Task-Based Language Teaching in a Japanese Context

Keynote Speakers: Rod Ellis & Natsuko Shintani

The University of Kitakyushu
14 December 2013

This one-day conference at the University of Kitakyushu is for English teachers in the local area, future English teachers in training, and anyone else interested in language teaching. The keynote talk will provide an introduction to what tasks are, how they can be used in teaching, and how teachers know if they work. Specific presentations will then address how input tasks can be used to improve learning with beginning level Japanese students, how simple speaking tasks can be created which push students to use more advanced language, and how grammar instruction might be improved by supporting it with tasks. The event will include a reception to allow participants to socialize as well as a final panel discussion in which participants can ask questions and talk about any problems they have in using tasks with Japanese students.

Free!
Please Register Early
Limited Seating is Available
Schedule of Events

1. 10:30-12:00: Rod Ellis, University of Auckland, New Zealand
   Using Tasks in Task-Based and Task-Supported Language Teaching

2. 12:10-13:00: Craig Lambert, University of Kitakyushu, Japan
   Using Task-Based Teaching to Advance Language Use

3. 13:00-14:00: Reception (Lunch Break)

4. 14:00-14:50: Colin Thompson, University of Central Lancashire, UK
   Using Task-Supported Teaching to Improve Grammar Instruction

5. 15:00-16:30: Natsuko Shintani, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
   Using Tasks with Beginning Level Japanese Learners

6. 16:30-17:00: Panel Discussion
   Participants will have a chance to raise questions and concerns about using
   tasks in Japanese schools generally, as well as in situations that they face in
   their own schools and their own classes.
ABSTRACTS

Rod Ellis, Using Tasks in Task-Based and Task-Supported Language Teaching

In the first part of my talk, I will define what a task is and illustrate how tasks differ from exercises. In the second part, I provide a classification of tasks with examples to illustrate different task characteristics and also suggest which types of tasks are best suited to different groups of learners. The third part will then consider how tasks can be incorporated into language lessons in terms of task-supported and task-based language teaching, the rationale for these two ways of using tasks, and the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. The final part of the talk will then consider how teachers can tell if a task has worked. This involves defining what is meant by ‘worked’ and then evaluating whether a task has achieved what it was designed to achieve. The talk will conclude with an example of how a teacher set about evaluating a task.

Rod Ellis is currently a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics, University of Auckland. He is also a professor at Anaheim University and a visiting professor at Shanghai International Studies University as part of China’s Chang Jiang Scholars Program. His published work includes articles and books on second language acquisition, language teaching and teacher education. His latest is book is ‘Exploring Language Pedagogy and Second Language Acquisition Research’ (Routledge). He has also published several English language textbooks, including ‘Impact Grammar’ (Pearson Longman).

Craig Lambert, Using Task-Based Teaching to Advance Language Use

The first part of the talk will discuss one way in which teachers might manipulate the demands of simple description tasks to push the development of noun phrase syntax. The second part of the talk will then consider the speech of one Japanese learner in completing different levels of the task in order to concretely illustrate the target language processes involved. Finally, the results of a study will be summarized in which 54 native and Japanese English speakers’ described three items at three levels of difficulty and the effect that both task demands and proficiency level had on noun phrase complexity as well as on related syntactic forms which have been shown to represent late-emerging aspects of the language system. The talk will provide useful examples of how teachers can use the ideas to create simple description tasks for their own classes.

Craig Lambert is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Kitakyushu University. His seminar is on task-based language teaching, and he teaches in the secondary English teacher certification program. His previous published research has focused on needs analysis in Japan, task motivation, the effects of interactive task design factors on the speech of Japanese learners, and classroom-based research on the implementation of task-based learning in Japan.
Colin Thompson, Using Task-Supported Teaching to Improve Grammar Instruction

In this talk, I will discuss the effects of providing Japanese learners with guided and unguided planning time before completing story-telling tasks that target the use of relative clauses over a seven week period. In Week 1, two groups of intermediate-level Japanese students were pre-tested to ensure that they were equal with respect to their knowledge of relative clauses with a grammatical judgment test, as well as their ability to use it during task performance. In Week 2, they were introduced to subject and direct object relative clauses through explicit instruction. Both groups then completed a different version of the task each week over a three-week period. They were initially given 10 minutes to plan before completing the task, but this time was reduced each week. However, Group 1 was told to use this time to plan specifically for using relative clause structures while completing the task (guided planning), and Group 2 was simply told to use this time to prepare their performance (unguided planning). Post-tests in Week 5 showed that both groups improved in fluency and in their accuracy in using relative clauses, but the guided planning group produced more relative clauses than the unguided group. Furthermore, delayed post-tests three weeks after the course of instruction showed that these gains in fluency and accuracy remained stable. Both groups also improved in their knowledge of relative clauses on grammatical judgment post-tests. The talk will provide ideas for improving grammar instruction in Japanese schools by supporting it with tasks.

Colin Thompson is a PhD student at the University of Central Lancashire, UK and an English teacher at Shimonoseki City University. He is the editor of the Japan Association for Language Teaching Task-Based Learning SIG Journal. His research interests are task-based learning and cognitive development.

Natsuko Shintani, Using Tasks with Beginning Level Japanese Learners

In this talk I will document my attempt to introduce a task-based approach with young Japanese learners of English. I first describe the input-based tasks I developed and then report on how I implemented them with the six-year old children, who had no prior knowledge of English. I then focus on the interactions that arose during the repeated performance of the same tasks by considering (1) the learners’ voluntary production and (2) their comprehension of the teacher’s input. I will discuss a number of general principles arising out of my study that could be useful in guiding teachers when implementing input-based tasks with young beginner learners. I conclude my talk by considering a number of potential problems that teachers may face when implementing TBLT in a school context in Japan.

Natsuko Shintani is an Assistant Professor at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She has worked as a language teacher in Japan and New Zealand, including in her own private language school for children. Her research interests are task-based language teaching, the role of interaction in second language acquisition, corrective feedback and meta-analysis as a research tool.
Registration

The conference is provided free of charge, but we request that you pre-register so that we can plan and prepare handouts and materials in appropriate numbers. To register for the conference, simply send an e-mail with: (1) your name, (2) your school or affiliation (if applicable), (3) your e-mail address, and (4) a telephone number that we can use to contact you in the rare event of changes in the schedule. If you are coming together with others, please indicate the number and names of the additional people in your group.

To register, please contact the English Department Office: eisen@kitakyu-u.ac.jp
For other inquiries, please contact Craig Lambert: lambert@kitakyu-u.ac.jp

Access

From Kokura Station: Take the monorail to Keibajou-mae Station (7th Stop, 10 minutes).

Parking

No parking space is available on the campus. An adjacent parking lot for JRA Kokura Race Course is open to the public.