



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

September 2014

www.atesl.ca

Follow ATESL on Facebook, Twitter and Google +.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's message

A message from Dorte Weber

TESL Canada Report

Celia Logan

ATESL Local Reports

Calgary – Chris Wharton & Glen Cochrane

Central Alberta – Lois Prostebby & Sharon

Duplessis

Edmonton – Evelyn Neame & Jacqueline Scott

Southern Alberta Local – Sheri Rhodes

ATESL 2014 Conference Report

Peter Myhre & Eaman Mah

Articles

Focus on Research

Marian Rossiter & Marilyn Abbott

Resources for Second Language Vocabulary

Teaching and Learning

Sarvenaz Hatami

U. of A. M.Ed. TESL Student Capping Projects

Task-Based Language Teaching Mentorship

in EAP: Action Research as a Catalyst for

Professional Development

Martin Guardado & Yvonne Breckenridge

Using Non-academic Listening Tasks in an

English for Academic Purposes Course

Luke Jang

English in Real Life: Using TBLT for Improving

Fluency and Social Integration

Sofia Elgueta Duplancic

TBLT and the Evolution of the Task

Lisa Matthew

The Task of Teaching: The Reflective Nature

of Professional Development

Yvonne Breckenridge & Martin Guardado

President's Message

September is such a busy time for us all: teachers and students both. For most ESL programs, fall enrollment is higher than at other times of the year, and we feel very busy. ATESL conference is just around the corner, and if you haven't already registered, you really need to get on that! Renew your membership while you are at it!

So far, so good. But beneath the good news story there is worry in the ESL community. While funding for LINC seems stable enough in spite of long wait lists, funding for ESL post-LINC programming has lost ground substantially over the last few years. The wait lists for funded seats in ESL are growing, and our learners are increasingly stuck in low-paying jobs waiting for language and job training that is farther and farther out of reach. However you slice and dice the course offerings, hundreds of dollars in tuition for an ESL course is too much for most immigrant families struggling to get by.

While we recognize the difficulties of long-range planning at a time of constant change, we nevertheless plan within the next few weeks to call on the government of Alberta to commit to language and job training for newcomers to Alberta and to work with the stakeholders, ATESL among them, to help get the best possible outcomes for our students and those newcomers who are not yet our students, but would like to be.

Dorte Weber, ATESL president



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

Provincial Executive

2013 – 2014

Dorte Weber

President

Maureen Stewart

President Elect

Sheri Rhodes

Past President

Wendy Chambers

Secretary

Sally Shifeng Zhao

Treasurer

Celia Logan

TESL Canada Representative

Chris Wharton

Calgary Local Co-Chair

Evelyn Neame

Edmonton Local Co-Chair

Jacqueline Scott

Edmonton Local Co-Chair

Sharon Duplessis

Central Alberta Local Co-Chair

Lois Prostebby

Central Alberta Local Co-Chair

Irene Wood

Business Manager

TESL Canada Report

TESL Canada has experienced some trying times since its AGM in Regina on May 9, 2014. At the AGM, the president, Sandi Kouritzin, and the treasurer, Hana Imai, resigned. The vice-president, Ron Thomson, declined to stand for president, meaning that the normal progression of the board members, vice-president to president, was unable to continue. Scott Douglas, the secretary, had previously resigned. As well as these disruptions, a motion was brought from the floor to ban anyone who had worked on the board in a director or committee chair in the last five years from running for the board. At this point, the AGM was stopped and an interim board was formed from among the provincial representatives along with the support of the provincial organizations, including ATESL.

This interim organization was charged with organizing a new election to be held electronically so as to include as many TESL Canada members as possible and not just the members present at the AGM. This election was to be organized and held as soon as possible. The interim board was subsequently challenged by the Saskatchewan provincial organization, TESL Saskatchewan, to seek a legal opinion about the legality of what had happened at the AGM.

This was a wise course of action considering that TESL Canada is an organization governed by by-laws and wishes to respect these by-laws which fairly protect the interests of all parties in an admittedly tense atmosphere.

The legal opinion was received on September 23, 2014 and the interim board has been organizing a meeting to be held as soon as possible to begin organizing an election for a new board. We want to follow the by-laws carefully so that there can be no questioning the legality of the new board. The interim board will send out a call for nominations for the new 2014-2015 board of TESL Canada in the very near future. All members in good standing will be eligible for nomination. The interim board and ATESL encourage the Alberta members to support TESL Canada by either standing for election or especially by voting in the Continued AGM. Please support our efforts to reconstruct this vital and important Canada-wide TESL organization.

Celia Logan



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

ATESL 2014 Conference Committee Report

October 24 and 25, 2014 are the dates for this year's Annual Provincial Conference in Edmonton. And, these dates are soon approaching. There will be 50 presentations (which include two keynote presentations on the Friday and Saturday from two very gifted individuals) at this year's conference on a wide variety of interesting, informative and practical topics.

Friday's keynote speaker, Linda Grant, is the author of two pronunciation textbooks, *Well Said* and *Well Said Intro*. She is also the editor of the recently published teacher resource volume, *Pronunciation Myths: Applying Second Language Research to the Classroom*. In both her keynote and her workshop to follow, Linda will be showing ways to integrate pronunciation into meaningful oral communication.

Saturday's keynote speaker is Dr. Niobe Thompson, a Cambridge-trained anthropologist and documentary filmmaker with a reputation for bringing the human story to life on the screen in ways that transport, delight and inspire his audiences. His films have won two Gemini Awards, five Canadian Screen Award nominations, and eleven Alberta Film Awards. In both his keynote and his workshop to follow, Niobe will be drawing on 18 months of filming around the world for the CBC's much-anticipated 2015 science-and-nature series, to explore the lessons we can take today from the story of our species' deep past.

In addition, this year, the conference is going to be held at the beautiful Fantasy Land Hotel in West Edmonton Mall which offers exclusive shopping, fine dining, exciting entertainment, thriving nightlife and luxury accommodations.

As a result, this is conference that is not to be missed. So, please go to <http://www.atesl.ca/> to check the conference at glance and to register for conference. We hope to see you there.

Peter Myhre & Eaman Mah
2014 Conference Co-chairs

Linda Grant – KEYNOTE: *Pronunciation: The Missing Link in Speaking and Listening*

When we teach pronunciation, students learn to become more effective speakers *and* listeners. Yet pronunciation is often the "missing link" in ESL courses with a strong oral/aural component. In this presentation, we will explore the natural intersections between listening and pronunciation. We will also identify a small number of teaching points that make a big difference in intelligibility. In the process, we will debunk two common myths about pronunciation teaching. Myth 1: It is difficult to integrate pronunciation into speaking/listening activities in a seamless way. Myth 2: Teachers cannot possibly meet individual pronunciation needs in a class of learners from varied language backgrounds.

Linda Grant – WORKSHOP: *Getting a Grip on Integrating Pronunciation Essentials*

The integration of pronunciation into meaningful oral communication has been advocated for many years, but teachers have received little clear direction about how to achieve this integration. This workshop expands upon ideas introduced in the keynote and gives participants hands-on experience mapping pronunciation instruction onto typical ESL classroom activities. After briefly examining principles for effective integration, we will investigate a variety of teaching activities, tools, and techniques illustrating those principles.



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

ATESL LOCAL REPORTS

Calgary Local Report

At our most recent meeting on September 17th at Bow Valley College, Glen Cochrane gave a short presentation on Networks and Communities, leading into a discussion into how each of these can relate to language learning contexts. Val Baggaley also gave a presentation on dialogue journals, detailing her experience in using them in the classroom. At the meeting we also discussed the schedule, topic ideas, and potential events for the upcoming year, which will include shorter "lightening" style presentations, and a December social event. Chris Wharton also recapped the chapter's events from last year. At the end of the meeting Peggy Jubien's name was drawn as the winner of the PDPP 2014 ATESL free conference registration. Our next meeting will be on October 14th at Mount Royal University at 6:00pm. Details coming soon.

Glen Cochrane, Co-chair

Calgary ATESL Local

CA-ATESL Report

The Central Alberta chapter of ATESL met on Wednesday, September 17th from 3:30 – 5:30 at CARE in downtown Red Deer with seven members present. Minutes from last year's business meeting were read, adopted and the business of filling the executive took place. Sharon Duplessis has another year as co-chair, Carol Smyth agreed to stay on as secretary and Hannah Disen agreed to continue as treasurer. This left the co-chair to be decided. There wasn't anyone present who felt they had the time to commit to this position, so the executive will speak to individuals not at the meeting in an effort to fill this position.

Carol Smyth was the winner of the free registration to the ATESL conference as she had not missed a meeting during the year. Hannah Disen reported on our financial status and we still have considerable funds to use in this budget. The group decided the maximum to be reimbursed for food would be \$75. Most of the funds spent so far have been on refreshments and gift cards for presenters. Discussion took place about holding an event that may raise the profile of the group and generate more interest in CA-ATESL.

The rest of the meeting was spent brainstorming ideas for the 2014-15 programs. The executive will meet in October to finalize the program and present it to the membership at the November meeting. There will be no meeting in October as most members will be attending the provincial conference.

The next meeting will be November 19th at CARE from 3:30 – 5:30 and will be a conference review to share presentations various members attended.

Submitted by Lois Prostebby



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

Newsletter Information

The ATESL Newsletter is published quarterly.

Deadlines: February 15, May 15, August 15, November 15

Announcements, workshop dates, book reviews, teaching ideas, and articles relevant to the field.

Contact: Irene Wood at services@atesl.ca

More information and archives at [www.atesl.ca/newslettersArc
hive](http://www.atesl.ca/newslettersArchive)

Professional Development Bursaries

Apply for an ATESL Professional Development Bursary

Deadlines: March 15, September 15

<http://www.atesl.ca/bursary>

The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL)

is a professional organization which promotes the highest standards of teaching and English language program provision for all learners in Alberta whose first language is other than English.

Edmonton Local Report

The Edmonton Local Chapter held its Annual General Meeting on Friday, September 26th at NorQuest College's downtown campus. ATESL members reconnected after the summer break, listened to Kerry Louw's presentation on intercultural perspectives in Canadian job interviews, and made nominations for the vacant positions on the Executive: Hospitality Coordinator, Treasurer, and Co-Chair. Sabine Ricioppo was nominated as the new Co-Chair, Patricia Watson as Treasurer, and the Hospitality position is still vacant. Sabine and Patricia will commence their positions after receiving final approval at the provincial Annual General Meeting on Friday, October 24th.

ATESL is indebted to our outgoing volunteers and truly appreciates the gifts of time and energy that they have given to the Edmonton Local Chapter. Brenda Chwyl has provided Hospitality for three years, Rose Elliot has been Treasurer for the past four years, and Jacqueline Scott has completed her two-year term as Co-Chair. Not only did they faithfully fulfill their duties, but they often went the extra mile. Brenda remembered to include gluten-free food options and would often prepare popcorn or bring a special dessert to enhance our dining pleasure. Rose was extremely accurate and thorough in administering funds, but she was also very effective at reporting the distributions, bringing the numbers on her page to life. Jacqueline worked tirelessly to make the meetings run smoothly, looking after countless details and faithfully supporting the Edmonton local at monthly board meetings. Thanks all for your valuable contributions.

We also look forward to the upcoming conference on October 24th and 25th and our next Edmonton Local Meeting on Friday, November 28th, at the University of Alberta's Extension campus: Enterprise Square, 10230 Jasper Avenue, room to be determined.

Submitted by Evelyn Neame, Co-Chair

Southern Alberta Local Report

On September 25, I was invited to meet with the ESL community of the Southern Alberta area at the end of their Regional Networking meeting sponsored by CIC. Thank you to Lucelle Prindle, President of SALAS Ltd. for coordinating my attendance at this event. After a wonderful day of professional development, where networking happened and ideas were shared, I had the chance to discuss the future of ATESL at the local level and encourage the members to organize once again. Because not all ATESL members may have had the chance to attend this afternoon meeting, Dr. Seppy Masoodi, the English Language Centre Programs Coordinator at Lethbridge College, agreed to coordinate with other interested members to set a meeting for November, following the ATESL Conference to plan for and organize the 2014 / 2015 program for the Southern Alberta chapter of ATESL. Details will be forthcoming.

Submitted by Sheri Rhodes, Past President, ATESL

Focus on Research (Marian Rossiter & Marilyn Abbott, University of Alberta)

Systematic, explicit vocabulary instruction is key to the successful development of second language reading comprehension and communication skills. Assessment of vocabulary knowledge is necessary to guide the selection of vocabulary that learners need for various purposes. As this may not commonly be done at the program level, the onus is on individual ESL instructors to measure the vocabulary knowledge of the students in their classes and to plan for appropriate instruction.

Many resources are freely available to guide teachers in assessing learner vocabulary and selecting vocabulary for learning. In our second Focus on Research column, Sarvenaz Hatami highlights tools for assessing and teaching vocabulary, and for choosing graded readers appropriate for learners' vocabulary levels. We invite you to access the websites in this article, to discuss potential applications with your colleagues, and to use appropriate resources to promote and monitor students' vocabulary learning and retention. Learners can also take advantage of many of these tools to self-assess their vocabulary levels, set personal learning goals, and track their progress, thereby enhancing both their language learning motivation and autonomy.

Resources for Second Language Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

Sarvenaz Hatami, University of Alberta

The significance of a well-designed vocabulary component for any language learning program cannot be overstated. As a teacher, it is of vital importance to find out what vocabulary our learners need to focus on (i.e., high-frequency, mid-frequency, low-frequency, or academic/technical), and to plan how this vocabulary should receive attention (Nation, 2013). We know that learning a word is a cumulative process and requires numerous encounters with the word in varying contexts; therefore, it is crucial to make sure learners are provided with adequate, effective vocabulary learning opportunities. Luckily, today, there are a wide range of valuable resources available to make such planning easier, less time-consuming, and more successful.

In what follows, a list of useful, research-based resources for assessing, teaching, and learning second language (L2) vocabulary has been provided. The list starts with L2 vocabulary tests such as the *True/False Test*, *Vocabulary Levels Test*, *Productive Vocabulary Levels Test*, and the *Vocabulary Size Test*, all of which are used to measure L2 learners' level (or size) of vocabulary knowledge for placement and diagnostic purposes. Results of these tests can help determine the current vocabulary level of the learners, and accordingly, the next vocabulary level that needs to be focused on (Nation, 2008, 2013).

Word lists (created on the basis of frequency and sometimes other criteria) can then be used to focus on L2 learners' appropriate vocabulary level inside and outside of the classroom. For example, if, through testing, a teacher finds that his/her learners have mastered the first 1,000 words of English, but only have partial knowledge of the second 1,000 words, the teacher can use a word list to specifically teach those words that belong to the second 1,000 word level. Therefore, in this article, following the list of vocabulary tests, some useful lists of individual words have been provided, such as the *General Service List*, *BNC/COCA Lists*, *Academic Word List*, and the *Academic Vocabulary List*.

Another excellent resource for giving attention to vocabulary at a particular level is graded readers. These simplified texts are designed on the basis of vocabulary levels, and therefore, once learners' vocabulary level has been determined through diagnostic testing, graded readers appropriately matched to the learners' vocabulary level can be used to set up an extensive reading program. Such extensive reading can be a significant source of vocabulary development and enjoyment for learners (Nation, 2013). To this end, a very useful resource, the *Extensive Reading Foundation* website has been introduced.

Vocabulary Tests

- **True/False Test.** The True/False test, developed by Nation (1993), is a test of the first 1,000 words of English, knowledge of which is essential to function in the English language. The words chosen to be tested are sampled from the *General Service List* (see below for more details about this list). The test consists of a true/false format and, if learners have poor reading skills, it can be administered orally. There are two versions of this test available (A and B), but usually only one version (consisting of 40 items) is adequate to obtain useful results. This test is freely available for download in the Vocabulary Resource Booklet on Paul Nation's website (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation>).
- **Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT).** The Vocabulary Levels Test - originally developed by Nation (1983) and later updated and validated by Schmitt, Schmitt, and Clapham (2001) - tests learners' knowledge of receptive vocabulary. The VLT samples words from four frequency levels, that is, the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000 word levels, as well as from the *Academic Word List* (see below for more details about this list). The academic section of the test is particularly useful for assessing learners with academic purposes. Each level of the VLT consists of 30 items. The scores on each level need to be looked at separately. The updated version of this test is freely available on Tom Cobb's Lexical Tutor website (<http://www.lextutor.ca/tests/>).
- **Productive Vocabulary Levels Test.** Developed by Laufer and Nation (1999), the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test is based on the older version of the VLT, and it tests the same frequency levels, that is, the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, and 10,000 levels, as well as words from the *University Word List*. The test measures learners' knowledge of productive vocabulary, that is, the knowledge needed to use the tested words in writing. Each level consists of 18 items. This test is freely available for download in the Vocabulary Resource Booklet on Paul Nation's website (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation>), as well as on Tom Cobb's Lexical Tutor website (<http://www.lextutor.ca/tests/levels/productive/>).
- **Vocabulary Size Test.** The Vocabulary Size Test, developed by Nation and Beglar (2007), measures learners' total vocabulary size; in other words, results on this test indicate how many words a learner knows receptively. Like all the other tests mentioned above, this test also samples words from frequency word lists, and it measures vocabulary size up to the 14th 1,000 word level and also the 20th 1,000 word level. The 14,000 version consists of 140 items (10 at each 1,000 word level), while the 20,000 version consists of 100 items (5 at each 1,000 word level). The test has a multiple-choice format. All versions of this test are freely available for download on Paul Nation's website (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation>). The 14,000 version is also available on Tom Cobb's Lexical Tutor website (http://www.lextutor.ca/tests/levels/recognition/1_14k/).

Vocabulary Lists

- **General Service List (GSL).** The General Service List, developed by West (1953), is a list of high-frequency words in English, that is, words considered to be of the greatest 'general service' to English language learners. The GSL consists of about 2,000 word families, 165 of which are function words, and the remainder content words (Nation, 2013). This list is freely available on Tom Cobb's Lexical Tutor website (http://www.lextutor.ca/freq/lists_download/). The GSL, although very well-known and widely-used for decades, is becoming outdated. Recently, Browne, Culligan, and Phillips (2013) have made an attempt to create an updated version of the GSL, the *New General Service List* (NGSL). The list is still in an interim stage of development, but can be accessed freely online (www.newgeneralservicelist.org).
- **BNC/COCA Lists.** The BNC/COCA lists, developed by Paul Nation and Mark Davies by integrating word lists from the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA), represent both North American and UK varieties of English. They consist of 25 word family lists (the 1st 1,000 up to the 25th 1,000 word lists) developed on the basis of frequency and range of occurrence of words across these two very large and well-balanced corpora (Nation, 2012). The BNC/COCA lists are available for free on Tom Cobb's Lexical Tutor website (http://www.lextutor.ca/cgi-bin/vp/comp/lists.pl?frame=bnc_coca_heads).
- **Academic Word List (AWL).** The Academic Word List, developed by Coxhead (2000), consists of 570 word families that occur frequently across a wide range of academic disciplines. The AWL is therefore very important for learners with

academic goals, as it can provide approximately 10% coverage of academic texts. After learners have mastered the first 2,000 high-frequency words of English (e.g., the GSL), the next step would be to learn the most frequent academic words, and the AWL could be used for this purpose (Nation, 2008, 2013). This list is freely available online on Tom Cobb's Lexical Tutor website (http://www.lextutor.ca/freq/lists_download/).

- **Academic Vocabulary List (AVL).** Another very useful list of academic vocabulary, the Academic Vocabulary List, has been developed recently by Gardner and Davies (2014), which when converted to word families, consists of about 2,000 word families. It provides approximately 14% coverage of academic texts. The AVL is accompanied by a website that provides a wealth of information about each word in the list (<http://www.academicvocabulary.info/>), all available online for free.

Extensive Reading

- **Extensive Reading Foundation.** The Extensive Reading Foundation has been created to support and promote extensive reading. It maintains a bibliography of research on extensive reading, and awards the best graded readers each year. The Foundation's website is an excellent resource in that it provides "a comprehensive, searchable, downloadable [list] of graded readers from around the world - providing useful information for educators and language learners" searching for appropriate graded readers. It provides not only basic information about a graded reader's series, title, author, and ISBN, but also detailed information about its headwords, level, total number of words, genre, target audience, whether or not it has won an award, and even more, all available online (<https://sites.google.com/site/erfgelist/>). This website is therefore very useful for choosing appropriate graded readers matched to the learners' vocabulary level (as determined by diagnostic tests). Also consult the homepages of some of the publishers listed in the website, as they often provide resources (lesson plans, worksheets, answer keys) to support classroom reading programs (e.g., <http://www.penguinreaders.com/teachers-main.html>). For more information about setting up a good graded reading program for learners, see Nation (2013, pp. 254-256).

We are very fortunate to have access to the brilliant list of resources mentioned above (which is by no means exhaustive). To make the process of vocabulary teaching and learning more effective and efficient, we should take full advantage of such resources, and actively encourage learners to use them, as well.

References

- Browne, C., Culligan, B., & Phillips, J. (2013). *The New General Service List*. Retrieved from <http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org>
- Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 213-238.
- Gardner, D., & Davies, M. (2014). A new academic vocabulary list. *Applied Linguistics*, 35(3), 305-327.
- Laufer, B., & Nation, P. (1999). A vocabulary size test of controlled productive ability. *Language Testing*, 16(1), 33-51.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1983). Testing and teaching vocabulary. *Guidelines*, 5(1), 12-25.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1993). Measuring readiness for simplified material: A test of the first 1,000 words of English. In M. L. Tickoo (Ed.), *Simplification: Theory and application, RELC anthology series* (No. 31, pp. 193-203). Singapore: SEAMEO-RELC.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques*. Boston, MA: Heinle.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2012). *The BNC/COCA word family lists*. Retrieved from http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/publications/paul-nation/Information-on-the-BNC_COCA-word-family-lists.pdf
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Nation, I. S. P., & Beglar, D. (2007). A vocabulary size test. *The Language Teacher*, 31(7), 9-13.
- Schmitt, N., Schmitt, D., & Clapham, C. (2001). Developing and exploring the behaviour of two new versions of the Vocabulary Levels Test. *Language Testing*, 18(1), 55-88.
- West, M. (1953). *A General Service List of English words*. London, UK: Longman, Green & Co.

Sarvenaz Hatami is a PhD candidate in the TESL program in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta.

Many of the following research projects would not have been possible without the support and participation of ATESL members, for which we are grateful. Those abstracts followed by a url denote capping projects that have been posted in the University of Alberta Education and Research Archive (ERA), where they can be accessed by the public. Previous TESL capping projects can be found in the database by searching “TESL” on the ERA Homepage (<https://era.library.ualberta.ca/public/home>).

Anne Chandler

Teaching and Learning Articles in ESL (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.39561>)

English article use is one of the most difficult aspects of English grammar for both teachers and learners of English as a second language (ESL). A teacher in Yamada and Matsuura’s (1982) study claimed that his students used articles “almost randomly” (p. 50) while some researchers (e.g., Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982; Swan, 2005) are convinced that the attempt to teach articles to ESL learners is a futile one. However, Master (1990, 2002) maintains that English article use has a system that is both teachable and learnable. He and other researchers (e.g., Butler, 2002; White, 2009, 2010) have proposed various pedagogical approaches for the teaching and learning of the English article system in ESL. In this paper I link research on English articles and English article acquisition to ESL pedagogy. I outline the form, meaning, and use characteristics of English articles, the difficulties associated with their acquisition, and guidelines suggested by the experts for teaching the article system to ESL students.

Irina Krasnikova

Film as a Source of Authentic Material in Teaching ESL Writing (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.38869>)

The objective of this paper is to examine how language acquisition can be most effectively maximized through film as the visual medium. This project explores ways of using modern Hollywood movies in the ESL classroom as a means of developing the writing skills of ESL learners. To my knowledge, no previous studies have focused on the relevance of the linguistic material and content of authentic video resources to a certain writing proficiency level outlined by Canadian Language Benchmarks competency indicators. Particularly, the benefits of using films are analyzed within the framework of CLB 6-8 writing requirements including both language proficiency and competence profiles. CLB 6 to CLB 8 proficiency has been chosen for this project because language requirements at these levels assume an expanded range of vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical conventions. The movies have been selected based on linguistic and non-linguistic criteria relevant for the specific environment of the ESL classroom. Some recommendations regarding movie selection are suggested to instructors. Based on these criteria, a number of classroom writing activities have been created (3 to 5 for each film). Finally, the study encompasses films that were released in the last decade and have not yet been in the spotlight of pedagogical attention. The language, cultural context, and pragmatics in these films can be motivating for learners due to their current and meaningful content. This study may contribute to a better understanding of benefits of authentic language use in the ESL classroom

Stacy Norrbom - ESL Learner Attitudes Toward Sexual Minority Identities

The intersection among language, culture and sexuality is complex. Attitudes toward sexual minorities are culturally embedded, and English as a second language (ESL) learners in Canada not only require linguistic skills to navigate their new environment, but they also need information relevant to cultural norms and the laws that govern the people. It is widely assumed that ESL learners hold conservative attitudes toward sexual minorities, which is not surprising given the political and religious status of gay rights around the world. Using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, the current study explores ESL learner attitudes toward sexual minorities and their rights, and examines factors that may contribute to the formation of these attitudes. Although the findings suggest that attitudes are mixed, ESL students in this sample,

particularly international students, hold quite positive views toward sexual minorities. Additionally, the study reveals that personal interaction with sexual minorities, knowledge of Canadian law, and immigration status are correlated with attitudes toward this population.

Deborah Ricketts

Analysis of Tasks and Activities in ESL Pronunciation Books (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.38868>)

Pronunciation plays an important role in effective communication and should be a key consideration in English as a second language (ESL) instruction; however, some educators feel uncomfortable teaching pronunciation. The purpose of this study was to examine the content of selected pronunciation textbooks and instructors' manuals to determine what instructional support is provided. Tables summarizing the findings and an annotated bibliography were created to assist ESL instructors when choosing pronunciation-specific textbooks.

Sixteen texts were examined. Twelve were beginner through advanced-level student books and four were teachers' manuals. The student texts were analyzed to determine the extent to which activities were communicative, contextualized, and spiraled (recycled). In addition, instructional foci were examined for the percentages of activities which were related to perception, production, segmental, and suprasegmental features. The instructors' manuals were reviewed for teaching tips, instructions, and pedagogical content.

The student textbook findings indicate that of the twelve texts, seven were comprised of fewer than 40% of communicative activities. Moreover, contextualization of activities varied greatly (12% to 30%), with beginner textbooks displaying more disparity. Also, the data show that a small percentage of content was spiraled as nine of the 12 textbooks examined contained fewer than 15% of revisited pronunciation points. With regard to instructional foci, findings suggest that all but two of the textbooks contained between 50% to 60% of perception and production related activities, and that there was consistent representation of combined perception and production related tasks. This study appears to reflect existing research findings, which suggest that a balance should be struck between segmental and suprasegmental features.

Findings from the instructors' manuals indicate that a broad array of information was imparted. Some manuals provided helpful teaching tips, explicit instructions, and pedagogical rationale for activities while others offered limited advice and reminders for instructors to monitor their learners' pronunciation. It is suggested that more explicit instructions and explanations of activities would provide added support for L2 learners and educators. Also, since many instructors lack formal training in pronunciation, greater attention to sound pedagogical principles, particularly in teachers' manuals, could provide guidance for educators in setting instructional goals and enhancing pronunciation teaching. Further collaboration among educators, researchers and publishers is also necessary.

In general, the findings of this study show that pronunciation textbooks vary greatly in content and quality. It is unrealistic to presume that textbooks can address all of the needs of individual L2 learners and instructors or that they can be used as the sole source for pronunciation programs; nevertheless, they do provide structure and guidance for educators. To improve the quality of pronunciation instruction and enrich the learning experience of students, educators must continue to be accountable and committed to self enhancement and professionalism. Attending conferences (e.g., Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching, TESL Canada, and TESOL), taking a personal interest in pronunciation by reading and discussing current literature with colleagues, and attending local TESL meetings and workshops are ways to gain background knowledge in the absence of formal training.

Jacob Scheffer

How Does Video Captioning Improve Listening Comprehension? (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.39875>)

The question, 'How does video captioning improve listening comprehension (LC)?' is discussed from the perspective of the value captioned video brings to the adult English as a second language (ESL) learner and from how they can be effectively used in the ESL classroom. Listening comprehension is a multifaceted construct made up of and influenced by numerous factors. Captions and subtitles can vary in quality and only through judicious use will they maximize language proficiency

for the language learner (LL). The idea that captioned video improves listening comprehension is presented through numerous studies that indicate the benefits and pitfalls of caption use. The major elements that influence listening comprehension when using captioned video include learning strategies and proficiency level, caption type, and video type. Each factor is discussed and the means to manage them is described.

Laurie Scheffer - *Using NFB Shorts in the ESL Classroom*

Integration of authentic material into the English as a second language (ESL) classroom is fundamental to language acquisition and progression through the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). This study is an evaluation of National Film Board (NFB) short films (shorts) for the ESL classroom specifically focused on CLB 1 to 5. The purpose was the creation of a teachers' guide for the development and improvement of learners' listening skills and for promotion of post-viewing discussions. The evaluation considered production date, length of the short, theme related to learner engagement, the language utilized, and the relationship to the learners' CLB competency areas. Results indicated that twelve shorts met the established criteria. Analyses revealed that these shorts will require varying degrees of scaffolding, and as expected, the shorts chosen for CLB 1 to 2 will require additional scaffolding. Pre- and post-viewing activities are suggested for each of the shorts.

Jacqueline Werstiuk - *The Feedback on Feedback: Has Research Influenced Pedagogy?*

Corrective feedback (CF) has been simply defined as 'responses to learner's utterances containing an error' (Ellis 2006, p. 28). For this report, second language acquisition (SLA) research was reviewed for evidence-based findings on oral corrective feedback in the classroom setting and compared with current pedagogical discourse represented in textbooks for teachers of English as a second language (ESL). A content analysis of 31 teacher education textbooks revealed themed statements and suggestions on oral corrective feedback with ESL learners. The amount of text dedicated to the direct instruction of CF within each guide, as well as the number of cited SLA references, were quantified. The guides were then examined for their references to the six types of oral corrective feedback outlined by Lyster and Ranta (1997). The results of these data, coupled with a qualitative analysis of several other themes related to CF, are presented.

Brenda Chwyl

***Linking Grammar to CLB-Based Materials: Theory to Practice* (<http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.39563>)**

Second language acquisition (SLA) research has well established that learners require input, interaction and focus on form during communicative language lessons (Ellis, 2012; Spada & Lightbown, 2008). The question now is no longer if form-focused instruction (FFI) should be included but where and how the inclusion is most effective in integrating grammar instruction within task-based lessons (Spada & Lightbown, 2008).

To date, there has been limited research that has directly addressed the topic of integration of grammar and tasks. However, Spada and Lightbown (2008) have argued that integrated FFI is beneficial in transfer-appropriate processing. Supporters of transfer-appropriate processing argue that learners can retrieve knowledge if the processes for retrieval are similar to those that were used in the learning condition. For example, using FFI with the present perfect (I have..., I've learned...) in communicative activities (listening and speaking) that have students practicing interview questions using the present perfect can be seen as transfer-appropriate because it transfers knowledge from the learning condition to a real life event.

CLB-based instruction is expected to be task-based, emphasizing communicative tasks based on real-life communication. The purpose of this study was to examine how grammar instruction is integrated within a set of well-known published CLB-based materials, *Canadian Snapshots: Raising Issues* (Kingwell, Bonkowski, Stephenson, & Holmes, 2005), designed for adult ESL learners in Canada. The following research questions (RQ) were addressed:

- RQ1: What types of grammar explanations and practice activities are found in *Canadian Snapshots: Raising Issues*?
- RQ2: Are the grammar explanations consistent with grammar reference books?
- RQ3: Do the grammar practice activities conform to best practice standards for grammar instruction?

RQ4: How are form-focused activities and communicative tasks linked?

Results

RQ1: Analysis showed that all (16/16) grammar explanations in the student book had a grammar explanation box, 14/16 focus on grammar (FOG) targets had an accurate grammar rule, 16/16 FOG targets used meta-language and less than 1% had rules explaining when or when not to use a grammar target. In terms of practice activities, of the 19 production outputs, 74% (14/19) were classified as closed production (narrow drill type, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice) and, consistent with closed production, the majority (68%, 13/19) of production outputs required reading and writing. Only 26% (5/19) were open production (students creating their own text or dialogue). Therefore, only 21% (4/19) of production outputs required speaking and writing and 11% (2/19) of production outputs required reading and speaking.

RQ2: Each explanation and example of a FOG target regarding accuracy was compared to Kennedy's (2003) grammar reference book; 88% of the grammar targets were seen as accurate.

RQ3: Overall, it was found that the grammar practice activities did not conform to best practice standards for grammar instruction. Learners need more opportunities to notice grammatical forms through input from listening activities, and more output through speaking and writing.

RQ4: The results showed that the practices of the grammatical forms were often contextualized within the topics of the tasks, but they were lacking in open-ended practice activities. The grammar therefore was not integrated with language learning tasks. This impedes the process of transfer appropriateness in which the grammar practice is similar to the demands of real communication.

Conclusion

Because most of the grammar exercises were found to be decontextualized and lacking in authenticity and meaningful practice, the textbook itself does not satisfy the needs of task-based CLB-based programs. Grammar instruction is meant to encourage learners to notice and analyze the forms, meanings, and uses of target structures; to provide ample exposure to target structures; to provide opportunity for pushed output, in which learners are encouraged to use new structures in spoken and written communication; and to provide feedback (ATESL, 2009).

My recommendations are for curriculum designers and material writers to have knowledge of grammar theories and the results of empirical research from SLA. In order to have theoretical and evidence-based research realized through classroom practice (Nunan, 1987), TESL professionals, pre-service teachers, and instructors need to acquire formal grammar instruction and need to develop a repertoire of options for addressing grammar forms in the context of communicative task-based teaching.

References

- Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (2009). *Best practices for adult ESL and LINC programming in Alberta*. Calgary, AB: Author.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *Language teaching research and language pedagogy*. Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kennedy, G. (2003). *Structure and meaning in English*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- Kingwell, G., Bonkowski, F.J., Stephenson, L., & Holmes, T. (2005). *Canadian snapshots: Raising issues*. Saint-Laurent, QC: Éditions du Renouveau Pédagogique.
- Nunan, D. (1987). Communicative language teaching: Making it work. *ELT Journal*, 41, 136-145.
- Spada, N., & Lightbown, P. (2008). Form-focused instruction: Isolated or integrated? *TESOL Quarterly*, 42, 181-207.

**A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING
WRITTEN BY MEMBERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM,
FACULTY OF EXTENSION, UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**

**Task-Based Language Teaching Mentorship in EAP:
Action Research as a Catalyst for Professional Development¹
Martin Guardado and Yvonne Breckenridge, University of Alberta**

Introduction

This theme issue of the *ATESL Newsletter* includes articles based on a meta-project designed to introduce English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioners to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Working within an action research (AR) framework, the participants learned about TBLT and AR, engaged in peer discussions, designed individual projects, and implemented these projects in their classrooms. This introductory article provides an overview of TBLT and AR and describes the umbrella project. The articles that follow summarize practical aspects of the projects, exemplifying how this model served to provide professional development opportunities to the participating EAP instructors. The closing article engages with an analysis of the instructors' reported experiences.

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching is a top down response to the form-focused and teacher-fronted classroom practices that fell out of favour after the 1970s (Van den Branden, 2006). Pioneering work by Michael Long, Patricia Porter, N. S. Prabhu, Peter Skehan, Graham Crookes, and others initiated a move away from rather decontextualized linguistic syllabi and teaching and towards approaches that focused on interaction and negotiation of meaning. This work was at least partly responsible for the emergence of TBLT, which has surfaced in the last two decades as an updated and robust variety of the unstructured CLT approaches that dominated the field in the 1980s and 1990s. Notably, there is no unified view of TBLT, and in fact, even the definition of what constitutes *task* itself can vary across versions. However, what TBLT proponents share is the commitment to language learning activities that closely mirror the tasks learners will need to perform in the real world. Based on a review of definitions of task, Ellis (2003) proposes key characteristics of a language-learning task, namely, a task:

- is a workplan
- involves a primary focus on meaning
- involves real-world processes of language use
- can involve any of the four language skills
- engages cognitive processes
- has a clearly defined communicative outcome (pp. 9-10)

Skehan (2014) further states that tasks can be narrowly- or broadly-conceived, thus allowing for a range of types of activities, some with tightly-controlled practice and others with the potential for high engagement.

Whereas CLT is mainly meaning-based, TBLT focuses on meaning while also incorporating a psycholinguistic orientation, which facilitates more direct linkages to SLA research (Skehan, 2014). An ongoing critique to TBLT research, however, has been its reliance on laboratory experimentation and its limited focus on actual classroom settings, making it less relevant and credible to teachers. In response to this reality, Van den Branden (2006) poses the following question: does TBLT work for teachers and learners in the classroom as well as it does for SLA researchers? (p. 1). Indeed, the questions posed by researchers are different from those of teachers. While researchers may examine issues of task design, complexity, and negotiation of meaning, teachers may be interested in task implementation and integration into their

existing lessons and their outcomes. Despite the vast body of TBLT literature based on experimentation, research conducted by teachers themselves is lacking. Ellis (2011) suggests that AR is ideal for conducting practitioner TBLT research.

Action Research

Practitioners conduct action research on their own practice in order to improve it. In language education, AR entails a systematic, self-reflective stance in the observation of one's own teaching and in the identification and selection of an area of concern (Burns, 2010). It has gained recognition in language education as it provides teachers with the tools to critically examine their assumptions about teaching. Even though AR helps teachers monitor their teaching in general, it also enhances their ability to address unsatisfactory situations in their teaching.

The Mentorship Project

Setting, participants and goals

The articles in this theme issue are part of several interrelated case studies, each constituting a self-contained AR project, conducted in the EAP program in the English Language Program at the University of Alberta. The project involved two Bridging Program courses, EAP 140 and 145, with class sizes averaging 14-18 students of various national backgrounds, with high representation from China. These are 3-credit courses of 132 hours each and delivered over seven weeks. The majority of the students have been conditionally admitted into degree programs because they require further English language development and academic preparation. Successful completion of EAP 145 allows them to meet the English language proficiency requirements and become fully admitted.

Along with the Academic Director of the program (Guardado), an instructor (Breckenridge) was engaged as a co-lead of the meta-project due to her advanced training and expertise. The participants were five EAP instructors (including Breckenridge) who volunteered to take part in a mentorship initiative. The project was launched in the summer of 2012 and lasted approximately 18 months.

The central goal of the project was to provide a professional development opportunity that was context-sensitive, mentorship-based, and teacher-driven. Given the full teaching loads of the instructors, an attempt was made to provide a structure that posed the least time demands while leaving enough leeway for them to work at their own pace and according to their own interests. In order to reach this balance, the project was designed in five stages.

Stage 1: Activating background knowledge

This stage involved examining the participants' prior knowledge of TBLT and AR. This was accomplished through surveys, written reflections, and interviews. We found that, aside from Breckenridge, the instructors had developed surface knowledge of TBLT through interactions with colleagues and student teachers, but still required the understanding needed for engaging with the project. Therefore, a reading group was formed.

Stage 2: The reading group

We selected practitioner-friendly readings that provided enough background information and practical procedures in a concise format considering the instructors' teaching schedules. First, we discussed several chapters of Anne Burns' (2010) *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners*. For the TBLT part, we used two texts: 1) *Task-Based Language Teaching in a Nutshell*, which is the introduction to Kris Van Den Branden's (2006) edited collection *Task-Based Language Education: From Theory to Practice* and 2) two chapters from Jane Willis' (1996) *A Framework for Task-Based Learning* containing Willis' TBLT model. The first chapter described the model in detail (see Figure 1) and the second provided a sample lesson plan and step-by-step implementation guidance.

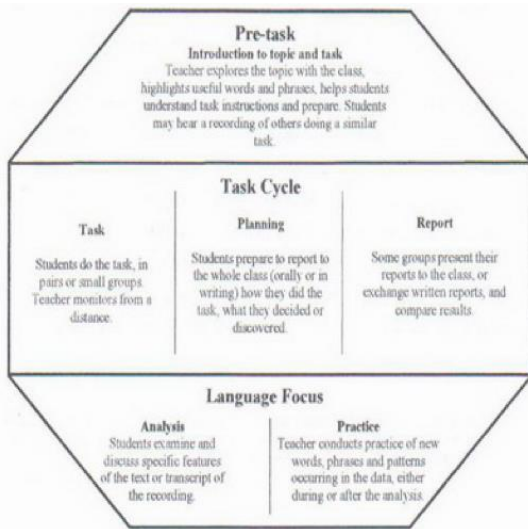


Figure 1: TBLT Model (Willis, 1996, p. 38)

Even though Willis' is a rigid model, which seemingly contradicted one of our central goals of fostering mentorship that was teacher-driven, we selected it for several reasons, especially because it provided a common foundation for understanding TBLT and it ensured a degree of consistency across the individual projects. Additionally, the model was introduced as a starting point and instructors were encouraged to adapt it to their own needs. Thus, the instructors learned and lived TBLT in their classrooms.

Stage 3: Individual action plans

During this stage, the instructors worked on how to improve their practice and identified an issue to investigate. They engaged in independent, unstructured reflection using questions and topics provided in order to stimulate their writing. These were sometimes shared through the project's e-Class site.

Stage 4: Project implementation

In implementing their projects, the instructors adapted the TBLT framework and followed the cyclical AR model set out by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) that suggests a recursive approach to research that includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. As a result, the projects evolved differently and were implemented only in one term or over several terms.

Stage 5: Final reflections

At the end of the meta-project, all instructors engaged in extensive reflective work on their experiences through writing on their own and in face-to-face interviews with the project co-leads. Results from this final stage are discussed in the closing article.

Conclusion

The self-contained action research projects embedded in this meta-study constitute examples of a professional development mentorship program designed to be teacher-driven and context-specific. Even though the project organizers established a foundational structure for instructors to follow, they also attempted to foster autonomy so that instructors could build on their interests, strengths, and classroom needs. The articles below illustrate how the instructors experienced this mentorship program and provide glimpses into the professional development trajectories that each of them followed.

¹ The list of references appears at the end of the concluding article.

Using Non-academic Listening Tasks in an English for Academic Purposes Course

Luke Jang, University of Alberta

Introduction—Testing or Teaching?

Early in my teaching career, when I presented listening material in class, I basically pressed *play* on a tape recorder and then went over answers to listening comprehension questions with my students. Vandergrift and Goh (2012) criticized this type of approach: “Many of the listening activities [in language classrooms] do little more than test how well [students] can listen” (p. 4), which causes stress and anxiety for them. For the TBLT project, I wanted to focus on listening tasks that would not be construed as a test. I refer to these tasks as *non-academic listening tasks*. My criteria for these tasks are that they are fun, engaging, and naturally lead students to practice specific listening strategies that they may not practice during tests.

My listening tasks included identifying factual errors, solving detective stories, finishing a story, guessing the meaning of nonsense words, retelling jokes, making origami or maps, and inferring missing information. Penny Ur’s (1984) *airplane announcement* is an example of identifying factual errors. The students listen to something that sounds like an airplane announcement and try to identify seven errors. Here is a short excerpt with one error: “We have just taken off from London on our flight to New York. We shall be flying due east” (p. 82). This task will be used to illustrate my approach.

TBLT—The Planning Stage

Judging from a small sample size, my TBLT classes were more successful in identifying errors in the airplane announcement than my non-TBLT classes. I had been using this type of listening task for several years before the TBLT project, and had aspects of TBLT’s pre-task and task cycle stages, but had never consciously followed the TBLT approach. However, by following Willis’s TBLT framework, I added more tasks to each stage. For the airplane announcement, the additions that I could observe most effectively and connect to the students’ successful task completion, was the poster-making in the planning stage, which was included to make the stage more student-centred and to have a more tangible product of task completion. The students discussed their answers more and were more engaged than in the non-TBLT classes. Possibly, writing the errors on a poster that they knew others would read encouraged more critical thinking. And while they were no longer listening to the announcement, their reflections on what they thought they heard was an invaluable exercise to lead them away from giving answers based more on sounds instead of on meaning. The poster helped make the lesson more meaning-focused.

TBLT—Time Consuming

The airplane lesson took 1.5 hours with TBLT, but only about 25 minutes before TBLT. I wanted to use about a dozen non-academic listening tasks through the whole course, so 1.5 hours was too long for each task. To make it work, if the students were familiar with a type of task, I shortened the non-academic task to just listening, discussing answers, and then reporting them. Then I moved to an academic lecture. Basically, I used the non-academic task as a pre-task to activate their listening strategies for the main part, an academic lecture.

TBLT—The Post-task Stage

The post-task stage, also known as the language focus stage, also added time because I did not have a post-task before. For deciding on the type of post-task that I would implement with TBLT, I knew I did not want to focus on “new words, phrases, and patterns,” which is how Willis (1996) described this stage. These elements emphasize an individual listening text too much, and may not help with many future listenings. Instead, I shifted the focus to listening strategies and skills so that they could be applied to most listenings. More specifically, I employed *metacognition*, or “the act of thinking about thinking” (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 5), by having students reflect on how they listened.

Judging by the students’ reflections, I was successful by the end of the course in raising their awareness of the importance of a variety of listening strategies. In their reflections at the beginning of the term, most comments relating to

listening strategies were about understanding vocabulary. However, at the end, they said things such as “focus on the big picture,” “we need to infer [something] from the listening,” and “get some new knowledge from listening instead of just writing down the answer.” Other strategies I encouraged included guessing vocabulary, predicting, activating schema, and connecting ideas.

Using Non-academic Tasks in an Academic Course

One concern about using non-academic listening can be that the language, register, and subject matter differ from academic lectures. It is true that non-academic listening does not effectively prepare students in these areas. However, the students did find that they used critical thinking and various listening strategies in such tasks as the airplane announcement. Students’ comments were overwhelmingly positive on the use of non-academic listenings, including their understanding that listening strategies could transfer over to the academic side. They also did these tasks with less stress and anxiety.

On the academic side, I use *Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn*, a listening textbook with audio lectures and a task-based approach. But as Kris Van den Branden (2006) indicated, “In the literature, various definitions have been offered that differ quite widely in scope and formulation up to a point where almost anything related to educational activity can now be called a ‘task’” (p. 3). One of the main tasks in my textbook is taking notes of a lecture. However, students are sometimes bored or do not focus on meaning. On this point, I particularly like Bygate, Swain and Skehan’s (2001) concise definition of a task: “An activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective” (p. 11). My students focused on meaning with the non-academic tasks, but with academic lectures, they focused more on writing down words without thinking more deeply about the meaning. My main point is that, just because a task is given, and TBLT is employed, does not mean students will learn effectively. The key is selecting a task that brings genuine interest to the students.

Certainly, students can be more interested in academic lectures too. For example, after giving a presentation of my TBLT project to my colleagues in our EAP program, one instructor, Sara Gnida, used the ideas of the airplane announcement and applied them to a lecture. She took a transcript of a lecture and created 10 errors to the content. In another lesson, Sara had students take notes on a lecture about two famous people with the understanding that they would have to “introduce” these people at an imaginary talk.

Conclusion

This project gave me more confidence that my unconventional use of non-academic listening activities can help improve students’ academic listening and listening in general. In addition, using TBLT improved my old lessons, but I need to be careful with time since TBLT can be time-consuming. On the positive side, TBLT’s planning stage made my activities more student-centred, and encouraged the students to reflect on what they thought they heard. The post-task stage brought a new dimension to my teaching, using metacognition, especially to raise awareness of various listening strategies. Overall, non-academic listening tasks can bring self-confidence to students who may struggle with academic lectures.

English in Real Life: Using TBLT for Improving Fluency and Social Integration

Sofia Elgueta Duplancic, University of Alberta

Project Focus

In the initial stage of our individual action research project, we were asked to identify problems we were facing when teaching our EAP courses. I had a challenge I had not been able to address for years: my students’ insufficient use of English outside of my language classroom. I also attributed two other problems—poor improvement during our seven-week course and a poor adaptation to academic life in Canada—to their unwillingness to use English when not in class. This was the focus of my *English in Real Life* project.

Possible reasons for students' limited use of English outside the classroom were hypothesized. The most important one seemed to be large cultural communities in Edmonton so many students can easily go about their day speaking their native language. Many of our students are shy or self-conscious, do not know how to make friends from a different culture, what to do, or where to go in a new city. In an online survey, students reported it was just "easier" to use their own language (88%), because their roommates and friends spoke their same language (69%), and they were embarrassed to make mistakes in English (31%).

The English in Real Life Tasks

TBLT was an ideal way to encourage students to use English to carry out tasks outside the classroom. Ellis' (2006) definition of task includes those that focus on meaning with a true communicative purpose, using language in the real world. Tasks done in English outside the classroom could help students use the language more consistently, get to know Edmonton and its attractions, interact with the community and make friends with whom they could speak English as well. It was anticipated that the extra practice would also help most of the students gain fluency and confidence.

A set of six tasks were designed as follows:

1. Participate in Week of Welcome activities; find out information about a club at Club's Fair
2. Talk to someone you have never spoken to before
3. Visit the Centre for Writers or the International Student Centre on campus
4. Visit an attraction in Edmonton or find out about a volunteering opportunity
5. Go to the cinema and watch a movie with a friend
6. Plan a class outing

TBLT in our EAP Classroom

The TBLT framework was applied in one-week cycles, beginning every Monday with the pre-task stage and a presentation of the tasks to students. They had the whole week to complete the task in their own time; the planning and reporting of their experience was done the next Monday or Tuesday, and then followed by the Language Focus stage.

Figure 1 represents how Willis' (1996) TBLT model was lived in our EAP classroom.

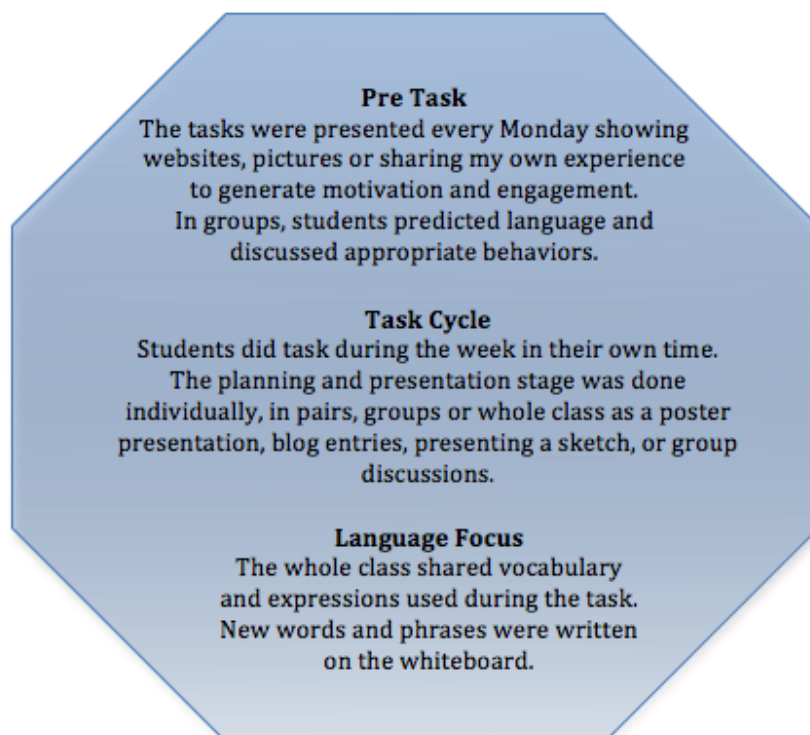


Figure 1: TBLT in our EAP Classroom

My very quiet and shy students turned into an open, friendly and unified group. I was very pleased with how enthusiastic they were and how they looked forward to the next task. They also found it a very positive experience. They reported they had found the tasks *fun* and *interesting* and that thanks to them, they had become part of the Edmonton community, gained fluency, and made friends. *English in Real Life* was a success.

TBLT - Benefits

TBLT proved to be a very valuable approach to address the issue of the students' reluctance to speak English outside of class.

Some of the benefits of using the TBLT approach were:

- The students saw the value in using English in a real context with a real purpose so they were very motivated to complete the tasks
- TBLT was compatible with my teaching philosophy so there was not a marked difference between other activities we would normally do and the English in Real Life project
- The framework helped me plan more carefully and structure my classes in a more systematic way

TBLT - Challenges and Possible Modifications

The TBLT framework presented some challenges as well, especially in relation to time management and to the language focus stage. Table 1 shows a summary of these and suggestions of possible solutions.

Table 1: TBLT – Challenges and Possible Solutions

Problem	Description	Possible solution
Time management	<u>Pre-task</u> : Students were curious and asked many questions during this stage. Not wanting to dampen their enthusiasm, I sometimes spent twice as long presenting a task than I had planned.	Assigning some pre-task activities to be done partially at home, posting relevant information on our e-Class site for preview before completing the task.
	<u>Reporting</u> : Individual presentations or planning for group activities was very time-consuming,	Favouring some ways to share the experience without using class time, such as blogs or vlogs. Planning for group presentations at home.
Language Focus	Very <u>difficult to predict language</u> of authentic interactions. Many of the phrases students had used to complete the tasks had already been discussed in the pre-task stage and most new words and expressions were not relevant for the class as a whole. As a result, there was <u>no practice stage</u> .	Briefly referring to language structures and vocabulary discussed in the pre-task

During this stage, other topics were brought up that were not strictly related to language but to cultural aspects of the interaction the students had had. Some examples were related to political correctness, protecting personal information, and safety, among many others. These were addressed and discussed, as all the students were interested and would benefit from the information shared. These topics were difficult to predict, plan for, and time.

Planning and addressing select cultural and social interaction issues in the post-task stage.

Recommendations for Instructors

After my experience with TBLT, I would suggest the following tips for instructors trying the framework out in their classrooms.

1. Stress the importance of **doing something** with language. The TBLT framework can help you focus on the purpose of the activities you do in class and verbalise this to students. The immediate functionality of the language they are working with can focus and motivate students
2. **Adapt the TBLT framework** to YOUR teaching style, trying to consider the different stages but making it your own
 - a. Sometimes you may have a longer pre-task stage but no language focus; whereas another task may need little preparation but require practice and a longer focus on form and vocabulary post-task
 - b. Know the framework well but be comfortable to introduce variations so that not all classes are the same. Following the exact same structure/stages day after day can be very boring for you and your students!
 - c. Try to design some tasks that involve more than one language skill and that intrinsically motivate students
 - d. Vary task involvement and focus to ensure task diversity
3. If **timing** is an issue, plan for different pre-task activities, planning of reports, or the reporting itself to be done at home
 - a. Asking students to come to class prepared for a certain task (using the Internet, or reading something you put together) may cut the pre-task stage time significantly
 - b. Similarly, having students blog about their experience (report) or plan a short group presentation (planning stage) at home can free some valuable class time
4. The **post-task stage** may require a focus on sociolinguistic topics or have to deal with strategic competence skills instead of language patterns or vocabulary

Conclusion

The project was a very positive experience. TBLT helped me plan and structure my classes more carefully. As I knew the framework better and was comfortable to make adjustments to it, my classes improved. The Action Research project we did as a group had a strong impact on my practice, making it more reflective and conscious. I will continue to use TBLT tasks to help my students communicate in English outside of class easing their adaptation to a new community while improving their fluency and confidence. Based on my positive experience, I would strongly encourage other EAP instructors to try this approach.

TBLT and the Evolution of the Task

Lisa Matthew, University of Alberta

Project Overview

By participating in the Task-Based Language Teaching project, I have been motivated to reflect on what I do in the classroom and why I do it. My teaching philosophy naturally follows the TBLT framework, not only because I see the value in it, but also because it is closely aligned with the goals for our EAP students. Our students have chosen to study in a Western institution where English is the language of instruction. Their goal is to establish fluency in English for study and possibly work purposes. Therefore, it makes sense to expose students to meaningful, real-world activities in order to build confidence and strong language skills. I am most interested in engaging students more effectively in active learning, while improving their reading comprehension, knowledge about the world and critical thinking skills. Many of the students in the EAP program come from a culture of teacher-centered learning. They are very good at memorizing large chunks of information and test taking skills. However, these skills do not serve them well in an English-speaking environment where they are asked to communicate with other international students and hone their critical thinking skills.

Reading the Newspaper as a Meaningful Context for Improving Critical Thinking and Global Awareness

Current events discussions can liven up the classroom. When students discuss the news they consider issues that are relevant and real. The news stories are rich and full of vocabulary from the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000). The reading texts are authentic and students feel a sense of accomplishment when they are able to understand and discuss an issue in-depth. University students are expected to consider different perspectives and ideologies. This is something EAP instructors need to take into account, as it is the first time in a multi-cultural setting for many of our students. Newspapers are easily accessible and make big concepts manageable when broken down into a series of small tasks. Thereby, the focus of my project was to find out how reading the newspaper and becoming informed about current events impacts critical thinking and global awareness. At the same time, I had language-learning goals in mind. I wanted my students to develop the language skills needed to participate in the social, cultural and economic worlds within a multicultural setting. It was my hope that students would better understand the purpose of their assignments or tasks and identify the areas where more improvement and support were needed. Below is a brief outline of the newspaper lesson organized according to the TBLT framework (Figure 1).

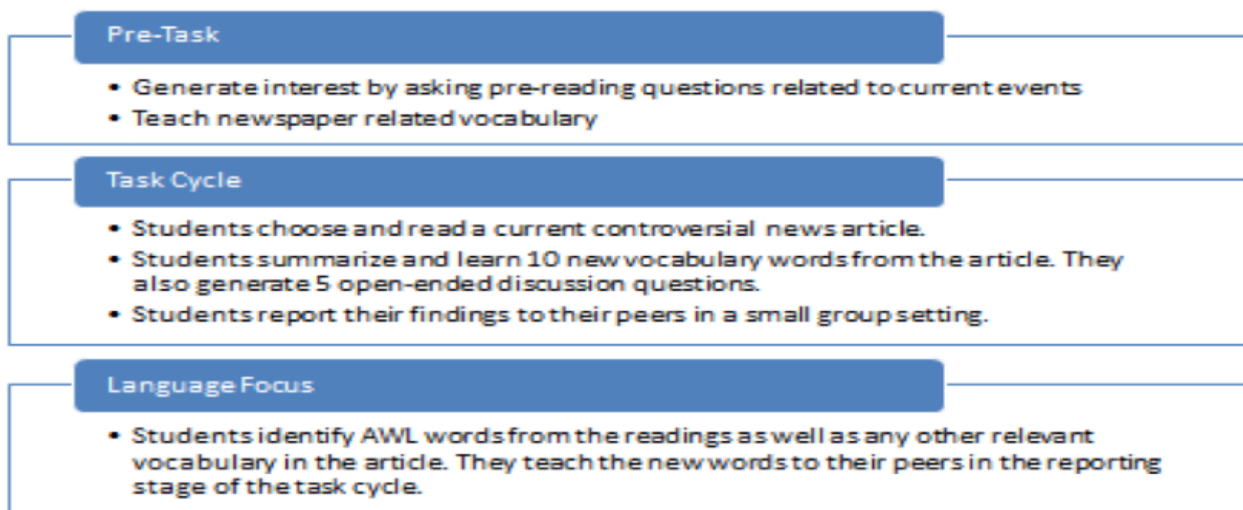


Figure 1: Task-Based Lesson in a Nutshell

Language Study and Observations

As Willis (1996) suggests, in a task-based lesson meaning comes before language. The purpose of the newspaper lesson was to extend vocabulary, practice using persuasive language and ask open-ended questions. What is more, the lesson was beneficial for other students in the group. Group members had to actively listen to the discussion leader, ask questions about the issue, and offer their opinions. Thus, the students were not worried about form; they were more

focused on meaning and speaking spontaneously. Willis (1996) tells us that by putting meaning first, students are using the language they already have and now they can be creative and resourceful as they expand their language and work together as a group to convey meaning. What I observed in this task-based lesson was, firstly, the students were in control; they were engaged and worked together to communicate. The presenter was the expert on the subject and learned that with careful planning and leadership they could establish meaningful communication with their peers. As a result, confidence, self-esteem and language skills improved.

In order to gather data, I observed students performing various tasks and took notes on how they responded to the assignments. In addition, I had the students record their reflections on the e-Class. As a result, over the course of the next three terms I modified the assignments according to the data and feedback I had collected and analyzed. At the end of the project I had plenty of data from both my students and my personal reflections to look over. After reflecting on my data and discussing my reflections with the project co-leads, three underlying themes became apparent: *1) the evolution of the task(s); 2) autonomous learning; and 3) critical thinking*. These themes were made obvious as I read and reflected on my observations throughout the various stages of the project.

The Evolution of the Task

While I was excited to see the students take responsibility for their learning and become more critical in their discussions by reading and presenting news stories, what was most interesting to me was how my approach to the task evolved and changed based on my own observations and reflections. Looking over my notes, I realized how much more detailed and structured my lessons became over the course of the terms. More importantly, I paid more attention to pre-task vocabulary and broke the main task down into a series of smaller tasks. Once I felt confident that the students had achieved the critical thinking skills that I was emphasizing, they were given the opportunity to do the larger task that I had originally planned. This is one of the challenges of teaching EAP. We have several goals in mind and tasks that we want to accomplish in a short period of time, but often students lack the foundational skills needed to complete the task well. I learned that I must spend more time at the pre-task stage, breaking the larger task down into a series of mini-tasks prior to completing the final task. In addition, I realized that some students needed practice at the pre-task stage in order to build confidence and vocabulary before beginning the task itself.

Thus, the end result was to refer to Willis's (1996) template of TBLT and re-work it so that at the end of the task cycle students would notice an improvement in their language skills and task performance. Self-evaluation was also added to the language focus of the template because, as Penny Ur (1996) observes, the purpose of any assessment is either to *enhance* or to conclude a process by confirmation of something mastered. In TBLT, students take on an active role as opposed to a passive one, so it made sense for them to reflect on their learning experience and monitor and reflect on their progress.

Recommendations

TBLT is time-consuming given the context of EAP. Some students will require more guidance and support than others and may not see the benefits of this kind of instruction. It may not achieve the desired results in all learning contexts or with all types of learners. However, instructors have to tailor TBLT according to their own contexts and blend it with other methods. I have learned that with careful planning at the pre-task stage and by breaking the tasks down into manageable parts, students develop a deeper awareness and knowledge of the language and support needed to complete the main task. Teaching students to notice their performance upon completing the task through self-evaluation gives them a sense of empowerment and appreciation for reading and discussing current events.

The Task of Teaching: The Reflective Nature of Professional Development

Yvonne Breckenridge and Martin Guardado, University of Alberta

An important goal of the project was to provide opportunities for participants to improve their teaching practice by adapting existing tasks to incorporate TBLT. As such, Lather's definition of *catalytic validity* seemed most in keeping with our approach to the research project. "Catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it..." (Lather, 1991, p. 68). This is synonymous with the TBLT approach to language learning where students are not expected to produce error free language, but use what they know to continually evaluate and improve their own understandings of the target language and learning. Similarly, we asked the participants to evaluate their understanding of TBLT and to constantly revisit how they were using TBLT and how this affected their classroom practice. In order to do this, four types of data were collected: 1) a pre-reading discussion survey, 2) recording of discussion groups, 3) reflective journals, and 4) exit interviews. What follows is a discussion of the results from the exit interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis

The four instructors did final interviews that included open-ended questions about four different areas. The first set of questions was about the instructors' participation in the project. These questions were intended to give feedback on the project. The second set of questions was about TBLT. These questions focused on their current understanding and usage of TBLT. The third set of questions was about the effect of an increased knowledge of TBLT on their classroom practice. The final set of questions was about how being a part of the project helped them to develop as researchers. Interviews took 60 to 120 minutes and were recorded, transcribed, and coded.

Themes

The four most prevalent themes that emerged across the participants' experiences were: 1) how the project acted as professional development; 2) how the project engaged them in reflective practice; 3) how the participants needed to adapt TBLT; and 4) the time constraints involved in teaching and researching.

Professional development

Although each participant went into the project envisioning it as an opportunity for professional development, the final interviews reveal how this project motivated them to change their routines in order to improve their practice. Throughout their interviews they each had individual terms for how the project motivated them to examine and change their pedagogical practice. For example, Instructor 3 stated that "... I wanted to be kicked to improve..." Similarly, Instructor 1 stated that "... I haven't pushed myself much and getting this kind of opportunity - maybe I need a push from someone else" Additionally, instructors recognized how participating in the project enhanced their understanding of themselves and their students. As Instructor 4 notes, "...when you do break out of those ruts you kind of discover new things about your students and what you're doing with your students." Similarly Instructor 2 notes that "...this was an opportunity for me to sort of challenge myself a little bit more and push myself, a little bit more, to be more purposeful in my teaching."

Reflectivity

As previously mentioned, an essential element of the project was reflecting on the benefits and challenges instructors met while adapting their tasks to incorporate TBLT. The reflection process challenged them to problematize what was once taken-for-granted. As Instructor 4 notes, "you kind of think its all up here and when you start putting it on paper... you realize it's not... you realize that it's not as clear or as simple-there's conflict there that you didn't realize..." Also, instructors saw a permanent change in their reflective practice. As Instructor 1 notes, "...I find myself now... just naturally reflecting right after the course is finished instead of saying it's 4:30 and I'd like to go home." Another benefit of

the reflective process was that instructors encouraged their students to be more reflective about their learning. Three teachers gave students surveys about their work, and Instructor 1 commented: "I've never had the students reflect on their learning in the past, so I can ...understand them better, which has an impact on the way I teach."

Adaptability

As part of the reflective process instructors adapted TBLT to suit their growing awareness of the purpose of different phases of TBLT, their confidence using it, and to accommodate time constraints. In general, the instructors found it necessary to adapt the pre-task, reporting, and language focus to align with the type of task and classroom constraints. Instructor 2 noted that using the TBLT framework allowed her to change an activity so that it was more effective. "I took... an activity that I thought was, you know a simple activity and I modified it as such that I broke it down to so many stages and steps that I think...I see the big picture now and the overall understanding of what I want them to do."

Time constraints

The biggest challenge instructors identified about the research project and using TBLT was time constraints. As researchers, the participants found that although the project was rewarding, it was difficult to focus on data analysis while teaching. Instructor 1's comment echoes the sentiments of the other instructors, "...there's very little time to look at the reflections and organize the data and think about it in a meaningful way..." Another issue was that going through the task cycle took more time as instructors began to realize the complexity of the task. For example, although instructors found the reporting phase of the task cycle valuable, it was also the most time-consuming. Fortunately, it was also a stage instructors could easily adapt by using a variety of reporting methods that included group work and on-line responses.

Discussion

We return to Lather's catalytic validity construct in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the research project. From the interviews it is clear that the research project gave participants a means to focus their professional development and allowing them to develop their own projects was energizing and transformative. As can be seen by the comments, the instructors used the TBLT framework to enhance their teaching, which is not only a desirable outcome, but a sustainable one. Three key factors contributed to the success of the project. The first was the personal investment of the participants. The second factor was autonomy because their individual plans were based on their own classroom practice. The third was reflective practice. Our understanding of reflective practice starts with Schön's (1983) *reflection in-action*, an essential classroom skill which enables the teacher to analyze the classroom experience as it is happening and make adjustments to yield more desirable student outcomes. He distinguishes this from *reflection-on action* (Schön, 1983). This is when educators reflect on the classroom experience and consider the reasons for their choices, consequences of these actions as well as alternatives. Throughout this project instructors used both forms of reflection to adapt TBLT to their teaching environment and teaching style.

Recommendations

With regard to future research, there are four recommendations from this project. The first one is that flexibility should be encouraged. As the instructors' understanding of TBLT grew, the different stages of the TBLT process became clearer to the instructors as they refined their lessons. Instructors learned first-hand the value of different stages. Second, although teachers are always engaging in reflective practice, on a daily basis it is mostly reflection in-practice. There needs to be a variety of ways for instructors to engage in reflection on-practice. Third, evaluation of current practices and curriculum is beneficial. Our instructors had increased personal investment because they saw TBLT as a method that could easily be integrated into current pedagogical practices and the curriculum. Lastly, we identified the need for research-institutional validation. It is important for administration to provide time and mentorship for research projects to motivate instructors to engage in professional development.

Biographical Information

Martin Guardado (PhD, UBC) is an Associate Professor and the Academic Director of the English Language Program, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta.

Yvonne Breckenridge (PhD, U of A) is an EAP instructor at the University of Alberta whose research focuses on how teacher identity influences professional development.

Luke Jang has been an EAP instructor at the University of Alberta for 11 years. His MEd degree in TESL is from the U of A.

Sofia Elgueta Duplancic (BEd, MA in Linguistics) has taught English and Spanish in Argentina, Chile and Canada. She currently teaches EAP at the University of Alberta.

Lisa Matthew (BEd, MEd in Curriculum Development and Teaching) has taught High School English and Social Studies. She currently teaches EAP at the University of Alberta.

Acknowledgements

The five contributors would like to thank the EAP students who enthusiastically participated in the projects and the English Language Program administration at the University of Alberta for their support.

References

- Bygate, M., Swain, M., & Skehan, P. (2001). Introduction. In M. Bygate, P. Skehan & M. Swain (Eds.), *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language learning, teaching, and testing* (pp. 1-20). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 213-238.
- Ellis, R. (2011). *Teachers evaluating tasks*. Plenary address to the Task Based Language Teaching Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Ellis, R. (2006). The methodology of task-based teaching. *Asian EFL Journal*, 8(3), 19-45.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York, NY: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, Inc.
- Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal: English Language Teachers Journal*, 58(4), 319-326.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (Eds.). (1988). *The action research planner*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Schön, D. (1978). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Skehan, P. (2014). *Task-based performance and task-based instruction: Research contributions* Paper presented at the Plenary address to the Task-Based Learning SIG-JALT, Osaka, Japan.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ur, P. (1984). *Teaching listening comprehension*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Van den Branden, K. (2006). Introduction: Task-based language teaching in a nutshell. In K. Van den Branden (Ed.), *Task-based language education: From theory to practice* (pp. 1-16). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. C. M. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. London: Longman.