

TBLT 2109

Invited workshop

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Task-Based Language Teaching, Canadian Style

In Canada, there are three pillars that support the framework of English language instruction for adult newcomers: the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs), task-based language teaching (TBLT), and portfolio-based language assessment (PBLA). These are described and illustrated in a number of curricular documents produced by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks as well as by provincial teacher associations, school boards, and individual educational institutions. In this session, we address each of these pillars using illustrative materials and hands-on activities. Our intention with this workshop is to offer both local and international educators a comprehensive picture of the practical aspects of Canadian-style TBLT.

We begin with a brief overview of the organization of the CLB and of the principles of TBLT. The task of the adult ESL teacher is to bring together these two distinct conceptual frameworks and interpret them for lesson and unit planning. Doing this presents three challenges which will be the focus of the workshop. The first challenge relates to the basic procedure of aligning task design with the functional CLB descriptions of 'what a learner can do' under specified conditions. The next challenge is the need for including a focus on form, which emerges from the fact that the CLB descriptors do not specify what linguistic structures are to be used. Thus, teachers need to analyze learning tasks to identify useful grammar targets (or other linguistic forms) for pre-task, during-task or post-task form-focused treatment. Our discussion here will draw attention to insights from SLA about effective grammar instruction. The third challenge is that of designing tasks for summative assessment using portfolios. After discussing the elements of a task-based approach to language assessment, analyzing an assessment task, and examining different rubrics, we conclude with reflections on how portfolio-based assessment can support task-based teaching and vice versa.

Short summary:

This workshop offers both local and international educators an overview of the practical aspects of Canadian-style TBLT. We address three challenges adult ESL teachers face: designing tasks aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks, planning for focus on form, and assessing language learning using tasks and portfolios.