Introduction to Task-based Learning

The Willis model and variations

Ken Lackman

Methods and activities for more effective teaching with less preparation
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Introduction

The idea behind TBL is that students will learn to communicate in the language by doing tasks in the classroom which approximate those in the outside world. Students do tasks in small groups and practise using language necessary for doing the particular task. The focus is completely on task completion and therefore students are free to use whatever language they have at their disposal to accomplish this. Although some new language may be presented before the task, the intention is that the bulk of the new language is presented after the students do the task. Part of the reason for this is that the aim of the task stage is purely communicative and successful completion will depend on how well students are able to negotiate meaning while doing the task. There is no insistence that students have to use certain language as that would take their focus away from meaning in favour of form. Thus the real-world nature of the task would be sacrificed as students would put their focus on producing set phrases and/or structures instead of task completion. Another reason for the presentation of new language after the task is that the learners are more likely to notice and acquire it since they were just put in a position of doing a task without some of the useful language appropriate for it.

Consider a student who had to give directions and lacked basic vocabulary like blocks, corner and expressions like continue going straight. When they are exposed to the language after doing the task, they are likely to think to themselves “THAT’S the word/expression I needed”. This reaction will surely add emphasis to the new language and most likely lead to easier acquisition.

There are different applications of TBL but this document will focus on what has become the most popular, the framework presented by Jane Willis in her 1996 book *A Framework for Task-based Learning*. Following an explanation of the teaching stages of this framework will be an analysis of the method according to the essentials of language learning that Jane Willis presented in her book and also a system for assessing lesson structure developed by Jim Scrivner. As part of this analysis, TBL will be compared with the predominant methodology of the last few decades, PPP. The intention of this analysis is to establish the value of using a task-based approach in the classroom.
## TBL Lesson Framework

The framework below represents the Willis model for TBL as applied to the sample task of suggesting things to do in Toronto for a newcomer. The framework was demonstrated with groups doing a role-play where one of the participants played the role of the newcomer to the city and the other two or three gave him or her suggestions about what to do or see.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Aim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pre-Task       | Introduction to topic & task | - T explains task.  
                   | - Ss brainstorm vocabulary to use in task.                               | - introduce task  
                   |                                  | - activate schemata               |                                  |
| Task Cycle     | Task                      | - Ss do role play in groups and give suggestions to one student about what to do in Toronto. | - fluency  
                   |                                  | - negotiate meaning               |                                  |
|                | Planning                  | - Ss work in groups and plan what to say about what went on during the task.  
                   | - T monitors                  | - fluency  
                   |                                  | - focus on accuracy for reporting to class (next stage) |                                  |
|                | Report                    | - Ss read their reports.  
                   | - Other Ss listen for differences.                                       | - "public" speaking  
                   |                                  | - listening for specific information |                                  |
| Language Focus | Analysis                  | - Ss hear recording of native speakers doing the task and pick out useful expressions.  
                   | - T clarifies.                                                            | - focus on form(s)  
                   |                                  | - raise awareness of task/topic related lexis                            |                                  |
|                | Practice                  | - Students repeat expressions from above in exercise/activity (controlled practice). | - acquisition(?) |                                  |

Adapted from Jane Willis "A Framework for Task Based Learning" Longman

### Pre-task Phase

The demo lesson began with the pre-task phase where the teacher outlined the task and then had the students brainstorm some ideas of what types of things they might use for the task, which produced items like types of museums, sports facilities, types of neighbourhoods, etc. This stage is meant to get students thinking about the topic but a few absolutely necessary lexical items could be taught here.

### The Task Cycle

#### Task

The task phase consisted of the students in each group giving suggestions to their “newcomer”. The task phase is meant to be completely communicative and student-centred, where the students use whatever language they have at their disposal for doing the task. The focus is on doing the task successfully and the teacher should not be concerned with lexical or grammatical accuracy at all at this point. The task should be real-
world related as it is meant to give them practice with language or skills they would need in the real world.

Planning  The planning stage has the students working in their groups to prepare a report for the rest of the class on what they did in the task phase. The report could be spoken or written. For a spoken report, the students should organize their ideas and make some notes about what they will report to the rest of the class. With the above example, they made notes about their suggestions for the newcomer. The aim of this stage is that the students get experience with “public” speaking or writing, where some planning is required to insure that the report displays the appropriate degree of accuracy and formality required for presentation. The teacher should monitor and help students with any language they need.

Report  After the reports have been planned or, in case of written reports, completed in presentation form, they need to be shared with the rest of the class. For written reports, they can be hung on the wall(s) of the class and the students can read what the other groups did during the task phase. For oral reports, one student from each group can deliver the report to the rest of the class. Regardless of whether it is written or oral, the students in other groups should be given a reading or listening task to do during exposure to the other groups’ reports. In the suggestion role-play, the students were asked to listen for suggestions that were different from the ones they had come up with. Because the point of the report stage is to focus on accuracy, the teacher may make note of significant errors that occur during the reading of the reports or in the written reports. The errors can be taken up after all the reports have been delivered.

Language Focus

Analysis  Typically the Language Focus stage will have students listening to (or reading) a sample of native speakers doing the same task as they did. They are instructed to listen for language (usually expressions) that they could have used when they did the task. Because they did the task relying on only the language they had at their disposal, they should be more receptive to noticing useful expressions in the native speaker sample. If the students are listening for expressions, get them to write them down as they hear them and then have them compare lists with a partner. If you are using a recording, you can play it twice. You can also have students underlining expressions in a text or tapescript. After the students have picked out some expressions the teacher should get them up on the board and deal with form, meaning, and, where necessary, pronunciation.

Practice  The Language Focus stage ends with controlled practice, which can be any typical practice activity where the students are required to use the target language correctly. A common controlled activity is a substitution drill, where students have to substitute words in a structure (e.g., “I suggest we go to the _________.”).
Below is the tapescript of a native speaker recording that was used in the demo lesson. The students did the task of giving suggestions to a newcomer to Toronto and after the report stage, they were required to listen to this “native-speaker sample” and pick out language they could have used for their task – specifically language used to give suggestions. Note that the language highlighted is not necessarily the standard “coursebook structures” that we are used to, e.g., “What/How about + GERUND ...”; “Why don’t you + BASE FORM ...”; “You could + BASE FORM”; “I suggest + GERUND...”, etc. This is because the recording was completely authentic and the participants were not instructed to use any particular language. In reality we use language specific to the task or topic, which may or may not include generic structures. The value of using authentic recordings rather than coursebook ones, is that students will be exposed to a greater variety of structures, especially those that are specifically related to the task. If you were to use a recording of suggestions for another task, e.g., suggesting films to go to, you would end up with other structures specific to that task such as, “I’ve heard X is really good”, etc.

KEN: Hi, I’m new to Toronto and I just wonder if you could tell me some good places to go.
CHRIS: Well, it depends what you’re looking for. If you want to spend some time outside you can hang out on Toronto Island, or maybe go to Ontario Place or maybe play some tennis in Trinity Bellwoods Park.
KEN: That’s good
MARK: Yeah, you could also check out the Entertainment District, and the clubs. You could check out all the great restaurants and all the great multicultural things that Toronto has to offer
KEN: For example?
MARK: Like festivals, like cultural events and, of course, other things like museums and uh, marketplaces. There’s really a bit of everything.
KEN: OK, and anything else, like, historical for example?
CHRIS: Well, there’s the historic Brewery District, Distillery District I should say, which is a very nice place to spend an afternoon.

KEN: Hi, I’m new to Toronto and I just wonder if you could tell me some places that would be interesting for me to see.
LAURA: I guess it depends what you’d like to do. There’s lots of places in Toronto where you can go and have a good time. You could go down to the Beaches in the east end of the city. Go to Woodbine Station and take the bus south. Lots of fun down there in the sun. And you could also go to College Street and check out some of the nice patios there.
KEN: OK, sounds good. Anything else?
MARK: Well, I love sports and I think Toronto has a lot to offer in terms of sports. You’ve got the Leafs, you’ve got the Blue Jays, Raptors - basically anything that you’re into. Another thing that Toronto has a lot of is live music, concerts from small venues to big stadiums. It’s really, it’s really great and it’s happening.
Conditions for Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure</strong> to a rich but comprehensible input of real spoken and written language in use</td>
<td><strong>Instruction</strong> in language (i.e. chances to focus on form)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong> of the language to do things (i.e. exchange meanings)</td>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong> to listen and read the language and to speak and write it (i.e. to process and use the exposure)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jane Willis points out that the three essentials for language learning are EXPOSURE, USE and MOTIVATION. If you think about it, it proves how some learners can learn a language just from watching television – the EXPOSURE is there, they can watch 24 hours if they’d like and it’s authentic; they can USE language they learn from television in real life, like ordering procedures they would see in a restaurant scene; and the MOTIVATION is there because they have already decided that they are going to use the television as a vehicle to learn the language.

A lot of classroom exercises and activities lack one or more of the three essentials. Grammar or vocabulary gap fills, for example, may not be motivating for the students - in themselves they do not require USE of the language to exchange meanings and unless the gaps are in a text of some substance (rather than in short sentences), the EXPOSURE may not be there. Student-to-student communication, while high in USE, do not provide real EXPOSURE and the students may or may not be motivated, depending on the task, topic and level of artificiality. For example, the students may not care about asking a partner about their future plans or past experiences. This is not to say that you should throw out all exercises and activities that do not provide the three essentials, only that the more the three essentials occur in your lesson, the more effective your lesson will be.

The three essentials are something to consider whenever you plan a lesson and if you are missing one of them in your lesson, you are not teaching as effectively as you could be. This lack of the essentials in many ESL classrooms could explain the reason for the research findings referred to in the following quote:

Comparative studies, similarly, suggest that up to now methodological factors have had relatively little impact on general levels of success. For example, one of the most influential 'comparative' studies suggested that instruction has no effect on language learning. A comparison was made between a group of instructed learners (in an ESL context) and a group of uninstructed learners, matched for length of time in the target language country. The two groups did not differ in level of achievement.

Peter Skehan
*Challenge and Change in Language Teaching* eds., Willis & Willis, MacMillan Heinemann 1998
ARC

ARC, which stands for Authentic, Restricted and Clarification was developed by Jim Scrivener, not as an actual teaching method but as a means to examine the stages in a lesson and evaluate them in terms of what the students get out of them. The idea is that every effective lesson should have an appropriate balance of activities that can be categorized as authentic, restricted or clarification.

Authentic

Authentic activities are those in which the language is not restricted. They could be either receptive or productive. An example of a receptive activity would be a relatively authentic reading or listening which exposes the students to a body of language used in a fairly natural way. The obvious example of a productive activity would be a speaking activity with a focus on fluency, where the students had free choice of language, as opposed to practicing specific structures. Communicative activities are authentic.

Restricted

Restricted activities are those which restrict the students to using specific linguistic items, such as specific vocabulary or grammatical structures. Typical restricted activities are things like gap fills or substitution drills (i.e., the students use a grammatical form in different ways). Controlled practice activities are restricted.

Clarification

Clarification refers to any activity in which the language is explained to the students in some way. It could simply be explanations of grammar or vocabulary provided by the teacher or it could be students discovering meanings and/or rules for themselves (i.e., Guided Discovery).

The balance of authentic, restricted and clarification activities will depend on the lesson. For example, a conversation-based lesson will tend to have more authentic activities while a grammar-based one will involve more clarification. However, students need all three to learn effectively and it’s a good idea for teachers to review their lesson plans and make sure all three are there.
## Authentic Use

for:
- meaning
- communications
- fluency
- real-life
- pleasure

## Restricted Use

for:
- form
- practice
- accuracy
- testing
- display

## Clarification & Focus

- I show you
- I tell you
- I help you to find out for yourself
- You find out for yourself

### Example activities

- **Speaking**
  - communicative activities
  - discussions
  - conversations

- **Writing**
  - stories
  - poems
  - essays

- **Reading**
  - novels
  - newspapers, articles
  - leaflets, notices, ads

- **Listening**
  - conversations
  - radio, TV
  - narratives

- **Speaking**
  - drills
  - language practice activities
  - elicited dialogues
  - jazz chants, poems, texts

- **Writing**
  - copying
  - exercises
  - guided writing

- **Reading**
  - examples
  - coursebook texts
  - exercises
  - stories

- **Listening**
  - discrete sounds, words
  - sentences
  - coursebook tasks
  - examples from coursebooks

### Tools and techniques

- rules
- examples
- reference information
- diagrams, timelines
- substitution tables
- translation
- questions about meaning, form or use
- error analysis
- sentence analysis
- problems and puzzles
- explanations, lectures
- demonstrations
- gestures, mime
- pictures, flashcards, visual aids
- cuisenaire rods
- contexts and situations
- repetition
- elicitation
- personalization

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**Adapted from J. Scrivner “Learning Teaching”**

### TBL and ARC

The following lesson plans indicate the aims of each stage of the task-based framework according to ARC and the conditions for language learning (Exposure, Motivation and Usage). Note that a lower case ‘e’ is used when there is teacher explanation. This is because there may be minimal exposure to teacher language used for the explanations, depending on the amount of teacher talk involved. Likewise, the ‘e?’ in the report stage indicates that the exposure to other students language may only be acceptable if the reports reflect a significant amount of prior teacher correction or remodeling. The “U?” in the practice stage indicates that the value of the usage in controlled practice is debatable depending on whether there is any exchange of meaning.
PPP: The Dominant Methodology

Although PPP continues to be the most popular methodology, it has been widely criticized and a quick comparison with TBL using ARC and the essentials for language learning reveals its limitations. Nevertheless, it can still be an effective method of teaching, particularly with lower level learners and basic grammar points.
An Introduction to Task-based Learning

The target language for a PPP lesson which aimed to teach suggestions for a newcomer would typically start off with the following standard structures for suggestions, as would any PPP lesson involving suggestions:

**Target Language**

- Why don’t you + BASE FORM
- How/What about + GERUND
- (Let’s + BASE FORM)*
- You could + BASE FORM
- I suggest you + BASE FORM
- I suggest + GERUND

The target language tends to be generic because it is explained first and applied later (prescriptive) rather than have it emerge naturally out of an authentic exchange (descriptive). This is why PPP tends to be lacking in EXPOSURE.

**Criticisms**

Some criticisms of PPP:

…the underlying theory for a PPP approach has now been discredited. The belief that a precise focus on a particular form leads to learning and automatization no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology…

Dave Willis

There is, it seems, little evidence to suggest that the PPP paradigm works in the way it is supposed to work. It does not, as it is claimed, lead in easy stages from presentation to mastery. At the same time, as a paradigm which focuses throughout on conformity it leaves little room for communicative language use. Finally, because it ‘presents’ language and requires little intellectual involvement on the part of the learner it does not provide for a critical focus on language form.

Dave Willis

…the PPP paradigm was a travesty, for philosophical, psychological, ideological and methodological reasons. It suggested that languages were best learned by limiting the language to which learners were exposed and practicing it intensely. In fact, the direct opposite is probably the truth…

Michael Lewis

Many teachers believe in PPP because they were trained to; the roots of their faith are in the initial training courses they took. A trusting trainee might suppose that they had been initiated into a methodology their tutors used themselves. The paradox is that many tutors who use PPP as a training paradigm don’t actually use PPP much in their own language teaching.

Jim Scrivener

The above quotes are from Challenge and Change in Language Teaching eds., Willis & Willis, MacMillan Heinemann 1998
Characterizing a Task

According to the Willis model, not all classroom activities are considered valid tasks. Standard coursebook exercises, while they are tasks of a sort, are not considered valid tasks because they do not relate to real world outcomes. One of the goals of TBL is to help students prepare for tasks in the real world. In order to do that, the classroom task has to be one which relates directly or indirectly to the real world. For example, a role-play where a student uses English to buy groceries would be directly related to the real world. Tasks can be indirectly related to the real world if the skills the students are using are related to the real world. For example, an activity requiring problem solving skills would relate to the real world, while a grammar-based gap fill would not.

1. Does the activity engage learner's interest?
2. Is there a primary focus on meaning?
3. Is there an outcome?
4. Is success judged in terms of outcome?
5. Is completion a priority?
6. Does the activity relate to real world outcomes?

Which two tasks meet all the above criteria? Which do not? Why?

A. Write four statements describing this picture (picture supplied).
   1 2 3 4 5 6

B. Write four questions to ask your partner about their weekend (use past tense). Then ask them.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

C. Do a role play about planning a holiday. One student is the customer, the other the travel agent.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

D. Tell your partner the members of your family. Draw your partner's family tree and then check with your partner to see if it's correct.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

E. Match the personality adjectives in column A to the definitions in column B.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

F. With a partner, decide the most important qualities for a boss then rank them in order of importance.

Answers on page 18
## Sample Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listing</th>
<th>Brainstorming/Fact Finding</th>
<th>make lists of things found in a kitchen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordering and Sorting</td>
<td>Sequencing</td>
<td>put events from news into correct order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>rank qualities needed for a job in order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Categorizing</td>
<td>complete a chart using information from a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classifying</td>
<td>think of five ways to classify your clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing</td>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>match descriptions to particular places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding Similarities</td>
<td>compare ways of doing things in different cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finding Differences</td>
<td>contrast education systems in different countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>Puzzles and Logic Problems</td>
<td>“A farmer needs to cross a river with a wolf, a chicken,...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real Life Problems &amp;</td>
<td>give advice to a visitor to your city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Situations</td>
<td>make up your own version of the end of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incomplete Texts</td>
<td>look at profile of a language learner and decide on best strategies to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Personal</td>
<td>Anecdotes</td>
<td>tell about a funny/unusual incident that happened to you or someone you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Personal Reminiscences</td>
<td>tell about your last holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes/Opinions/Preferences</td>
<td>find out what others think about films, TV shows, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Reactions</td>
<td>find out what makes someone annoyed, happy, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Tasks</td>
<td>Children’s Activities</td>
<td>make a model of something and describe the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
<td>write a poem, short story, etc. based on something you have seen or read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social/Historical</td>
<td>interview older inhabitants about how their society has changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigations</td>
<td>make a model of something and describe the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Projects</td>
<td>produce a class or school newspaper/magazine, one-off or regular issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condensed and adapted from J. Willis, “A Framework for Task-Based Learning”
Advantages of TBL

- Authentic language
- Lots of use and exposure
- Holistic to specific
- Fluency to accuracy: meaning first, form after
- Link to real world
- Students negotiate meaning
- Report stage gives students chance to improve language
- Language analysis relates to students’ production
- Students can choose language to focus on
- Language learned organically and experientially, not forced on learner
- Target language is dealt with more analytically than mechanically
- Descriptive not prescriptive
- Blends grammar and vocab. (lexical approach)
- Language is contextualized
- Highly communicative
- Student-centred and lots of interpersonal communication
- Specific task encourages student participation
- Students of different levels can participate
- Two types of speaking: spontaneous (private) and planned (public)
- Genuine need to use language to communicate (task and planning stages)
- Genuine need to strive for accuracy (reporting)
- Intrinsically motivating
- Encourages confidence
- Encourages acquisition by students noticing language they could have used in task
- Encourages autonomous learning
- Stages are flexible
- Can involve all four skills
- More fun!
Variations in Task Framework

In spite of the aforementioned benefits of teaching with the Willis model, some teachers have had issues with some aspects of it. For example, some teachers don’t like having to find or create native speaker samples. The following adaptations of the Willis model address some of those issues.

The following adaptation eliminates the need to bring in native-speaker samples for the students to listen to or read and then analyze. In the planning stage the teacher circulates and while helping students, makes notes of useful language that comes up from the students, either correct structures or incorrect ones. For example, staying with the suggestion lesson, the teacher hears or reads, “We suggested him to go to the museum” and copies down the utterance to focus on later. During the report stage the teacher makes notes of additional language that comes up. The collection of notes is presented to the students in the analysis stage and errors are corrected and useful structures are clarified. The other stages remain the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Task</td>
<td>Introduction to topic &amp; task</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Cycle</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Teacher monitors and helps students with structures and/or vocabulary they need for the report (or just makes notes of language they should be using). Then collects some expressions or vocabulary to go over in language focus stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Teacher listens to student reports and adds to notes, if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Focus</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Instead of using a “native-speaker” sample, language focus is on vocabulary and structures collected by the teacher from the planning and report stages. The target language is presented and if from incorrect or awkward student utterances, it is corrected or remodeled. Write the target language on the board, on an OHT, read it or dictate it to the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another way to avoid bringing in native speaker samples is for the teacher to provide the sample live in the classroom. The best way to do that would be to write out a collection of expressions beforehand to plant in a conversation and then do a role-play with a fairly confident student, where that student is provided with a question, or set of questions to ask the teacher which would elicit the expressions. Other students listen and write down the useful expressions they hear the teacher say. For the suggestion role-play the student would be instructed to ask the teacher what they should see in the city and the teacher could answer using the following structures:

- You could…
- Why don’t you…
- What/how about…
- I suggest you…
- I suggest _____ing…

Note how the language will be more prescriptive this way but additional task-related structures could be also be planted into the conversation e.g., “Toronto has a lot of ….” Also, some may emerge naturally.

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Focus</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Instead of using a recording or prepared text, the teacher has a student perform the task live with him/her and has students listen to teacher-talk for task-related language. The teacher could plant the target language in his/her answers or students could focus on whatever emerges naturally. The dialogue could be recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Added Production Stage

Some students and teachers don’t care for the idea of ending a lesson with the controlled practice stage. They prefer a lesson that seems like it’s building towards a culminating activity. One solution is to repeat the task at the end but make it a little more controlled by requiring students to use the language they focused on in the analysis stage. This is what most teachers and students are used to from PPP. In essence, it is marrying the two methods as the three Ps are actually in the lesson structure in order. However, it still retains all the benefits of TBL.

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<th>Report</th>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Task | Task repeated Production | The task above is repeated but in a more controlled way so students can use the language from the practice stage. Some other variation in the task set up is advised, such as switching partners or skills focus (e.g. writing scripts and then acting out). |

No Reporting Stages

Many teachers prefer to use the Willis model without the Reporting stages. This would mean simply going straight from the task to the Language Analysis stage. However, this means a native-speaker sample is needed, although it could be provided “live” by the teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>ARC</th>
<th>EMU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Task</td>
<td>Introduction to topic &amp; task</td>
<td>-T explains task. -Ss brainstorm vocabulary to use in task.</td>
<td>-introduce task -activate schemata</td>
<td>A/C</td>
<td>EMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>-Ss do role play in groups and give suggestions to one student about what to do in Toronto.</td>
<td>-fluency -negotiate meaning</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>MU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Focus</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>-Ss hear recording of native speakers doing the task and pick out useful expressions. -T clarifies.</td>
<td>-focus on form(s) -raise awareness of task/topic related lexis</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>EMU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>-Students repeat expressions from above in exercise/activity (controlled practice).</td>
<td>-acquisition(?)</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working Backwards from Texts

Sometimes you can build a task-based lesson around texts from coursebooks and other sources. The trick is to work backwards using the text as the “native speaker sample”. For example, with text below, you could set the students’ task as “Give your partner some advice about a first date.” Below is a sample lesson you could do with this text:

SAN-CHI: So what are you up to these days, Sam?
SAM: Hi, San-Chi! What a coincidence. I’ve been meaning to give you a call. I need some cultural advice.
SAN-CHI: What about?
SAM: Well, I’m having dinner at Mei-Li’s house tonight, and her parents are in from Taiwan.
SAN-CHI: Really?
SAM: Mm-hmm. And you know how much I love to talk politics. Would it be rude to bring that up at the dinner table?
SAN-CHI: Uh … Well, not really. Most people from Taiwan like to talk about politics too. But it would not be cool to argue with them if you don’t agree with what they say!
SAM: How well you know me! I do tend to be a little opinionated.
SAN-CHI: Well, in that case, I’d advise you to talk about something else!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Task</td>
<td>Introduction to topic &amp; task</td>
<td>Assign task: Give your partner some advice about a first date. Students brainstorm first date “dos and don’ts”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Cycle</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Put students in groups and have them give advice to one member who tells them about his/her date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Students plan a report to describe what happened in the task stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Students read out the reports. Others listen for advice that was similar to what they gave/received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Focus</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Students read the text and pick out structures that could have been used for their task (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Students do a substitution drill using the structures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Answers to quiz about sample tasks

A. Write four statements describing this picture. (picture supplied)
   1 2 3 4 5 6

B. Write four questions to ask your partner about their weekend (use past tense). Then ask them.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

C. Do a role play about planning a holiday. One student is the customer, the other the travel agent.
   1 2 3 4 5 6*

D. Tell your partner the members of your family. Draw your partner’s family tree and then check with your partner to see if it’s correct.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

E. Match the personality adjectives in column A to the definitions in column B.
   1 2 3 4 5 6*

F. With a partner, decide the most important qualities for a boss then rank them in order of importance.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

*sometimes you can tweak an activity so it qualifies as a task. For example in 3, if you specify that the travel agent has to sell the customer a holiday, then it will meet the remaining criteria. In 5, if the adjectives are applied to a real person, it will engage learner’s interest (1) and relate to the real world (6).

Recommended Reading

Willis, J A Framework for Task-Based Learning Longman 1996
Willis, J and Willis, D (eds) Challenge and Change in Language Teaching MacMillan 1996
Willis, J and Willis, D Doing Task-Based Teaching Oxford 2007