literature, ranging from rather general to quite specific, and these are summarized in Chapter 1. Our contributors also use the word 'task' in slightly different ways. So what characteristics do the tasks in this book have in common?

- In carrying out a task the learners' principal focus is on exchanging and understanding meanings, rather than on practice of form or pre-specified forms or patterns.
- There is some kind of purpose or goal set for the task, so that learners know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the task, for example, to write a list of differences, to complete a route map or a picture, to report a solution to a problem, to vote on the best decorated student room or the most interesting/memorable personal anecdote.
- The outcome of the completed task can be shared in some way with others.
- Tasks can involve any or all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- The use of tasks does not preclude language-focused study at some points in a TBL lesson, though a focus on specific grammar rules or patterns will not generally come before the task itself, as this could well detract from the real communicative purpose of the subsequent interaction.

What, then, would not count as 'tasks'? Activities requiring learners to use language patterns they have just been taught or been told to use, would not count as tasks in this sense, for example, completing

a transformation exercise, acting out dialogues or taking part in role plays with set parts. The principle focus in such activities is not on learners expressing and exchanging their own meanings but on practising pre-specified language forms or functions and displaying their ability to 'produce' these patterns. (See Skehan, 1998: 95–6.)

The task characteristics listed above can apply to many different types of task. While there is no definitive way to classify tasks, a broad classification that is based on cognitive processes consists of six categories: listing tasks; ordering and sorting tasks; comparing tasks; problem solving tasks; sharing personal experiences; and creative tasks (see J. Willis, 1996a). The contributors to this collection have used a range of task-types in their studies. For example, Poupore (Chapter 19) investigates the effects that different types of problem solving tasks have on his students' language production, and Kiernan's students (Chapter 5) engage in narrative tasks where they share embarrassing personal experiences. Shehadeh, in Chapter 1, gives an overview of other ways in which task-types can be categorized for both teaching and research purposes.

The move towards Task-Based Learning (TBL)

In the countries and contexts represented in this book, English is being taught as a Foreign Language with a view to enhancing international communication. However, the examination systems in many of these countries often put a premium on formal accuracy and, as a result, teachers often prioritize the teaching of grammar. Teachers model the target language forms and get students to repeat them, and then ask questions intended to elicit the target forms in response, for example, *What time do you usually get up in the morning?* to elicit: *I usually get up at 7.15.* (Note that *'I don't know really, it depends.'* would not be an acceptable response in this situation.) This approach stems from behaviourist learning theories and the language thus produced is commonly called 'display' language; students are expected to respond using a word or pattern that conforms to the teacher's expectation of the specific form to be used, rather than on conveying meaning or message (D. Willis, 1996b). The label given to one such approach is **Presentation, Practice, Production**, also known as **PPP**. (For an explanation and discussion of PPP see Shehadeh, Chapter 1 and D. Willis, 1996b: iv–v.) However, we all know that what is taught is not necessarily what is learned. And although PPP lessons are often supplemented with skills lessons, most students taught mainly through conventional approaches such as PPP leave school unable to communicate effectively in English (Stern, 1983). This situation has prompted many