

Task-based learning for ‘International Awareness’

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Summary:

The United Nation's UNESCO has set the ten-year goal (2005-2015) for education to be the 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development'. Within Japan, there has been a coinciding boom in 'Education for Development' (開発教育), employing participatory workshop style classroom procedures that often utilize teaching materials developed by NGO volunteer groups, or ODA aid organizations. The procedures employed are remarkably similar to, and can be easily adapted to 'Task-based Learning' for the language classroom as popularized by the likes of Peter Skehan, Rod Ellis, and Jane Willis. This workshop will present some simple tasks that could easily be used in a typical 'International Awareness', or 'Global Studies' course offered by the English department of a high school or university.

What is Task-based Learning (TBL)?

It is post (anti) PPP framework of procedures for a language lesson developed by authors/researchers in the area of TEFL/TESL.

What is PPP?

Presentation

'Okay, everybody look at this dialogue. Do you have any questions? I will explain the phrases for you.'

Practice

'Now, practice this dialogue in pairs, matching what you say to the pictures. Now you have memorized all the phrases and can manipulate them.'

Production

'Right. Now go around the class and ask people questions like in the dialogue. You don't have to say it exactly like the dialogue.'

What's wrong with PPP?

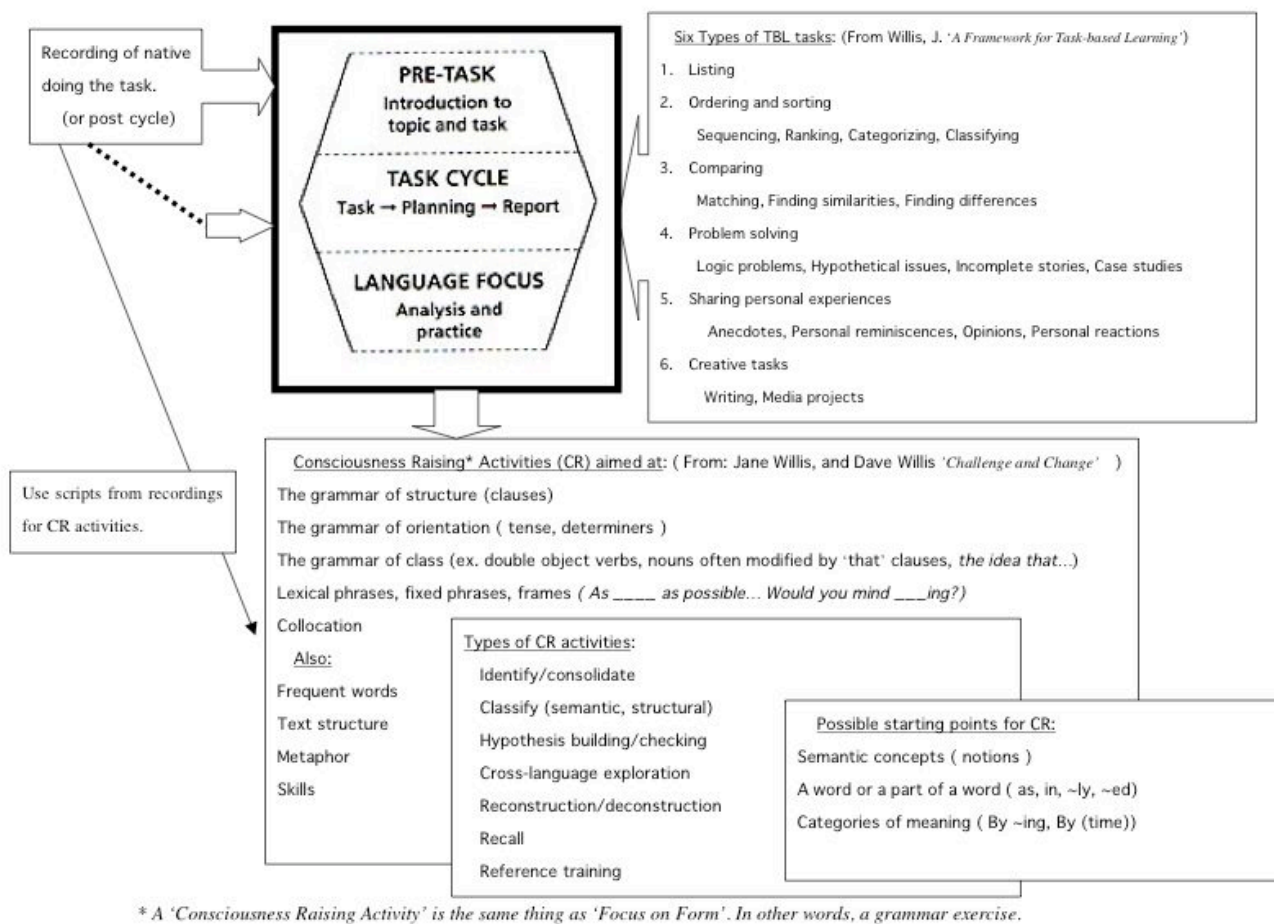
Beyond that class, when speaking spontaneously, learners don't end up using the things they learned. Research in the area of second language acquisition (SLA) proves this. We force-fed them a solution to a problem they didn't *really* have. By presenting a target at the beginning and limiting the focus, we also usurped chances for learning other language features that would naturally come up in such a context. Every learner's language is different, so we cannot predict what they, (the chances) would be. Rats in laboratory experiments may be able to pick up a behavior through positive or negative 'reinforcement', but human language acquisition does not appear to work in this 'behaviorist' fashion.

So, what's so different about Task-based Learning?

(See figure 1 below)

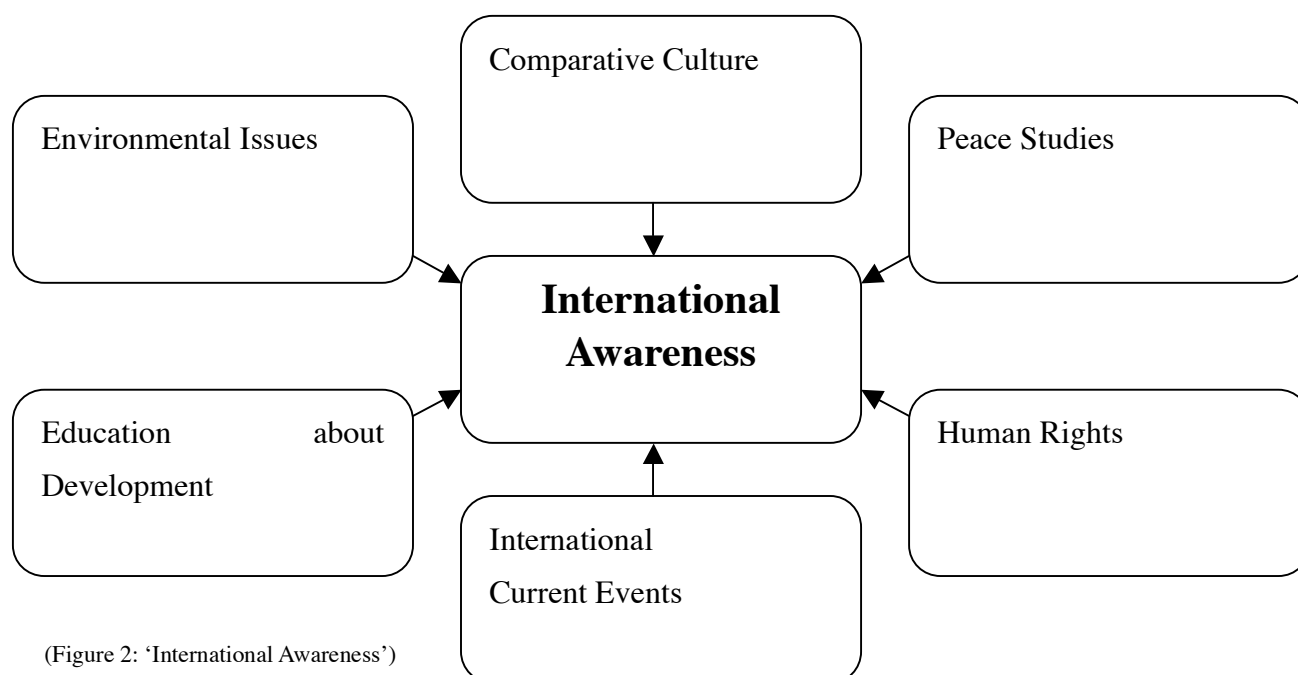
- 1) Language is not specified for the initial task. It consists of *free production*.
- 2) Any language focus happens after the task (and reporting) stage.
- 3) The learners are not expected to immediately produce the target of the language focus.
- 4) By using recordings of natives doing the task, the whole text can be examined by the learner, thus increasing the chance of something relevant to a particular learner being noticed.
- 5) By having a distinct 'task', and then 'report' phase within the task cycle, chances for both spontaneous and planned language production are provided.

** With free production at the beginning, and a language focus at the end, TBL could almost be described as PPP upside-down!*



(Figure 1: A framework for Task-based Learning.)

What is 'International Awareness'



(Figure 2: 'International Awareness')

As can be seen from the figure 2 above, ‘International Awareness’ can denote a great many things. In schools in Japan, it can be the realm of both the social studies department and the English department, the former typically aiming at environmental issues, or on a broader scale, an understanding of the sorts of issues the United Nations deals with, and the latter quite often focusing on cross-cultural themes from more of an individual’s point of view. Cross-cultural themes can be found within many popular ELT textbooks and more recently books like ‘*J-Talk*’, are devoted solely to such a focus. As teachers of English, we are sometimes asked to instruct a course with a title such as ‘International Awareness’ and, in addition to the cross-cultural themes we are used to dealing with, there exists a recent trend in education that can lend itself to our purposes.

What is ‘Education for Development’ (開発教育)?

NGO volunteer groups and ODA organizations have popularized the use of participatory workshops to raise an awareness of the sorts of global issues they deal with. They often give seminars aimed at teachers (more often from the social studies department), with the hope that the teachers will then adopt the procedures at their school. The term ‘Education for Development’ (開発教育) is used to describe these types of classes and activities. Often an NGO will offer conveniently prepared teaching materials at an ever-so-slightly high price, and buying these can serve as a way of donating to them, but the procedures themselves often can be traced to a few key publications and authors. As we will see the procedures are incredibly similar to the *task cycle* (see fig. 1) of TBL. By adding a language focus and choosing tasks that are do-able in a foreign language, we can adapt many of the materials found in these publications to our purposes. After we have done this a few times, I’d venture to say that we could start making our own tasks around any issue or topic we deemed within the realm of ‘International Awareness’.

Uhhh, which books and authors?

‘*Participatory Workshops*’ by Robert Chambers has a plethora of advice for creating the ‘workshop’ feel as well as specific ideas for organizing group-work, fun games and the like. There is also a version of this book translated into Japanese.

Graham Pike & David Selby’s book ‘*Global Teacher, Global Learner*’ as well as the newer ‘*In the Global Classroom*’ series consist of an assemblage of classroom procedures developed by teachers involved in teacher-training projects such as the World Studies Teacher Training Project funded by large NGOs such as OXFAM. Some of the themes in the books are rather abstract but one in particular; ‘interconnectedness’

hit the mark in the classroom tasks at the end of this paper. The name ‘Selby’ is considered core in this field of education.

Although in Japanese, ‘新しい開発教育のすすめ方’ (古今書院) has many out-of-box tasks that can be used right way. Some of the ones described at the end of this paper are from this book.

Also, searches on the Internet can easily locate many downloadable ready-made teaching materials from government ODA organizations such as JICA, or large NGOs such as Christian Aid, MSF (Doctors Without Borders) or Amnesty International.

The Tasks.

1) ‘Webbing’: the interconnectedness of world problems.

Procedures:

A) Pass out the list of vocabulary words with Japanese equivalents. Have students pronounce them with you.

B) Demonstrate ‘webbing’ by connecting 4 problems on the board. (See the sheet below) As you connect the problems, talk as if you were 2 people encouraging the student to notice the language you use. Repeat the following phrases many times as you demonstrate. This models them doing the task. However, if you write the phrases out on the board, you run into the danger of having the students merely parroting the dialogue as they do the task, which wouldn’t be TBL so much.

Do you think (~) is related to (~)

Yes/ I agree. / I don’t think so. / Not really.

Let’s connect them.

O.K., Next. It’s your turn.

C) Pass out the sheet with the problems in boxes, scissors, glue, and construction paper. Let the students do the task in groups.

D) After they have finished have each group display their finished web and make a presentation about their impression of the activity and the web they made. Give them time to prepare for the presentation. With classes at a lower level you may want to use the sheet below to give them an easy to follow framework, but it would probably be more interesting if you let them do it without giving them the sheet.

E) An example of the final grammar focus for this activity is on the bottom of the sheet with the framework for the presentation. However, since we did not use a recording of natives doing the task to introduce the task, it’s different from what was suggested in fig. 1

(Materials for “Webbing”: the interconnectedness of world problems.)

List of problems facing the world
(for webbing activity)

Poverty 貧困
Child labor 児童労働
Illiteracy 非識字
Population growth 人口増加
Deforestation 森林伐採
Desertification 砂漠化
Food shortages 食糧問題
Environmental destruction 環境破壊
Loss of biodiversity 生物多様性減少
Economic inequality 経済格差
Oppression 被抑圧感
Terrorism テロ
Aggression 対立
Conflict 紛争
Refugees 難民
Migration 人の移動
Illegal immigration 不法入国
Consumption of energy resources エネルギーの消費
Discrimination 差別・偏見
Human rights violations 人権侵害
Political and cultural oppression 政治・文化的抑圧
Mass consumption 大量消費
Pursuit of comfort and convenience 快適性・利便性追求
Unfair trading 不公正な貿易
Human trafficking 人身売買
HIV/Aids HIV/エイズ

(for demonstration of webbing activity)

Population growth

Consumption of energy resources

Mass consumption

Environmental destruction

Problems facing the world (webbing activity) II

Small Presentation

1) Translate the following words into Japanese:

because:

cause:

however:

in order to:

2) Make a small presentation like this:

I think the most important problem facing the world is (a) because (a) causes [(b), (c), and (d)].

However, $[(e), (f), \text{ and } (g)]$ cause (a) so we must solve those problems in order to solve (a).

Problems facing the world: Small Presentation 9/3-9/5

Name _____ Student/Class number _____

'Because..' vs. 'That's why..'

日本語でもこの二つは似ている。どう訳しますか？ 下の例を見て考えましょう。

a) Many people in the world are oppressed. That's why there is terrorism.

b) There is terrorism because there are many people in the world that are oppressed.

c) There are many conflicts in Africa. That's why there are so many refugees.

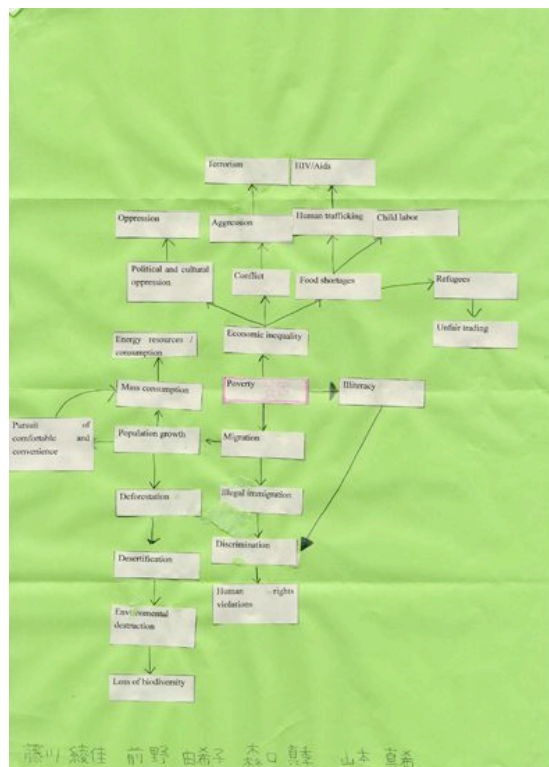
d) There are many refugees in Africa because there are conflicts in many countries.

日本語訳：

Because:

That's why:

この二つについて、なにか使い分けのルールを考えられますか？



2) Ranking the ‘core-ness’ of the world problems.

Procedures

- A) Explain that the purpose of the task is to find out which problems are core. Use all the alternative words you can think of like *central*, *main*, *big*, etc, to make sure to get this point across. They will also need the vocabulary sheet from the first activity (above).
- B) Write the 4 problems on the back of the sheet (see below, ‘A’) on the board and direct the students to the back of the sheet. Demonstrate the task (A) by asking the class ‘Does (~) cause (~)?’ for each problem and take a vote to determine whether an arrow should be drawn or not.
- C) After all the arrows are drawn, add them up and come up with a score for each problem. For example ‘poverty’ was probably seen to have caused all 3 of the other problems so it would get a 3, where ‘child labor’ probably only got a 1 (causing poverty).
- D) On the board, list the ranking of the problems. It probably looks something like this:

3	Poverty
2	Conflict
2	Refugees
1	Child labor

- E) Explain that by ‘core-ness’, it is meant that the problems at the top of the list cause the problems at the bottom. In order to defeat the problems at the bottom, we first must deal with those at the top. An interesting thing to point out would be that making a law against ‘child labor’ is meaningless without also combating the ‘poverty’ that causes it.
- F) Go through the ‘Task Cycle’ (see fig. 1), i.e. have groups do the task, prepare, and then give a presentation.
- G) If you have a recording of natives doing the task, use it for a language focus activity. An easy example is provided in C of the sheet (below).

Note: With time constraints, it may be difficult for all groups to complete the task in its entirety.

(Materials from 2: “Ranking the ‘core-ness’ of the world problems.”)

Group activity: Which problems are most ‘core’?

*Use arrows! →

Name: _____

Mass consumption

Poverty

Unfair trading

Illiteracy

Food shortages

Conflict

Human rights violations

Terrorism

Economic inequality

HIV/Aids

Oppression

Environmental destruction

Refugees

Child labor

Webbing Activity 2: Core problems

(A) Listen to Mr. Walsh and draw the connections.

Child labor

Conflict

Poverty

Refugees

(B) In your group, find the connections.
Take turns asking questions.
Use only English.

According to your group, what were the 6 most ‘core’ problems?

(C) Fill in the blanks from the recording:

a) OK, child labor. Do you think child labor is () to poverty?

b) Yes, I think it is.

a) You ()?

b) Yes, I’m sure.

a) Why?

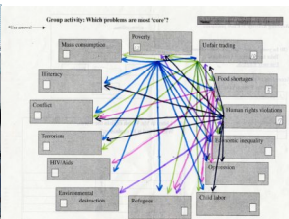
b) Because if children are required to work that () that people are ().

a) OK. How about child labor and refugees. Is child labor connected to refugees?

Do..Does child labor () refugees?

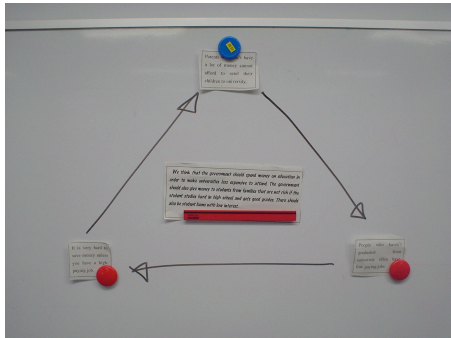
b) Refugees...ummm...I don’t think so. No.

a) Ok, I ().

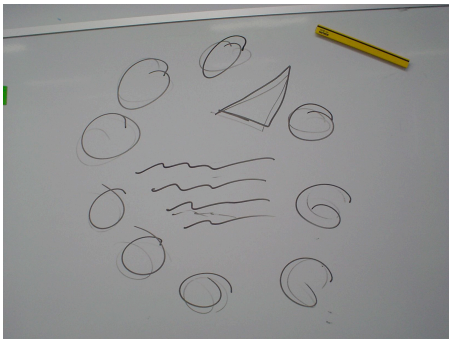


3) 'The Ring of Poverty.'

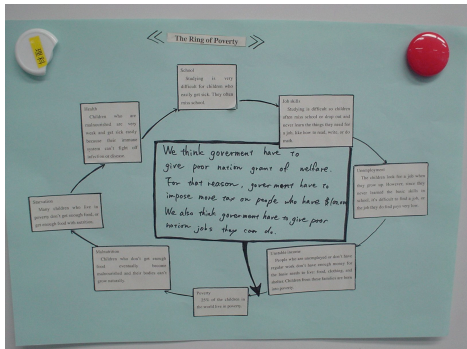
For sake of brevity, please allow me to show how this task works though pictures. The materials will follow.



The instructor demonstrates the idea of 'a vicious circle' of social problems, creating a loop. The text in the middle is a model of what the student's demonstrations will look like.



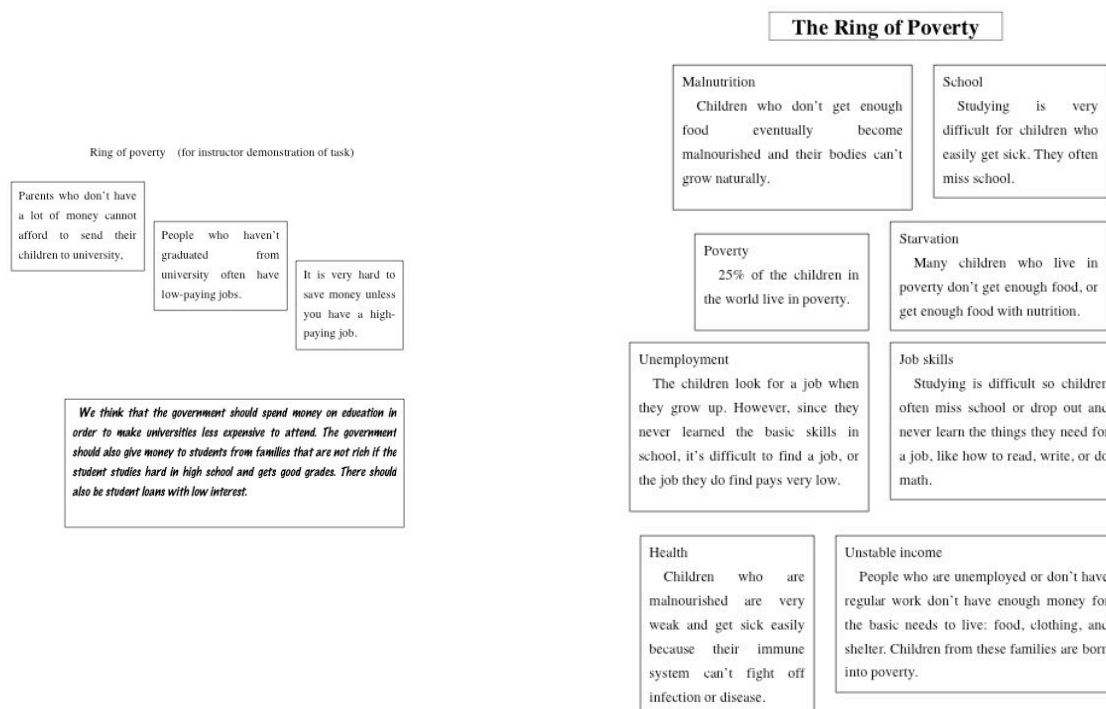
The instructor illustrates that the task is to arrange the cards (below) in the correct order and then come up with a solution to 'break the chain' in a specific spot.



Students complete the task-cycle, giving their presentations at the end.

The language focus for this activity could be from the instructor's original presentation, or the student's texts.

(Materials from 3 “The Ring of Poverty”)



Thank you very much for coming to see my presentation. I would be happy to send you any of the files from these lessons if you contact me by email at:

mattandyukari@hotmail.com

I'd also be honored if you took a look at my website at:

http://www.geocities.jp/walsh_sensei/index.html

which is easier to find by googling 'walsh EFL'.