

## Task Based Learning

Design a....

Create a....

Produce a....

1) Task: What would you like your students to design or produce?

2) Plan: What specific instructions will you give your students for doing this task and what guidelines should they follow during their planning stage?

3) Report/Present: What do you want your students to report or present and how much time will you give them to explain or present their project?

# Teenagers and adults

## Two successful task-based activities

Sheila Ward

The following activities were carried out with a group of young learners aged between 11 and 15. They were of pre-intermediate to intermediate level.

### Designing a squirrel-proof bird-feeder

We had watched a video about how clever animals can be and the students were particularly fascinated by the fact that however ingenious the design of a bird-feeder is, the squirrels always manage to find a way to get the food.

I then asked them if they thought they could design a squirrel-proof bird-feeder. They were all convinced that they could so I told them to imagine they were entering a competition to design one. They could work in groups, pairs or individually.

They set to with great enthusiasm drawing up their plans and consulting me when they needed language or advice.

When they were ready each group, pair or individual came to the front and explained how the bird-feeder worked. The others listened very attentively because they wanted to find fault. They (and I) raised objections such as: But if you put the bird-feeder near the tree, the squirrel can jump onto it, or Glass isn't a very good material because it can break.

When everyone had finished, we tried to decide which one was the best. This was tricky and in retrospect I wish I had videoed it and allowed a group of teachers to decide.

What most amazed me was the use of language during the preparation and feedback. The students were using first conditionals and passives naturally and the same vocabulary kept coming up again and again, words such as slippery, greasy pole, plastic dome. During the oral presentation phase they were using these



words as if they'd always known them. It was particularly rewarding to see students who had been reticent speakers at the beginning of the year keen to get their points across.

I believe this lesson could be just as successful even if you haven't got the video. It is simply a question of presenting the situation to the students and they will be eager to show what they can do.

### Producing a class magazine

I thought it would be nice for students to have something to take home at the end of the year so I asked them if they would like to produce a class magazine. They greeted this idea with great enthusiasm.

First of all, we brainstormed the sort of thing we can find in a magazine, then different groups decided which aspects they wanted to concentrate on. I told them that each group was restricted to three sides each. I also gave them the deadline for when it should be ready for copying.

Generally we took about 40 minutes each time over a period of about four weeks.

Everything was typed up by the students on the computer and one noticeable thing about this activity was how willing the students were to edit and correct their work and present it in a professional way, whereas usually they are reluctant to correct their homework.

In the end they produced an interesting magazine with stories, jokes, cartoons, drawings, facts, puzzles, horoscopes and fashion, all in faultless English.

They were all very proud of themselves when they saw the result and I felt that they had employed skills, as well as language, that would stand them in good stead in the real world.

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