Task-Based Educational Approaches
ABSTRACT

Recent researches in ELT have focused their attention on the content or "what" to teach rather than the method or "how" to teach. Actual classroom experiences have not been given the necessary attention that they should have, yet the classroom is the appropriate laboratory for language theories, language content and methodologies to take place and be tested.

This paper which is anchored on the strong version of the communicative competence, has for its primary objective to describe and share with language teachers and other language practitioners a classroom experience on task-based teaching and learning in difficult circumstances. These difficult circumstances include factors such as limited and reduced domain for using English, large class size, low student motivation, heavy workload, and inadequate teaching materials and facilities.

The particular focus of this paper is upon those aspects in the task-based approach that have implications to language learning, specifically, the ways by which learners may achieve lesson objectives and those that could serve as practical guides for language teachers on how to initiate, operationalize and evaluate task-based activities in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is twofold: to describe and share with language teachers and other language practitioners a classroom experience on task-based teaching and learning in difficult circumstances and to draw out from this experience those aspects in the task-based approach that have implications to language learning, specifically, the
ways by which learners may achieve lesson objectives. Also, this paper will focus on those aspects in the classroom experience that could serve as practical guide in initiating, operationalizing, and evaluating task-based activities in a language classroom. The task-based approach as used in this paper refers to tasks and activities in a lesson as means or bases for realizing routes to language learning.

In the last 15 years or so, researchers have focused their attention in investigating intensively (Coleman in Candlin and Murphy, 1987), the nature of language. Part of the intensive effort is the considerable attention given to the matter of content or the syllabus content and because of the attention given the "what" it has naturally lessened the attention paid to another equally important aspect of language learning -the methodology or "how" that actually takes place in a language classroom. It is in the language classroom where a language teacher applies, tests, revises, challenges and actualizes language and language learning theories, syllabus content and language teaching approaches and methodologies.

This paper subscribes to the strong version of the communicative approach to language teaching which is "... concerned with enabling learners to do their learning by using the language "(Coleman in Candlin and Murphy, 1987 p. 121) and "... if management activities are directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communication problems in the target language, then language learning will take care of itself "(Allwright in Candlin and Murphy, 1987 p. 121).

The strong version of the communicative approach subscribed to in this paper could be effectively realized through task-based language teaching and learning and also as an effective alternative to the traditional grammar-based approach in language classrooms.

KLT in Difficult Circumstances - The Philippine Context

The expression difficult circumstances is borrowed from Michael West’s (1960) and from the theme of a series of seminar-workshops given to language teachers in some regions of the Philippines as part of the training and enrichment programs in
In the Philippines, language teachers have reasons to look for alternatives to the traditional classroom approach due to some difficult circumstances they find themselves in. These difficult circumstances include factors such as the constriction of the domain of English, the demands of the Bilingual Policy of Education of 1987, and the conditions of the teachers and the classrooms among which are heavy workload, large class size, low student motivation, and inadequate instructional materials and facilities (Luzares, 1988).

The Constriction of the Domain of English

In the Philippines, English and Filipino over the years have been the media of instruction in schools with English having an upperhand over Filipino. However, in the last 15 years or so, the domain of English has constricted and shrunk considerably. Before 1974 and some years later, English occupied a venerable position in the social, economic, and political life of the Filipinos. English was the language of the elite and the educated. It was the prestige language and the language of upward economic and professional mobility (Sinha and Sadorra, 1991). But with the implementation of the Bilingual Policy, No. 25, S. 1974 (BEP 1974), which allocates English and Filipinos as the media of instruction for specific courses in the curriculum, the domain of English has been consequently reduced. However, this language policy has paved the way for Filipino, the national language to be developed and enhanced, to be given the much needed attention and the massive support that it should have from both the government and the private sectors. In addition, it has also provided the opportunity for Filipinos to be more widely accepted than ever before, thus giving for Filipino an upper hand this time over English. The BEP of 1974 therefore, reduced the time devoted for learning English in school, and there is no "massive external support in those activities of the communications media which are directed at the great majority of the population "(Benton, in Bautista, 1988). It is in this context that English teaching and learning is now relegated to second class status in Philippine schools and with the way things are going at present, English may become an endangered species among the many Philippine languages. It is in this regard that vigorous and concerted effort should be exerted and
directed at making the learning of English in schools be effective and efficient.

The Demands of BKP 1987

However, despite the limited time allotted for English learning after 1974, a later language policy known as BKP 1987 and as mandated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, has recognized and accepted the significant role that English still plays in the lives of Filipinos. The BKP of 1987 demands "...an enhanced learning in two languages to achieve quality education..." and "...the maintenance of English as an international language for the Philippines and as a non-exclusive language for science and technology".

These significant provisions in the policy force us to confront the problem of the kind of English that will best prepare Filipino learners of English for their academic and professional life. Since the policy requires Filipinos to use English in their involvement and participation in world affairs and activities, and in being able to access to science and technology, then the kind of English program that schools should provide should reflect the present Philippine realities. Some of these realities are letters of application are expected to be written in English, job interviews for higher and financially rewarding positions are conducted in English, formal business meetings and presentations are conducted in English, court rulings and decisions are written in English, students need to read materials in science in English, and a big percentage of Philippine mass media use English as medium. These are just some of the instances that show the significant role that English plays in the Philippines; hence the need for our English curriculum to address this problem of how English learning can be taught in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The Conditions of the Teachers and the Classroom

Most teachers in the country are faced with circumstances that are difficult. These difficult circumstances are heavy workload, large class size, low student motivation, and inadequate teaching materials and facilities.
Heavy workload - Teachers in addition to actual classroom teaching do other various related or unrelated activities both in and outside of the school. Among these activities, are checking and marking numerous students' papers, attending meetings, seminars and training programs, participating in socio-civic and political affairs of the community writing reports and various other tasks that put additional burden to classroom work.

Large Class Size - Normally a language class on the average has 35 to 50 students. A large class will mean drastic reduction in the opportunity for students to use the target language in the classroom. In addition, large class size means additional workload for teachers in terms of the volume of papers to check, more students to pay attention to, etc.; thus creating a chain reaction in all tasks and activities in the classroom. Class size therefore has significant implications on the methodology, evaluation, and the over-all effectiveness of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Low motivation among students - This is another difficult circumstance that can either challenge or discourage a teacher. Since motivation plays a significant role in learning and teaching, a language teacher is constantly challenged to find creative and meaningful activities and tasks that will motivate students to be interested and get actively involved in what is going on in their classes.

Inadequate instructional materials and facilities - Lack or inadequate instructional materials will hamper effective classroom teaching and learning. The significance then of adequate and good instructional materials in language classes can not be overemphasized.

The above factors certainly are difficult situations that language teachers find themselves in. These factors confront them everyday and therefore there is really need for language teachers to find alternative ways to make classroom teaching interesting, purposive and fulfilling in addition to being motivating and challenging to students. An alternative way that can be done by teachers in difficult circumstances is to use the task-based approach in their language classes.
Task-Based Language Teaching

Candlin and Murphy defined task-based teaching as "problem-solving negotiations between knowledge that a learner holds and new knowledge. The new knowledge is conducted though language in use..." (1987, p.1). This means that a learner is exposed to a given situation where he has to solve problems or make decisions based on his schemata of the world, that is, knowledge that he possesses and new knowledge presented to him through actual use of language whether oral or written.

Task-based teaching materials provide students with situations where they are given specific roles to play. The role requires students to negotiate or solve a problem in order to accomplish the task they are required to do. In the real world, we are always confronted with problems to solve, decisions to make or negotiations to handle. Task-based teaching materials simulate what the outside world does inside the classroom. Presenting "reality" in the classroom can challenge and motivate both students and teachers in creating a rewarding, interesting, meaningful and enjoyable classroom partnership. And since task-based materials involve decision making and problem solving activities and tasks which are conducted through language use, then students are given more chances to put language to practice. With the limited time allotted for English, in our curriculum, every opportunity for using language is maximized. With task-based teaching materials, students will have more chances to use language whether in oral or written forms in every class meeting despite the large class.

The Task-Based Language Teaching Material

Before I present the lesson, let me give you this word of warning. I would like to point out that the lesson to follow does not describe the content of the entire teaching material. Instead, I will show the procedure or process where interactive tasks occurred in the lesson. Also, along the way I will describe the important aspects related to the purpose of this paper. Unfortunately, much as I would like to give the complete details of how the lesson was actualized, no matter how interesting and exciting, I cannot because the interactive details would make the
data unwieldy to handle and they can not be always captured completely in writing in a straightforward manner.

This task-based teaching material was designed for college students taking Business English and was intended for three class meetings of one and a half hours each session.

The lesson is about the plans or proposals for the future development of Pala-Pala, an island in the Pacific, to make it into the 'best of all possible world'.

This is how the lesson was initiated.

Session 1

A. Preparation Stage (10 minutes)

1. The class was divided into 7 groups with 5 members each and the chairs were also grouped into 7 groups.

2. One member from each group was asked to pick out from a box a piece of paper containing the name of the committee assigned to the group. Then the group's name was written on a bigger piece of paper and tucked at the back of a chair for the class to see.

3. The class was briefed about the activity to be done in terms of
   a. roles  c. hand-outs
   b. expected outputs  d. procedure

B. Lesson Proper

The situation was introduced by telling the students the purpose of the activity and by showing them the map of Pala-Pala. Then Hand-out No.1 was given. This is Hand-out No. 1.
The Situation

Pala-Pala, a peaceful tropical island state lies in the center of the Pacific Island. The island has three main towns: Mapayapa, the capital, Malambing and Mahusay. Its climate is generally pleasant throughout the year except in January until early March, the wet months, when strong typhoons usually visit the island. Pala-Pala has an area of 30 square kilometers. A hydro-electric power plant generated from a big water fall found in Malambing provides the island with electricity. The island has 200,000 inhabitants who live in small villages that are scattered over the island; majority of them live in Mapayapa. Fishing and agriculture and a little tourism are the sources of income for the inhabitants. Two years ago, oil was discovered off the west coast of the island thus providing Pala-Pala more than its needed revenues and making it one of the richest island states in the Pacific. At present, the government wants to make Pala-Pala the "best of all possible world". So the governor of the island created seven committees that were tasked to plan, discuss and present a five year development plan for the island's future. These committees are Buildings, Transportation, Commerce and Industry, Parks and Recreational Facilities, Sanitation and Waste Disposal System, Water System, and Communication.

After the students had read and understood the situation, Hand-out No. 2 was given. This is Hand-out No.2.
Hand-out No. 2

Procedure

(You are given 10 minutes to do this activity)

As a group

1. You should know what your committee is and the other committees for this activity.
2. You will decide on who the following will be
   a. Chairperson - leads the discussion, coordinates with other committees, oversees the tasks required for the group to do, presents the committee's plans to the governor
   b. Reader- gets the role cards and hand-outs for the group, reads orally to the group data contained in the cards and hand-outs, helps the researchers in collecting data, helps the secretary prepare the written report
   c. Researchers - gather data from other committees, present gathered data to the group, prepare visual aids for oral presentation
   d. Secretary - takes down discussions and plans of the group, writes group's written report

3. Understand what your group is required to do.
4. Use English in all your discussions.
5. You can consult with the other committees after you have discussed your plans with your co-members.
6. As you discuss your plans
   a. consider the existing conditions of the island
   b. list all your plans and make them as concrete as possible (Ex. construction of a children's park with a zoo at Malambing)
7. Formulate your objectives using to + v (present form of the verb), e.g., to construct
8. You are expected to a) present your plans orally to the governor and to the other committees and b) submit a written report of your proposal following the guidelines for the written report.

9. Every member should help the chairperson in answering the questions asked in the oral presentation.

10. You can consult your teacher about some problems/questions that may occur during the discussions.

11. Keep all the hand-outs and role cards given for this activity. You will be referring to them from time to time.

12. After reading this hand-out and doing No. 2, ask for Card No. 2.

Hand-out No.2 is the "lecture" hand-out. It contains all the necessary information and the expected tasks for the problem solving activity. After this hand-out role card 1 was given. This is Card No. 1

Card No. 1

Your committee is composed of two engineers, an architect, an environmental planner, and a businessman. You are specialists in your field. The Governor has chosen you to be members of the Parks and Recreational Facilities Committee.

1. Decide who will be the engineers, the architect, the environmental planner and the businessman in the group. Your role is important in planning the projects for parks and recreational facilities of the island.
2. After knowing your specific roles in this activity, ask for Card 2.

This card gives the members their individual roles to play in addition to the specific job description they are to perform for the group. The contents of all Role Cards 1 are the same for all groups except for the names of the committee and the professions /specialization of the members of the group. As soon as the groups receive their role cards, they start doing the task indicated in the cards. This is Card No. 2

Card No. 2

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

At present there are no public parks and recreational facilities existing in the island.

You are to come up with a 5-year development plan for the island’s parks and recreational facilities and present this orally to the governor and the other committees. Money is not a problem.

1. You are to brainstorm on your ideas about parks and recreational facilities.

2. Refer to the map and consider the existing conditions of the island. Also consider the island’s climate, location, etc.

3. You can refer back to Hand-out No. 2 for some guidelines.

4. You are given 30 minutes for this preliminary brainstorming.

5. After 30 minutes, ask for Card No. 3.

The content of Card No. 3 varies according to committees but the expected task is the same for all the seven groups.
At this stage the teacher goes around to monitor if the groups are doing the tasks specified in their role cards. Also at this stage, the students are involved in intense discussion with co members of the group. After the allotted time, a new role card is given. This is Card No. 3.

Card No. 3

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

You have by now some ideas about your plans for the island’s parks and recreational facilities but you need some more data to make your plans more definite, relevant and beneficial to the people of the island. To help you with additional information

1. consult with the other committees about the existing conditions of the island in terms of their assigned aspects in the island’s development

2. All committee members should gather data from the other groups, except the secretary, and report their findings to their group mates.

3. The secretary should provide the other groups with information about parks and recreational facilities of the island. Refer to Role Card No.2.

4. The researchers will get their needed data from the secretary of the different committees while the chairperson and the reader will consult the other chairpersons about their preliminary plans for the development of the island. The consultation with the other chairpersons is important in order to avoid duplication or overlapping of structures that will be built in the same area in the island.
5. Card No. 4 will be given after you (all members) have gone back to your group.

6. You have 15 minutes to do this activity.

The class is expected to be noisier this time when the students go around to consult with the other committees.

After the students have gone back to their respective committees, Card No. 4 is given.

Card No. 4

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

1. You are to report orally to your group the data you have gathered from the other committees.

2. Continue discussing your plans and consider the new data gathered.

3. For the Secretary - List all the plans discussed for this meeting and provide your teacher a copy of this list. Follow this format in preparing this list:

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities
Tentative Plans for the Development of Pala-Pala
1. (Ex. Construction of a Children's Park in Malambing)
2. ____________________
3. ____________________

Members
(Names)
1. ____________________
2. ____________________

Job Description
(Ex. Secretary)

4. For the Reader - Read the Tentative Plans to the group then ask for Card No. 5.
The reporting of what the different members have gathered from the other committees will create another round for exchanging ideas and information among the members. The new data may cause revisions, changes or modifications in the previously discussed plans. It is at this stage where decisions have to be made by the group members.

When this activity was done, Card No.5 was given.

Card No. 5

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

You have by now some definite plans for your proposal. However, you have gathered your data only from the information provided by the other committees. You need to consult other sources of information to give you a broader understanding of the importance of parks and recreational facilities to the people of Pala-Pala and the probable type of structures and parks to be constructed in the island. So, your assignment for the next meeting

1. Read reference materials such as books, journals, magazines, etc. in the library on parks and recreational facilities.

3. Bring to class pictures of parks and recreational facilities.

4. You may interview some persons you know whose line of specialization is on parks and recreational facilities.

5. Observe existing parks and recreational facilities in your community.

6. Be prepared to present the ideas you have gathered from the above sources with the other members of your committee.

7. This is your last card for the day.
the Reader in each group is asked to read the Tentative Plans discussed by the group in the previous meeting. After this recall, Card No. 6 is given.

Card No. 6

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

You have just heard the plans you discussed in the previous meeting. Since you consulted other references you may have other new ideas to add or modify your tentative plans.

1. Bring out some pictures and some reference materials you have brought to the class.
2. Present your new ideas to the group.
3. Continue your discussion about your plans but this time make your plans definite and specific. You have to decide now which plans are to be included in the proposal you are presenting to the Governor.
4. List the plans you have decided on and discuss their advantages and disadvantages to the inhabitants of Pala-Pala.
5. Decide and agree on the specific places where your planned projects will be constructed. Consult the map and your data on the existing conditions of the island.
6. Consult or negotiate again with the other committees the specific places or areas in the island where your planned projects will be constructed.
7. Finalize the plans/projects that will be included in the oral presentation.
8. Formulate the objectives of your committee. (what your committee is assigned to do in terms of the parks and recreational facilities aspect in the development of Pala-Pala).
9. Secretary – Write the final plans of the committee using the same format in TENTATIVE PLANS. This time your title should be FINAL PLANS. Provide your teacher a copy of the final plans.
10. As soon as your final plan is submitted to the teacher, ask for Card No. 7.

At this stage the different groups have already finalized their plans for their proposals. The teacher goes around to monitor the different tasks done by the seven committees. After this activity Card No. 7 is given.

Card No. 7
Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

You are now ready to plan for the oral presentation of your proposal.

1. Ask for Hand-out No.3 - Guidelines for Oral Presentation from your teacher
2. Reader - Reads Guidelines to the group
3. Plan how proposal should be presented. Envision how the oral presentation will come out.
4. You have 20 minutes to do this activity.
5. After you have finalized your plan for the oral presentation, ask for Card No. 8

While the activity is going on, some students may consult the teacher about their plans for the presentation. When this activity is done, Card No. 8 is given.

Card No. 8
Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

Since you have already planned your oral presentation, now you are ready to write your proposal.

1. Ask for Hand-out No.4 and read this to the group.
2. Refer to your FINAL PLANS and prepare your written report.
a. Formulate the objectives of your committee (what does your committee supposed to do in the overall development of Pala-Pala)

b. Agree on the time frame for your proposed projects

3. Refer to Hand-out No.1 for specific duties of each member
   a. Secretary and Reader - prepare the written report for submission in the next meeting
   b. Researchers/Engineers - prepare the visual aids needed for the oral presentation in the next meeting
   c. Chairperson - practice for the oral presentation and pick out a number in the box to know your number in the oral presentation.

4. You are given 30 minutes to do this activity.

5. When this is done, ask for Card No.9.

Card No. 9

Committee on Parks and Recreational Facilities

At this time you already know very well what is expected of you in the next meeting. Just make sure that

1. you edit the written report before submitting it
2. you have all the needed visual aids and the other needed materials for the oral presentation
3. you have understood the guidelines for the oral presentation
4. you have practiced very well for the oral presentation
5. you should help your group members in putting up the visual aids for the presentation and in answering questions that will be asked by the audience during the presentation.
6. You are expected to ask questions about the proposed plans of the other committees
7. This is your last card for the day.
Session 3

Session 3 was devoted for the oral presentations of the seven groups, each oral presentation, was followed by an open forum. Then after all the seven groups had presented their final proposals, debriefing followed.

Here the students were asked to think back and find out the problems and difficulties they encountered while performing the required tasks and how they were able to find solutions to these problems and difficulties.

After a discussion of the difficulties encountered and solutions made the students were asked to write in a one paragraph composition their individual reaction/comment about the whole lesson or activity.

Looking Back - Some Comments and Observations

The following are some notes and observations in the task-based teaching lesson described earlier.

1. Generally, the students enjoyed the activity. They had fun in being able to present and discuss their ideas, argue, persuade and even laugh together while doing the required tasks.

2. In the oral presentation part of the lesson, the students took special care in their dress and appearance.

3. Students were creative in their oral presentations. Many groups used pictures or small toys that can be tucked to mark specific areas on the map where their "projects" were supposed to be constructed. This was interesting because after the oral presentations, the class had a composite picture of the over-all development of the island.

4. The proposals presented varied from practical to realistic ones like "construction of two modern moviehouses in each town", to something ambitious like "construction of an underground railway system that will connect the entire island" to something fantastic like "using 'Vanish' a newly
invented liquid that can make things vanish especially garbage”.

5. Students do not want to be disturbed by teacher talk while they are engrossed in the activity.

6. Students take the lesson seriously if directions are written either on the board or in the handouts rather than being given orally.

7. Enough or reasonable time should be given to students to discuss and decide on the task they are required to do.

8. Although directions were written in the handouts and were made clear in the beginning, still some groups were not able to follow directions correctly.

9. Many times during the activity, the students could not help but revert to their native tongue in discussing their “plans”.

10. Much noise is created by students in activities like these; however, the noise is a purposive one.

11. There was a very positive response from college English teachers when this particular lesson was demonstrated. In fact, the kind of teaching materials produced by these teachers after the training program are very good examples of task-based instructional materials.

Discussion

The lesson described in this paper shows the many possibilities that can be done in a language classroom and the high degree of student involvement. However, I will focus my discussion only on those aspects that have implications to language learning and language teaching specifically those that can serve as practical guides for teachers in difficult circumstances.

1. Planning Task-based Teaching Materials

The key to a successful task-based language teaching is careful and systematic planning.
Planning involves knowing the learners' language experiences and language skills and abilities. The lesson described in this paper was designed for students who already possess the basic skills needed to make simulation possible. This means that the students are able to make sense of the role cards given to them during the activity, that they possess basic oral and written skills needed for interactive tasks, and that they have been exposed to group activities before.

Data on learners' language skills and abilities is important in determining the kinds of problem-solving and decision making tasks that will be included and required in task-based activities.

Planning also means being able to envision the entire actual teaching process from the very start such as preparing or setting the classroom atmosphere to the very end such as evaluating required written reports. It will be observed that in the lesson presented, each task or step along the entire process is not an isolated task, rather each step is a preparation for the next one. There is a building up of small tasks that serves as basis for the bigger task in the later part of the lesson. In addition, planning also means being able to anticipate probable problems and reactions that may arise in the entire teaching process. The teacher should have an accurate picture of what the different groups in a class of 40 to 50 students will be doing at any one given time. This way, the teacher is prepared with alternatives or solutions to problems that may arise.

Language learners can benefit much from a systematic planning of task-based teaching materials.

2. Putting language to use -

The lesson showed considerable amount of language activity and a high degree of student involvement. From lesson initiation to debriefing, the students were constantly using language, both in oral and written forms, although more focus was given to the oral-aural aspect of language.

The tasks then to be given in task-based lessons should be able to challenge students to think in order to come up with solutions or decisions to
problem solving exercises and at the same time exploit the opportunity for students to use language in meaningful and purposive communicative situations.

Since, less time is devoted for English in Philippine schools at present, every opportunity for students to use language should really be exploited and maximized.

3. Debriefing/Evaluation

This is the part of the lesson where students are made to look back and analyze what they did in the lesson. Through questioning, students can think back and critique the activity they have experienced. Here, the teacher’s role is very important. The discussion can be centred on evaluating the tasks done by the students based on the given guidelines (both written and oral) and/or on communication problems that arose during the inter-active tasks. When the teacher evaluates the expected outputs of students, a teacher’s work load is significantly reduced. The reduced work load is manifested in the seven groups to be evaluated for the oral report, and the seven written reports to be graded instead of the regular 35 or more.

4. Grouping -

In big classes, the chance of a student to express his ideas and opinions orally is very minimal. In a language class this is a crime. Grouping students (3 to a maximum of 5 members) will help solve the problem of providing opportunity for learners to use language. In small groups, even shy students can be "forced" to contribute and be involved in group discussions. Small groups provide the opportunity for every class member to his share his ideas and be listened to by his classmates.

Grouping also means less "work" for the teacher because there are only a few groups to monitor instead of all the 35 to 40 students in a class.

5. Time Allotment -

In the lesson described, a reasonable time limit was given to performing the different tasks required in the entire activity. The time limit "forces"
students to use their time efficiently. In addition, since role cards can only be given after the previous task has been done the students look forward to finishing the "small achievements" in order to move on to the next task.

For the teacher the time allotment given enables her/him to know which groups are "slower" hence more attention perhaps is needed, and "faster" performers.

6. Teacher’s Role -

In task-based learning, a teacher has varied roles. She is the source of input, the encourager, the facilitator, the monitor, and the provider. There roles are all used by the teacher in a task-based lesson in varying degrees.

The teacher’s role as a source of input is reflected in the carefully planned lessons that contain the situations for problem-solving and decision-making exercises. This is why in the actual teaching process of task-based materials teacher talk becomes minimal. It is her role as monitor and facilitator that really comes to play when the task-based teaching material is operationalized in the classroom. But it is in debriefing that the teacher plays her/his most significant role in task-based teaching. It is through her thought provoking questions and carefully planned sequence of discussion points that should lead the students to think back and reflect on what transpired in the whole teaching-learning activity. In addition, the students should be able to critique the entire activity. Here the students and the teacher cooperatively share the task of evaluating the entire teaching-learning exercise. This is again another significant part of the lesson where the degree of student involvement is high and the opportunity for language use is greater.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have shared a classroom experience in difficult circumstances using a task-based teaching material. I have specifically focused on the procedural aspects of task-based teaching such as initiating, operationalizing and evaluating
the expected outputs of the lesson and those aspects that can serve as practical guides for teachers in difficult circumstances. The task-based teaching material described shows the many possibilities that can be done in a language classroom: the high degree of student involvement, the greater opportunity for students to put language to use and the many creative and challenging opportunities that teachers can easily do in the classroom. These possibilities conform to the strong version subscribed to in this paper and these possibilities can also help "soften" and brighten up the difficult circumstances that some language teachers find themselves in.

Notes:

1. The idea of the lesson presented came from Leo Jones and Victoria Kimborough's Great Ideas, 1987.
2. Task and activity are used interchangeably in this paper.
3. College English teachers were the teacher-participants who attended the series of seminar-workshops conducted by some language specialists from the De La Salle University and Miriam College on "Task-Based Language in Difficult Circumstances" in Regions 7 and 8 in the Philippines. The seminar workshop was part of the training and enrichment programs for language teachers in the different regions of the country.
4. The required written report at the end of the activity was used as the springboard to introduce the more "serious" lesson on preparing and writing project proposals.
REFERENCES


