

Menu Task

I. Rational

This task involves a simulation of a dining experience. This task was designed to be used with beginner learners, but can easily be adapted for use with intermediate and advanced learners.

This activity uses images found at: perfectpantry.com, thebyronicman.com, cheersboston.blogspot.com; leftoversforlunch.com, kashi.com, sunset.com; marketmeats.com, tigersandstrawberries.com, and kraftrecipes.com.

This activity supports language learning through these means: meeting the criteria for task based language teaching and interaction.

1) Task Based Language Teaching

Ellis (2009) presents the criteria an activity must meet to be considered a “task”: 1. The primary focus should be on ‘meaning,’ 2. There should be some kind of ‘gap,’ 3. Learners should have to rely on their own resources to complete the task, 4. There is a clearly defined outcome aside from the use of language (p. 223). The optical illusion opinion gap activity meets the criteria to be considered a “task.” Each learner brings their perspective to the image they are given, and they must communicate their perspective to their partner, meeting the first two precepts for TBLT (focus on meaning and a gap). The outcome for this activity is for each student to try to convince their partner to see what they see in the optical illusion; the learners should be able to use their knowledge of the language and resources to complete the task.

2) Interaction

Oxford (1997) explains that interaction is interpersonal communication, “related to: (a) types of language tasks, (b) learner’s willingness to communicate with each other, (c) learning style dimensions affecting interaction, and (d) group dynamics,” (p. 449). There are numerous task types that promote interaction. These include simulations, role plays, games, drama, and electronic communications. The weather information gap task encourages learners to interact with one another.

The menu task involves a simulation in which students take turns acting as a waiter and as a patron at a restaurant.

II. Description

1) *Pre-Task*

The teacher begins by putting KWL on the board.

She lets the students know that they will be focusing on the K for now.

Ask the students what they know about talking about food.

Record the student responses on the board under the K.

You can probe students by asking leading questions.

You can also stimulate responses by showing the students the menu.

You may need to introduce the a question that the waiter can ask: Caqiq neryurcit?- What do you want to eat?

2) *Task Cycle*

Arrange the students into groups of 2-3 students.

Give each group one to two copies of the menu.

Either assign or have the students self-assign the roles of waiter and patron(s).

Explain that the waiter's role is to ask each patron what they want and to repeat back to the patron what they have asked for (for example: Patron- "Tunturyurtua." Waiter- "Tunturyurtuten.")

Let the students complete their role, then switch, so the waiter has the opportunity to be a patron.

3) *Post Task*

Revisit the KWL chart on the board.

Ask students to identify something they want to learn, based on their experience with the task.

You can ask a question such as, "Did you notice anything that you wanted to day, but were unable to?"

Record students' responses on the L or Learn section of the KWL.

III. Reflection

I implemented this task with my secondary beginning Alutiiq students. The students identified many lexical and grammatical features of the language that they knew when speaking about food. Their responses included the postbases for "want" –yug, and "eat" –tur.

The students did not seem to have any trouble participating in this task. Each student took a turn as a patron.

After the task, I asked the students if there was anything that came up during the task that they wanted to say, but were unable to communicate it. The students identified past tense forms, time terminology such as yesterday, tomorrow, etc. They also identified some of the vocabulary that they were having trouble with like "kiikeq," cake.

IV. References

- Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based language teaching: Sorting out the misunderstandings. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 19, 221-246.
- Oxford, R. L. (1997). Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction: Three communicative strands in the classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 443-456.