

2.3.1 Employing Task-based Learning

Activities

Activity 1: Defining tasks

Question 1.1

Dictionaries define a task as:

- a usually assigned piece of work often to be finished within a certain time
- something hard or unpleasant that has to be done
- duty, function

Can you think of another possible meaning?

Write your views in the text box below.

Question 1.2

People often use the word task together with:

- Verbs like assign, take on, undertake, carry out, accomplish, complete...
- Adjectives like challenging, demanding, difficult, easy, repetitive, impossible, major...

Can you think of other verbs and adjectives that could be used together with the word task?

Write your views in the text box below.

Question 1.3

In the ELT field we often encounter the terms ‘communicative tasks’, ‘language tasks’, ‘learning tasks’, ‘study tasks’, ‘routine tasks’, ‘pedagogic tasks’, ‘isolated tasks’, ‘real life tasks’...

Can you think of a ‘communicative task’ or a ‘real life task’ in an English language classroom? Can you make one or two examples?

Write your views in the text box below.

Question 1.4

Watch the video “Prof. Rod Ellis on Task-based Language Learning”, where Ellis, a well-known researcher, provides a brief introduction to task-based language teaching and learning. You can find the link in the “Supplementary Materials” part of this Section.

Does Rod Ellis mention any examples similar to the ones you had thought of?

Write your views in the text box below.

Activity 2: Is this activity a task? Using the 6 criteria

Use the 6 questions below to decide if the following activity is a task.

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

Activity

Think of the busiest day you have had recently. Work in pairs.

Tell your partner all the things you did. Decide which of you had the busiest day, then tell the class about it. Decide who in the whole class had the most hectic day (and say why). Finally, from memory, write a list of the things one person did on their busiest day and, without revealing their name, read it out to the class (or display it on the wall) to see how many people can remember whose day it was.

Write your views in the text box below.

Activity 3: Exploring the TBL approach

Question 3.1

Watch the video “Teaching Speaking with Task-Based Learning”, where there is an example of conversation development in a multilingual classroom. You can find the link in the “Supplementary Materials” part of this Section.

Can you identify elements in this lesson that you may use in a TBL approach?

Write your views in the text box below.

Question 3.2

Think of what you have learnt so far, go through the following 4 sample pedagogical activities and decide if they are: a) Not TBL tasks (no communication, no real life); b) Traditional TBL tasks (real-life outcome, focus on meaning and on NS norms); c) ELF aware TBL tasks (real-life outcome, focus on meaning and on interaction with NNS).

Put a tick in the appropriate option and explain what made you provide your answer.

	Not TBL task	Traditional TBL task	ELF-aware TBL task
Sample 1: Read the conversation between a bus driver and a tourist, then rehearse the same conversation with your partner.			
Sample 2: A partner class from another country will visit yours; together with a school-mate prepare an interview to be carried out on Skype with the visiting students. You want to find out more about their habits, preferences etc.			
Sample 3: Listen to a telephone conversation between a client and a clerk in a Lost & Found office. Complete the dialogue script filling in the blanks with verbs and politeness formulas.			
Sample 4: Try to find out three things that your grandparents' and your partner's grandparents' lives had in common. What was the biggest difference between them?			

Write your views in the text box below.

Activity 3: Challenges in ELF-aware teaching (a)

Think of your own experience as a former English learner and now, as an EL teacher and respond to the following 2 questions:

- WHAT does teaching such an 'unstable' language might imply for an EL teacher?
- HOW does learning English now occur among our learners?
- WHAT & HOW can an English teacher sustain learning in an ELF aware perspective?

Write your views in the text box below.

Activity 4: Integrating tasks in an ELF-aware approach

Based on your own knowledge and experience as a teacher, as well as what has been discussed in this and other sections you have gone through:

- To what extent is integrating TBL from an ELF-aware perspective appropriate in your own teaching context? Why?
- If it is appropriate, what kind of ELF-aware tasks could you employ? Provide one or two brief examples.

Write your views in the text box below.