Task Based Learning: Incorporating scaffolded multimedia activities

Jonathan Mullins
Department of French and Italian
Scope

• Task Based Instruction: TBI
• Integration of multi-day activity that blends reading, writing, speaking and performance
What is a task?

• A task is a way to focus on the creation of “practical meaning”.
• There is also a ‘gap’—be it in terms of information, reasoning or opinion.
• Participants select and deploy the grammar, vocab and syntax they desire.
• The task has a precise, non-linguistic end product.

Scaffolding
The task...
the Prince of Filettino
The backstory/context...

- Era of austerity: budget cuts
- Small town in central Italy decides to become a principality to maintain its social services
- Competition to become the prince
Organization of the task

1. In-class reading with instructor with subsequent discussion of contemporary Italian political situation (austerity, long standing separatist strains of thought of Italian nation)

2. Homework assignment: Reading exercise using newspaper article with comprehension questions and meaningful sentences using subjunctive.

3. Electoral campaign
   1. Written political platform
   2. Video advertisement
   3. Debate

4. Vote for the Prince/Princess of Filettino.
The importance of scaffolding

- Through every step of the task, students gain competence to understand the material the task presents and carry out the task’s objective...

- In-class reading of brief history of Italian politics
- Homework assignment that includes reading of newspaper article regarding Filettino’s decision to elect a prince.
- Group work that culminates in the writing of a political platform for each candidate.
Writing of political platform...

Students work together to devise:
- A symbol
- a five point platform
- A slogan

My students came up with party names such as the following:
- “Feminist Utopia”
- “The Rich Life”
- “MacKinzie’s Threats”
30 second advertisements
Debate
And, then, finally the vote...
The importance of multimedia

• Allows students to exercise the 4 skills:
  • Writing
  • Reading
  • Speaking
  • Listening
The “gap”

• The gap in this task is more one of reasoning and opinion. The students collaborate to define their political campaign.
• They seamlessly integrate grammar and vocabulary within the construct of the task.
Assessment?

- Initial homework assignments
- Writing
- Oral performance in both advertisement and final debate.
THANK YOU.

Jonathan.k.mullins@dartmouth.edu