You Want Me to Do *What*?
Lessons for bridging the gap into university academics

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What does your bridge look like?
Task-based language learning offers an opportunity to strengthen the bridge towards university readiness and success.

Second Language Acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching

Mike Long, University of Maryland, 2014

TBLT begins with a “task-based needs analysis to identify the target tasks for a particular group of learners” and after some modifications, the tasks are “used as the content of a task syllabus, which consists of a series of progressively more complex pedagogic tasks.”
A discipline-specific approach to listening and speaking units of learning fosters critical thinking by focusing on language tasks + authentic experience.

2 major obstacles we continually face:

• Students struggle to push their language and thinking beyond who, what, where
• And the bridge isn’t often being crossed...
Situating language tasks in discipline-specific authentic learning materials, coupled with critical-thinking practice, helps students to understand how language is used in a discipline’s research, academic lectures, field projects, etc.

**Tasks identified:** language for definitions; essential (guiding) question(s) that frame research, lectures, etc.; language signaling conclusions drawn; significance statements / summary and analysis

**Tasks identified:** Language needed to become an expert *puzzle detective* = repetitive language & synonym strings; tangential language; figurative language; transitional phrases for divergent perspectives; guiding questions

L4: Archaeology, History (Egypt), ….

L5: Neuroscience, Geology, Globalization and the Environment

L6: Sociology, Current Events, Political Science, Economics
L5 / Integrating practice and authentic experiences builds a stronger bridge toward university readiness.

*The Mysterious Workings of the Adolescent Brain*
by Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, Neuroscientist

*Origins of Pleasure* (How beliefs affect pleasure)
by Paul Bloom, Neuroscientist

Intro to Brain and Behavior (2000-level course at UNCC)
with Dr. Jeanette Bennett, Psychology Lecture: “Homunculus Man”
(sensory imprint of body on brain / how beliefs affect physical pain)

Language tasks

**Discipline-specific vocabulary** (signal language surrounding definitions)
Listening for essential questions (signal language surrounding essential questions)
**Listening for significance statements, conclusions being drawn**
(signal language for significance / conclusions drawn)
The learning is carefully scaffolded to lower apprehension of the new discipline while strengthening language / knowledge / skill.

Vocabulary defined in the lecture / signal language used by speaker:
- Adolescence (...is defined as)
- Cognitive functions (...involve things like decision making, planning, etc.)
- Synapses (The connections between cells in the gray matter of the brain, called…)
- Social brain (...that is, the network used to understand other people)

Bloom’s Level 1 & 2 Questions are used to gain basic understanding of source:
- During adolescence, what brain region changes dramatically?
- What cognitive functions are controlled by this part of the brain? (Bloom’s Level 1)

Build toward Bloom’s higher levels of understanding, analysis, discussion and presentation:
- Drawing conclusions / significance (discussion post)
- Attending and responding to a university lecture
- Presenting a summary and analysis of a brain science lecture
L5 / Offering some mental relief each week increases the desire to engage more with the discipline.

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon

(audiobook with chapter readings)

A story about an adolescent with a brain disorder, namely Asperger’s Syndrome
Focus on: independent group discussions working with Bloom’s Taxonomy

5 to 6 students / group

*Each member has a weekly job that rotates*

Each group discusses about 5 chapters / week
The neuroscience unit culminated with the students performing a readers’ theater performance of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*
L5 / Student responses from the unit of study

This unit showed me how much I miss learning and how ready I am to get back into the sciences and mathematics. -Abdulla

I love the learning of the brain. I can be a brain scientist! -Marianna

At first I did not know why I learn brain science. But I now am know that I can understand a hard major. -Abdulwahab
L5 / Student responses from the university lecture

Student 1 – Stephanie
Student 2 – Abdulrahman
Student 3 – Won Young
Student 4 - Abdulwahab
L5 / Student responses from the university lecture

1 - What I understood from her class about Homunculus Man is that sensation and movement of different parts of the body are controlled by medial cortex of the brain.

- Reem

2 - When she described her definitions she was saying the definition before the word and sometimes she was saying her definition after the word. She used her language that helps you understand what she tries to show a conclusion is drawn (So, what this means is that..., this is important because)

- Nana

3 - It was the first time to be in that big class at UNCC and I learned many things about the brain with her class and I prefer to have classes in the UNCC with American student. This class was helpful to understand more about the brain and how the brain take the informations from our bodies...

- Mohammed
L6 / University workshops & small group trips foster student autonomy & ease students into campus integration.

“and it gives new insight into Americans’ thinking…” (Japanese student)

http://ucae.uncc.edu/
www.venture.uncc.edu
Analyzing current events through the lens of different sociological theories stretches students’ critical thinking and analytical discussion skills about more abstract concepts.

Discipline-Specific Theories:

- Social Conflict Theory
- Symbolic Interactionism
- Functionalism

Videos:
www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/society-and-culture
Independent course observation projects allow students to make connections with professors and observe authentic courses in a variety of academic disciplines.

★ Differentiated for undergrad & graduate students

★ Practice note taking in real time!

★ Report findings & discuss Qs w/ Americans

★ Compile data!
L6 / Links

**Instructions:**
- Project criteria & presentation rubric

**Student Work:**
- Example of student presentation and notes

**Compile Data (Tools / Resources):**
- LS601 class observations spreadsheet
- Collection of authentic syllabi
End-of-semester resource projects can be a catalyst for employing the highest levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy (analyze, evaluate, create). Students create a final, original product to help inform and/or prepare international students for university coursework in the U.S.

Examples:

- Video & Resource Youtube Channel & Playlist [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgz9vjUP8JDT3ieWDaO8ByQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgz9vjUP8JDT3ieWDaO8ByQ)
- Vocabulary Resource Guide (compilation across majors)
Hellooo

This is Zaynab, your student, I hope that you still remember me =)
I just want to tell you that I finished my first semester at the University of Alabama at Birmingham with straight A's. I got a 4 out of 4 GPA, thanks to you. At the beginning of this semester, I was afraid that I won't be able to do well at the university. But as the days passed by, I noticed that using the strategies that I've learned at ELTI would be so helpful.

Sarah: notes, notes, and notes. Thank you for all the taking notes practices because honestly without them, I couldn't be able to pass my History class.

One last thing I will say, which is that you have added something to me (the love to learn) that I have always wanted to add. Thank you.
How can you make your bridge sturdier?
References


