TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

**VICTORIA**
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

*SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES*

*MASTER OF ARTS*
*LALS 519 SPECIAL TOPIC: TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING*
*15 POINTS*

**TRIMESTER 2 2016**

## Key dates

**Trimester dates:** 11 July to 13 November 2016
**Teaching dates:** 18 July to 16 October 2016
**Mid-trimester break:** 22 August to 4 September 2016
**Last assessment item due:** 26 October 2016

**Withdrawal dates:** Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds.

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test in the last three weeks of teaching, or an examination, it may instead be possible to apply for an aegrotat (refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

## Class times and locations

Monday 1.10 - 3.00pm                    Murphy Building, Room 531

## Names and contact details

**Dr Jonathan Newton (Coordinator)**

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## Communication of additional information

Additional information about this course and information about any changes will be posted on the course site in Blackboard and emailed to course members.

## Prescription

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been extensively researched and adopted. This course draws on research and classroom perspectives to explore teaching through tasks. It covers the areas of task-based course design, methodology, and assessment as well as the design of tasks for beginners and children through to advanced learners and adults.

## Course content

In the course we will draw on research and classroom perspectives to explore teaching through tasks, including a focus on the design of tasks, TBLT methodology and on the practical and contextual issues that teachers face when implementing tasks in specific learning contexts. Course members will have opportunities to apply ideas from the course to their particular teaching context whether it be teaching beginners or advanced learners, children or adults, ESOL/EFL or other second languages.

## Schedule of classes

| Week beginning | Module Topic | Weekly readings |
|---|---|---|
| Class 1 18 July | Theoretical foundations (Part 1): (a) When is a task a *task*? (b) Why TBLT? (3) Responding to criticisms of TBLT | *Doing TBT*, Chpt 1 & 2 Skehan (2003) Ellis (2009) |
| *Focus on task-based learning affordances* | | |
| Class 2 25 July | Input-based tasks (listening and reading) | *Doing TBT*, Chpts 3 & 4 Shintani (2012) |
| Class 3 1 Aug | Production tasks (speaking and writing) | *Doing TBT*, Chpt 5 Foster & Skehan (1999) |
| Class 4 8 Aug | FoF and the post-task phase | *Doing TBT*, Chpts 6 & 8 Batstone (2012) Skehan (2013) |
| Class 5 15 Aug | Sociocultural perspectives on task-based interaction, negotiation of meaning and collaborative discourse | Nakahama, Tyler, & van Lier (2001) Foster and Ohta (2005) |

| Focus on teachers and task-based teaching in different contexts | | |
|---|---|---|
| Class 6<br>5 Sept | Teacher perspectives on TBLT (1) | *Doing TBT*, Chpt 7<br>Van den Branden (2016)<br>Newton & Trang (Forthcoming) |
| Class 7<br>12 Sept | Teacher perspectives on TBLT (2) | Erlam (2016)<br>McDonough & Chaikitmongkol (2007) |
| Focus on the curriculum | | |
| Class 8<br>3 Oct | Sequencing tasks | *Doing TBT*, Chpt 9<br>Romanko & Nakatsugawa (2009)<br>Robinson (2011) |
| Class 9<br>10 Oct | (a) Overview: where to from here for TBLT?<br>(b) (b) Task-based assessment | *Doing TBT*, Chpt 10<br>Carless (2012)<br>Norris (2016) |

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course will be able to:

1. Understand the rationale and research support for task-based language teaching and critically evaluate different theoretical positions taken in controversies concerning TBLT
2. Critically analyse published teaching tasks and task-based lessons
3. Apply TBLT principles to the planning and design of task-based units of work for teaching in particular settings and for addressing the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing)
4. Identify the language learning opportunities afforded by different types of tasks and different phases in task-based lessons with specific reference to the accuracy, complexity and fluency dimensions of language proficiency

## Teaching format

The course is delivered in two modes: on campus and by distance. On-campus classes are run as lecture-workshop sessions. Distance classes are run asynchronously via Blackboard, Victoria's online teaching and learning system (http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz). Students in both teaching modes are expected to contribute weekly on-line blogs.

## Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

1. obtain at least 40% in each piece of assessment in order to demonstrate the achievement of all CLOs in the course;
2. contribute to the nine weekly group blog discussions on Blackboard in order to share understandings and practical applications of set readings and related topics. If a course member is prevented from meeting this requirement by illness or other unexpected events, exemptions should be negotiated with the course lecturer.

Any student who is concerned that they have been (or might be) unable to meet any of the MCRs because of exceptional personal circumstances, should contact the course coordinator as soon as possible.

## Workload

Course members are expected to spend 150 hours on this course or about 15-17 hours on each weekly unit as well as time completing assessment tasks. Around 80-90 hours should be allocated to assessment on the course. Of this, around 10-15 hours may be required for assignment 1, around 30 hours for assignment 2, and up to 40 hours for assignment 3. While the course requires a lot of independent work, course members are also encouraged to study cooperatively by forming study or discussion groups, or, in the case of distance students, using the Blackboard discussion boards and e-mail to share ideas and resources.

## Assessment

Details of each of these assessment tasks will be provided on Blackboard in the Assessment folder.

| | Assessment items | Due date | Word length | % | CLO(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A critical analysis of a unit from an EFL textbook from a TBLT perspective | Monday 15 Aug | 1000 words | 15% | 1, 2, 4 |
| 2 | An analysis of affordances and constraints for TLBT in a particular context. | Friday 16 Sept | 2000 words | 40% | 1, 4 |
| 3 | Design of a task-based unit of work | Monday 18 Oct | 1500 words (Commentary) | 45% | 1, 3, 4 |

### Marking criteria

Marking criteria will be provided on the feedback sheet for each assignment. These feedback sheets will be available on blackboard in advance of the due dates for the assignments to which they apply. The **Grade Scheme** for the Master's in TESOL/Applied Linguistics provides a broader set of descriptors which are used to allocate grades to assessable work. This is available in the assessment area on Blackboard.

## Submission and return of work

All course members should submit assignments through the Blackboard (BB) system. Instructions on how to use the BB assignment tool are on the BB website. Assignments are usually marked and grades and feedback provided within 2-3 weeks of the submission date. Feedback and a grade are provided on a grade sheet for each assignment and sometimes also in the body of the assignment. Assignment grades are all provisional until the course and course assessment has been subject to moderation by an external moderator. This usually occurs by the end of the month after all assessment is complete and prior to final grades being entered into the Victoria University grade centre.

### General guidelines
- Ensure left/right margins are set to at least 3cm, and top/bottom margins to at least 2.5cm. This allows space for margin comments on the text.

- Set line spacing to 1.5 and font size to 12 point.
- Number the pages.
- Include an assignment title page (please use the template available in the assessment folder in the LALS 519 Blackboard site).
- Give your assignment a **title** that captures what it is about (i.e., not just 'Assignment 1'). Consider, for instance, what title you would give it if you were submitting it to a journal or presenting it at a conference.
- Provide a word count for the assignment (the word count does not include the reference section or appendices).

# Extensions and penalties

## Extensions

If you require an extension for good reasons, ask the course coordinator ahead of the due date for handing in the assignment for an extension, providing reasons for the request.

## Penalties

In line with School (LALS) policy, assignments handed in after the due date without an extension will receive one grade less (5%) per working day and comments may not be provided. After one week, no grade will be given, but the assignment can still count for mandatory course requirements if submitted by the end of the teaching period for the trimester. Note that if no work is submitted for assessment before the last three weeks of teaching, there will be nothing on which to base an aegrotat consideration.

# Set text

**Willis, Dave & Jane Willis. (2007).** *Doing task-based teaching.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

This is available from Vicbooks: *www.vicbooks.co.nz* or via on-line retailers of your choice (e.g. Book Depository http://www.bookdepository.com/). In addition, there will be one to three extra readings from the following list for each week of the course as specified in the schedule of classes.

# Set Readings

Batstone. R. (2012). Language form, task-based language teaching, and the classroom context *ELT Journal,* 66 (4), 459-467. doi:10.1093/elt/ccs058

Carless, D. (2012). TBLT in EFL settings: looking back and moving forwards. In A. Shehadeh & C. A. Coombe (eds.), *Task-based language teaching in foreign language contexts: Research and implementation.* (pp. 354-359). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based language teaching: sorting out the misunderstandings. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics,* 19 (3), 221-46.

Erlam (2016) 'I'm still not sure what a task is': Teachers designing language tasks. *Language Teaching Research*, pp. 1-21 Online version doi: 10.1177/1362168814566087

Foster, P. & Ohta, A.S. (2005). Negotiation for meaning and peer assistance in second language classrooms. *Applied Linguistics* 26 (3): 402-430.

Foster, P & P. Skehan. (1999). The influence of source of planning and focus of planning on task-based performance. *Language Teaching Research,* 3 (3), 215-247. doi: 10.1177/136216889900300303

McDonough, K. & W. Chaikitmongkol (2007). Teachers' and Learners' Reactions to a Task-Based EFL Course in Thailand. *TESOL Quarterly,* 41 (1), 107-132.

Nakahama, Y., Tyler, A., & Lier, L. v. (2001). Negotiation of Meaning in Conversational and Information Gap Activities: A Comparative Discourse Analysis. *TESOL Quarterly, 35* (3), 377-405.

Newton, J & B. Trang. (Forthcoming). Teaching tasks from a textbook: When and why teachers 'taskify' and 'de-task' textbook activities. In Ahmadian, M. & M. García Mayo (Eds.). *Current trends in task-based language teaching and learning.* Boston, Mouton de Gruyter.

Norris, J. (2016). Current uses for task-based assessment. . *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31: 230-244.

Robinson. P. (2011). Second Language Task Complexity, the Cognition Hypothesis, language learning and performance. In Robinson, P. (ed.), *Second Language Task Complexity: Researching the Cognition* Hypothesis of language learning and performance. (pp. 3-37). Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Romanko, R., & Nakatsugawa, M. (2010). Task sequencing based on the Cognition Hypothesis. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2009 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

Shintani, Natsuko. (2012). Input-based tasks and the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar: A process product study. *Language Teaching Research*, 16 (2), 253–279. DOI: 10.1177/1362168811431378

Skehan, P. (2003). Task-based instruction. *Language Teaching.* 36, 1–14. DOI: 10.1017/S026144480200188X

Skehan, P. (2013). Nurturing noticing. In J. M. Bergsleithner, S. N. Frota, & J. K. Yoshioka (Eds.), *Noticing and second language acquisition: Studies in honor of Richard Schmidt* (pp. 169-182). Hawai'i: National Foreign Language Resource Center.

Van den Branden, K. (2016). The role of teachers in task-based language education. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31: 164-181

## Recommended reading

References for links for additional recommended readings will be provided via Blackboard.

## Class representative

A student representative for the MA programme will be elected early in the trimester, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. This person provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students. You can find out more information on Class Representatives on the VUWSA website.

## Student feedback

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course. Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

I did not seek formal summative feedback from teachers who took LALS519 in 2015. However, midway through the trimester I held a formative feedback session midway through the course in which I invited teachers in groups to discuss their experience to date on the course and to suggest ways it could be improved. I also invited distance students to email me any feedback and suggestions. Feedback I received at this time and after the course had finished indicated that the teachers found the course "very interesting, informative, and practical" and that it "has had a very positive impact on how I think about teaching and the

way I plan and carry out activities." In terms of suggestions for improving the course, the following suggestions were offered, both of which I have worked to address:

1. Focus more explicitly on the readings in class
2. Reduce the amount of content in the on-campus classes so that we can get through all the activities in the allotted time

The question was also raised as to why the classes weren't taught using TBLT methodology. This is an interesting point, and I have always sought to apply TBLT principles to the course where appropriate, notably with regard to setting up activities that involve a range of participation patterns (e.g. teacher-led discussions, group work, problem-solving, ranking tasks etc.). However, this is not a language learning course and so TBLT is not an entirely relevant methodology.

## Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progess (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Special passes: refer to the *Assessment Handbook*, at www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Subject Librarians: http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian
- Terms and conditions: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz