



TESL NS Newsletter

November 2015

TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN NOVA SCOTIA

IN THIS ISSUE

Benefits of Task-based Instruction

By Andrea Taylor and Beth Vye

By using task-based instruction in our classrooms, we give our learners the opportunity to complete tasks that reflect the way people use language in real situations. Whether it's writing a thank-you email after an interview, giving or receiving feedback, or navigating a workplace document, by providing task-based instruction for our learners, we set them up for success.

Task based instruction focuses on creative, spontaneous language production while centering around real-world tasks to find meaningful, often collaborative solutions. A task is a communicative use of language to accomplish a specific purpose in a specific situation.

Our learners like task-based instruction because they have control over how they complete tasks, allowing them to use a variety of Essential Skills to accomplish the task. For example, they can use thinking skills, oral communication skills (listening and speaking) as well as the key skill of working with others. By doing this, they are able to apply and share their experience and knowledge, communicate in a natural way and feel motivated and confident during this process.

As learners work to accomplish the objectives, they build rapport with one another as they engage in purposeful communication, all the while knowing it's useful in the world outside the classroom. Often the tasks present memorable scenarios learners can recall later to use in real-life situations.

So, how can instructors use task-based instruction to construct these meaningful teaching and learning activities?

Some suggested questions we should ask ourselves to determine if it's a true task are:

- Will it engage the learners' interests?
- Is the main focus on meaning?
- Is there an outcome?
- Is success based on the outcome?
- Does the activity relate to the real world?

(Source: www.teachingenglish.org.uk)

If we can confidently say 'yes' to these questions, the more task-like the activity is.

First, think about and define the overarching content goal/purpose for the class module, theme or topic.

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Newsletter

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Lineups: Warmer or Icebreaker Activity

By Sandra Powell

Lineups: Warmer or Icebreaker activity

Good for getting students up and moving around... waking up sleepy classes, letting active students stretch their legs, refreshing students after long sitting

Easing students into expressing an opinion

Getting students thinking about a new topic or theme

Create 5 simple statements that students can easily express an opinion about, on a scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral or No opinion or It depends, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) See samples below

Move desks and chairs to make room to move around. Establish one end of the room as Strongly Agree, and the other end as Strongly Disagree.

Get students to stand up and cluster in the middle (don't try to start the activity while they are sitting)

Read your first statement out and ask students to move to the part of the room that shows how they feel about the statement. While students are moving, repeat the statement several times. If students start to request



more information about the statement or say their opinion depends on circumstances, tell them to move into the middle.

After students finish moving, have a brief whole-group discussion while still

standing in their positions. Ask volunteers to talk about their reasons for agreeing/disagreeing. Invite people from various positions on the scale to speak.

If there is a marked majority/minority division in the Agree/Disagree groups, let the minority speak after hearing from the majority.

The people in the middle either have no opinion and don't want to speak, or they have a more nuanced position and want to explain it. Ask people in the middle if they have something to add to the discussion.

Read the next statement. Have students move into a new lineup.

The physical lineup creates more energy and interest than responding to the same Agree/Disagree statements on paper while sitting. Use it as a warmer or change of pace, keeping the discussion part short and sweet and voluntary.

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TESL NS Fall Conference Nov 20-21 St. Mary's University

This year's conference will include a **Friday night keynote and wine and cheese**, and a **full day on Saturday**, including a keynote, workshops and presentations, hot lunch, a book fair and the TESL NS Annual General Meeting.

Friday 6:30-8:15

Loyola Conference Hall

Saturday 9:00-4:00

The Language Centre and
Loyola Conference Hall

**Have you
registered yet?
Visit teslins.com for
more details.**

Friday, November 20 Keynote



Marion Crandall

Educational Testing Service

Keynote: Fairness as a Consideration in Developing Assessments

Saturday, November 21 Keynote



Randi Reppen

Professor of Applied Linguistics
and TESL at Northern Arizona
University

Keynote: Twelve Principles for effective grammar instruction

TESL NS FALL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

For further details regarding times,
locations and parking see:

<http://teslins.com/conference/2015-fall-conference-program/>

Book Review—*Mastering the American Accent* by Lisa Mojsin

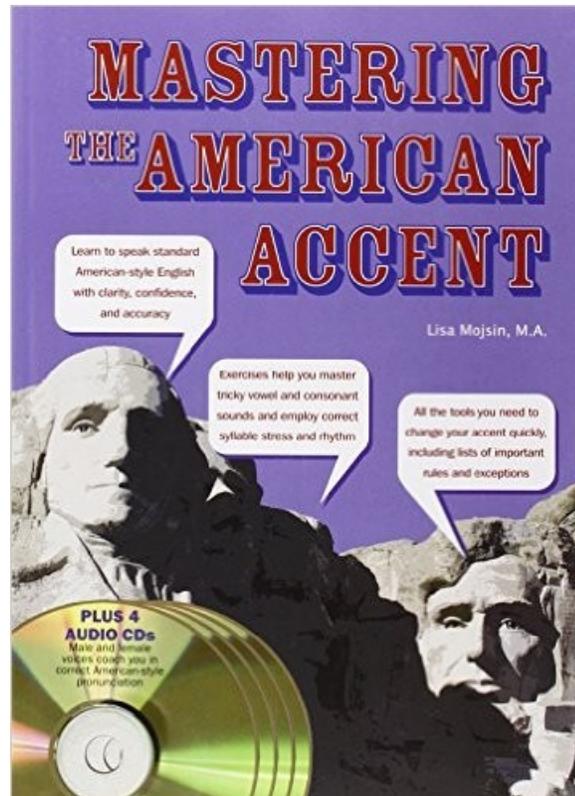
As an English Instructor in the English in the Workplace program at ISANS, clients often desperately want to improve their pronunciation. Clients want to be better understood in the workplace and want to sound more fluent and professional. Enter my best pronunciation friend, *Mastering the American Accent*.

I find a lot of pronunciation textbooks to be very dry and difficult to get through. The text is dense and the explanations denser. But this is not the case with *Mastering the American Accent*. This text is spaced out easily and has colour, graphics, practice sentences as well as stories for practice and songs. The context always stays on point. Another great feature that is speckled throughout the text is "Advice from a Successful Student" with real life tips from students who have improved their pronunciation. For example, "I have collected a list of words that are difficult for me to pronounce. I make up sentences from these words and I practice saying them over and over." Miroslaw Nikolic, Serbia. I find the clients find this sort of advice from student to student quite inspiring and helpful.

Mastering the American Accent is a great resource with plenty of real examples and exercises. Things are broken down and explained easily and I find the context always stays relevant. The book is broken into sections and deals with vowels, consonants, syllable stress, word stress, intonation and exceptions. Not only that but there is a section at the back that deals with typical difficulties for native languages, which is super helpful and really tends to be true to life.

I would recommend this book to anyone who wanted an overall look at pronunciation or a more focused look at specific problem areas. It is easily laid out, easy to use and really makes a difference!

Laurie Burns has been teaching English as an Additional Language for 10 years in Taiwan and Halifax. She presently is enjoying her position as an English in the Workplace Instructor at ISANS.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Online Conference series

Five days of free talks for teachers of English starting November 3rd, 2015.

<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/speaking-skills-online-conference/>



Visit Tutela.ca to join an online community of ESL/FSL professionals and attend webinars.

"Task-based" Continued from page 1.

For example, your goal might be to make a presentation. From here, describe the objective of the day's lesson. For example, your objective might be to write an outline including an effective introduction, body and conclusion.

Next, define the tasks that will assist learners in achieving the objective. For example, a task might be to discuss and compare the use and style of presentations in learners' countries. Then, instructors would provide skill building activities such as sequencing and transition vocabulary, listening to a correct model of a presentation, and giving and receiving feedback on a presentation. Finally, learners would complete the real-world task of delivering a presentation in front of the class.

A useful visual to assist instructors with this process of lesson sequencing can be found on page 66 of the *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 Guide to Implementation* document. Here, we can see the continuum from enabling tasks and activities (things learners would not likely be asked to do outside the classroom) extended into real-world tasks (what they'll do in real life).

Another useful tool from this document can be found in the Appendix section called a *Lesson Planning Web*. Instructors can use this simple tool to brainstorm and streamline what needs

“Task-based instruction prepares learners for workplace scenarios by using strategies, language, culture and Essential Skills in the class-

to be done in order for learners to successfully move from an enabling to a real-world task in the task-based classroom.

To conclude, task-based instruction prepares learners for workplace scenarios by using strategies, language, culture and Essential Skills in the classroom. It is also important to note that task-based instruction provides measurable outcomes as learners are able to demonstrate the competencies they've acquired.

Andrea Taylor has been teaching EAL since 1999, both abroad and in Canada. She earned a Master of Education in EAL Curriculum Design in 2006. She has been with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia in Halifax, Nova Scotia, since 2008. Andrea has taught both face to face and online at ISANS.

Beth Vye is the Labour Market Language Team Lead, Labour Market Language Instructor and CLB Training Facilitator at Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISANS). She is currently teaching Communication for Healthcare Professionals. She has developed curriculum and taught LINC, ESP and EAP.

Are you represented on the TESL NS Board?

By Mary Lou Harnish

TESL NS draws its members from many sectors, including language schools (including private and in university settings), volunteers, MEd (TESL) program students, NSCC, ISANS, HRSB Adult EAL program, Language Assessment Services, consultants, self-employment and others. However, not all of these sectors are represented on the board. Here's how we look, based on the information from membership registration forms.

At the AGM on November 21st, we'll be electing your new board. It is important that all sectors be represented and have a say at the table. We hope that members of some of the underrepresented sectors give serious consideration to

putting their names forward to work on the board. All positions are for one year terms, so all are open for nominations.

Sector	% of membership	% on TESL NS Board
Language schools (private and university)	49%	80%
Settlement language	25%	14%
Self-employed	11%	0%
Volunteers	8%	0%
Other	6%	6%

Report from Lake Louise

By Anna Maier and Carol Derby

TESL Canada 2015: Elevating Language Learning to New Heights



Muhammad Naz presenting at TESL Canada



Beautiful Lake Louise

Picturesque Lake Louise, Alberta was home to this year's TESL Canada Conference. Hosted by Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL), the conference attracted hundreds of attendees and offered 188 symposia, workshops and presentations. There were three keynote speakers and the schedule was jam-packed with a wide variety of EAL fields and specializations. In addition to the luxurious accommodation and delicious food at the lovely Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, the conference also offered a graduate symposium, an exhibitor/publisher's display, a president's reception and a gala dinner.

Nova Scotia was well represented, with instructors from Dalhousie University and Immigrant Services of Nova Scotia (ISANS) presenting, as well as attendees from East Coast School of Languages. The workshops topics from Nova Scotia presenters ranged from academic language - metaphors in academic English, beyond the 5-paragraph essay in EAP writing, and cultural attitudes toward grading in EAP - to settlement language - PBLA literacy, pronunciation, Essential Skills and settlement language, motivating online learners, and innovative programming in settlement language.

Those of us attending and presenting from Dalhousie University were fascinated by both the variety and the quality of the EAP related workshops. There were many great topics to choose from which often made it quite difficult to decide which ones to attend. The interactive workshops and roundtable discussions sparked great forums for sharing and collaborating ideas. The high-calibre presentations were insightful and left us feeling inspired to bring some of the theories and teaching practices into our own classrooms. A few of the themes that were particularly interesting, in regards to EAP, included paraphrasing/anti-plagiarism, teaching academic behaviours, teaching pronunciation, from EAP to ESP, technology use in the classroom, and building academic L2 writing, reading, speaking and listening skills.

Staff from ISANS were delighted to see that the settlement sector was well represented, with a wide range of workshops. The day of symposia and two days of workshops had interactive workshops, demonstrations, poster presentations, lightning talks, roundtable discussions and papers/reports. Themes of interest to settlement EAL instructors were EAL literacy,

PBLA, intercultural communication, workplace and sector-specific language, teaching multi-level classes, pronunciation, and online and blended learning technologies, as well as the standard reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in a task-based context.

A complete list of the presentations, as well as some presentation slideshows, can be found at <http://teslcanadapresentations.com>. Looking to the future, the next TESL Canada Conference will be held in Niagara Ontario in the spring of 2017, so hang on to your TESL Canada membership!

Anna Maier is currently an EAP instructor at Dalhousie University. She holds a Master of Education (TESL) from Mount Saint Vincent University. She has taught abroad in different countries and in Nova Scotia in a variety of settings. She loves teaching and working with people from various cultural backgrounds.

Carol Derby is the manager of Labour Market Language programs at Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS). She has a Master's Degree in Adult Education and 20 years experience in the EAL field.

"Line-ups" Continued from page 2

Sample statements for Agree/Disagree Line-ups :

(Icebreaker to help students get to know classmates)

I love to play sports; I am most active and happy in the early morning ; I like old, classical art (or music) better than new, modern art (or music); I want to have a big family; I am a quiet person and I like to listen more than to speak.

(language learning theme)

It takes about 2 years to learn a new language well; you have to study grammar rules in order to learn a language; teachers should correct all our mistakes when we speak; teachers should correct all our mistakes when we write; the only way to learn a language well is to go to a country where they speak that language; outgoing people learn languages better than shy people.

Share an idea!

Do you have a low-prep activity that's easy to adapt to share with your colleagues?

This is one from the classroom of Sandra Powell, who teaches at The Language Centre at SMU, that she brought to last year's Idea Swap event.

Exploring EAP at TESL Canada 2015

By Jennifer Macdonald

The TESL Canada conference in Lake Louise could most likely go down in the books as the one of the most scenic teachers' conferences ever. Getting to attend talks from EAP practitioners from across the country while taking in the breathtaking views of the mountains, snow-dusted forests and that turquoise lake was an absolute pleasure. It didn't distract me from checking out several sessions on teaching English for Academic purposes, though. Here are some highlights:

Teaching EAP Students Academic Behaviours: Dianne Tyers, Christina Musa

This was a very participatory workshop where we brainstormed together with the presenters to come up with tips and techniques for developing seven non-linguistic academic behaviours (time management, self-efficacy, participation in seminars, collaboration, academic honesty, respectful communication, individual responsibility for learning) to complement the linguistic content of our EAP classes.

Student Input and Curricular Alignment in EAP: Marcia Kim and Gregory Tweedie

In this talk the presenters shared the results of some recent research they've done where they interviewed graduates of their EAP program to see how well the content of the EAP courses aligned with the language demands of their first years of undergraduate study. It was very interesting to hear which areas aligned (group work, writing) and which areas didn't (reading, lack of informal speaking, assessment style) and those present had a very lively discussion as to why these misalignments may have occurred and what was to be done about it. This type of research should be an important part of the systematic review of any EAP course.

Complexity in L1 and L2 student writing: The development of Discourse styles: Douglas Biber

This talk fell more under the umbrella of applied linguistics rather than classroom practice, which was a nice counterpoint to a lot of a sessions at TESL Canada. It was an interesting demonstration of how we tend to describe academic writing as "complex", although it's not complex in the way we general define the term: in terms of frequency of dependent clauses. Academic English is complex in terms of a high frequency of dependent phrases, while non-academic discourse which tends to have a higher incidence of dependent clauses. In very simple terms, academic discourse is focused on the noun and complex noun phrases, as opposed to dependent clauses built around verbs. He explored these definitions of complexity across disciplines, and over time. He didn't delve too far into the implications for teaching and materials development though it was a lot of food for thought.

Exploring the Rationale for Task-Based Language Teaching: Jane Willis

This wasn't a specifically EAP-focused talk, but since many EAP teachers draw on task-based language teaching (TBLT), it was quite relevant to our interests. This opening keynote presentation was a nice review of the history, principles, and essential elements of TBLT, with some participation as demonstration.

Building L2 writing skills using Vocabulary and Grammar Resources: Randi Reppen

This was a practical talk, in which the presenter drew on the Grammar and Beyond series that she authored to give lots of ideas for activities for EAP writing and grammar that were informed by corpora and grounded in real language use.

Getting real about paraphrasing and anti-plagiarism instruction: John Sivell

One of the highlights of the conference was this talk by John Sivell, a faculty member at Brock University. His talk revolved around the assertion that the act of paraphrasing is a substantial linguistic, cognitive, academic and cultural challenge. However, on most university campuses, despite the fact that paraphrasing is a major obstacle for both English L1 and L2 speakers, the teaching and learning of this skills is relegated to the sidelines—an online course, writing centres or in EAP courses with crowded curricula. The session ended with both the presenter and the attendees sharing strategies, tips and ideas for anti-plagiarism instruction.

Jennifer MacDonald is Head Teacher, ESL Programs, at Dalhousie University. Her interests include English for academic purposes curriculum and materials design, educational technology and sociolinguistics. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in education at the Institute of Education, University College London. She can be found online at www.jennifermacdonald.ca and @JenMac_ESL