

ESL MiniConference

Education, Training, Coaching Solutions for Teachers

Life's Timing *By Monty Thompson*

A critic's view of life often breaks down all of the little things that seem meaningless and turns them, effortlessly, into purpose. At times I have drifted through things in my life that truly seemed meaningless; yet they ended up having a profound impact on my life and the lives around me. I just never took the time to examine things like picking up a piece of trash off the floor in a store, or allowing the door to close behind me, not looking for someone to be walking through right after me.

It seems the smaller the immediate impact the less chance of utilizing them to provide meaningful gain. We have become a society of instant gratification, destined to get it now and work out the issues as we go. Planning does not seem to come into the process until we are planning to cleanup or start over. Personally, I have jumped into many situations without thinking and the result is always the same... Failure!

Planning should always be at the forefront of any decision we make. Some say you can't plan for everything, but in essence you can devise a plan that will help to be prepared should something not go right and you can plan alternatives in the beginning of a new goal or objective. The first is a backup plan in that it offers alternatives in the event of failure.

Planning ahead offers steps towards achieving something when a backup plan offers a new course of direction after the fact. I have never been much of a planner, unfortunately. The term, "flying by the seat of your pants" comes into play a great number of times in my daily activities.

Spontaneity, impulse, and gut decisions are all part of an energy inside us that begs to be thought of as different and exciting, although, sometimes this energy can cause serious grief, emotional and/ or physical to us and those around us. It is the adrenaline that keeps life moving for us- we all seek it, just in various degrees. As I get older, I find that that adrenaline rush I was seeking 25 years ago...

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Shuffle Lessons and Meta-Procedures

By Dave Hopkins

Shuffle lessons are collections of lesson content that can be shifted about, modified, supplemented or excised as the teacher wishes. I would propose that these "pieces of lesson content" are a type of semi-materials (Prabhu as noted by Maley in Tomlinson, Materials Development in Language Teaching). These pieces of lesson content, semi-materials, are pictures, scripts or texts drawn from authentic sources, or prepackaged lessons, and arranged according to the teacher's design for a particular class.

Shuffle lessons combine raw input, and meta-procedures, ("generalizable" activities), to make the lesson. The point being that, "all learners, all teachers and all teaching situations are uniquely different" (Maley in Tomlinson, 2011). Thus, no prepackaged lessons can be "right" for any particular class. There really is no choice, but for the teachers to construct their own lessons. What follows is a collection of meta-procedures from an article by Alan Maley that can be used to develop any lesson content. It will be obvious that the most susceptible materials will be written texts, although I can imagine many of these ideas applied to listening scripts and visual media.

1. **Expansion.** The text must be lengthened in some way. Add sentences/paragraphs at the beginning or end. Add specified items within the text (e.g. adjectives). Add sentences within the text. Add subordinate clauses within the text. Add comment within the text.

2. **Reduction.** The text must be shortened in some way. Remove specified items (e.g. adjectives). Turn it into "telegraphese." Combine sentences. Remove clauses or sentences. Rewrite in different format (e.g. power point). *Continued on page three*

Monty Thompson *Continued from page 1*

...isn't quite the same as the adrenaline rush I get today. Not that high fiber diets are part of the rush I am seeking, but I no longer look for rooftops to jump from either. We need that rush, we strive for it and it becomes a part of us that is rarely closely looked at. We just keep moving without asking ourselves how we got to this point. Unless, the outcome and end result are negative. How often do we stop and look at the positive things that we have accomplished in life and re-examine the steps we took to get there?

If we did, we may be able to retrace those steps, adjust them to suit a new situation, and PLAN ahead for bigger and better things. Life can be a dangerous thing if we don't think things out. Disaster can come in very quickly and rip through our core being, leaving behind fallout that may or may not be repaired. Every day, as I seek to do something that might provide a staple of security in my life, I am reminded of the mistakes that were made.

I welcome these reminders, as they have made me who and what I am. As a boy, I used to ride my bike a lot, thinking I could jump any obstacle. I built a ramp in the middle of our street out of whatever scraps my dad had laying around, grabbed a few bricks or cinder blocks, and not so carefully made an incline that would propel me through the air. I had a plan, I knew the immediate obstacles, and I was ready for the risk involved. I wasn't ready for the road rash, though. I wasn't ready for the peroxide to be poured over my knees and the palms of my hands. And I wasn't ready to have the gravel dug at under my skin. But, being a young child with great ideas, I was ready to do it again the next day, this time learning from the mistakes made previously, adjusting my plan of attack, and expanding on the possibilities. Plan ahead, plan for disaster, plan to succeed. Life's timing is almost never what we want or expect; it is what it is.

Building and devising a plan to handle the weight of life's timing is the most difficult plan one can make. It may be thought of as impossible, but we can design a plan that will help us to be prepared for it as it happens. We can also design a plan that offers alternatives in the event of possible failure. Just don't be afraid to make the occasional mistake, take a chance now and then, allow room in life to grow and be creative. There is always more peroxide to clean the temporary wound.

Thai Lesson II – Talking About Sports*By Jidapa Promruang*

Vocabulary: badminton, tennis, ping-pong, volleyball, basketball, golf, gymnastic, football

(แบดมินตัน เทนนิส บิงปอง วอลเลย์บอล บาสเก็ตบอล ยิมนาสติก กอล์ฟ ฟุตบอล)

Conversation:

A: What sports do you like? B: I like _____ A: Who do you want to play with? B: My _____	คุณชอบเล่นกีฬาอะไร ผม/ฉันชอบเล่น..... คุณชอบเล่นกับใคร ผม/ฉันชอบเล่นกับ.....
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Process**1. Context setting**

- Teacher draws pictures of sports instruments, Shows picture or acting, students guess the context
- Teacher gets students to come up and act out (TPR)

2. Vocabulary modeling & Practice

- T models pictures clearly
- T presents vocabulary in sentence *I like _____.*

3. Q & A modeling

- T presents Q by drawing and modeling
- T presents Q& A
- Students practice and write on BB

4. Listening

- T hands out work sheet
- SS fill in blank

5. Writing

- T hands out work sheet
- SS writing
- SS exchange and read each others

Commentary

This is a “foreign” language lesson organized as a “communicative” lesson with the meaning, as well as the reading and writing of a non-English script “modeled,” in context. Foreign language study is usually presented as “phrase-book” lessons, which may be useful for travelers, but less so for students who want to develop proficiency in a language. The application of TESOL techniques and models to foreign language study has lagged behind simply because of the financial incentive. It is useful to remember that teaching/learning models are not “language specific,” and it is of critical importance to develop strategies for the learning of “other” languages.

These Thai lessons have been trialed with US Peace Corps Volunteers and Burmese refugees, and proven to be effective models.

3. **Media Transfer.** The text must be transferred into a different medium or format. Transfer it into visual form (e.g. pictures, graphs, maps, tables, etc.). Turn prose into a poem (or vice versa). Turn a letter into a newspaper article (or vice versa). Turn a headline into a proverb. Turn a poem into an advertising slogan (or vice versa). Turn a prose narrative into a screenplay.

4. **Matching.** A correspondence must be found between the text and something else. Match text with visual representation. Match text with a title. Match text with another text. Match text with a voice/music.

5. **Selection/ranking.** The text must be chosen according to some given criterion. (In the case of ranking, several texts must be placed in order of suitability for a given criterion.) Choose the best text for a given purpose (e.g. inclusion in a teenage magazine). Choose the most/least (difficult, formal, personal, complex, etc.) text. Choose the text most like the original version. Choose the words from the text to act as an appropriate title.

6. **Comparison/contrast.** Points of similarity/difference must be identified between two or more texts. Identify words/expressions common to both texts. Identify words/phrases that are paraphrased in the other text. Identify ideas that are common to both texts. Compare facts present in one text and not in the other. Compare grammatical complexity.

7. **Reconstruction.** Coherence/completeness must be restored to an incomplete or defective text. Insert appropriate words/phrases into gapped texts. Reorder words, lines, sentences, paragraphs etc. Reconstruct sentences/texts from a word array. Reconstitute a written text from an oral presentation (various types of dictation). Remove sentences/lines that do not belong in the text.

8. **Reformulation.** The text must be expressed in a form different from the original without loss of essential meanings. Retell a story from notes or memory. Use key words to rewrite a text. Rewrite in a different format (e.g. prose to poem as above). Rewrite in a different style of mode.

9. **Interpretation.** Personal knowledge must be used to clarify and extend the meaning of the text. What does this recall from your own experience? What does this remind you of?

What images does this throw up? What associations does it have? What questions would you wish to ask the author? Formulate questions on the text beginning with WH? What does the text not say that it might have said?

10. **Creating text.** The text is used as a springboard to create a new text. Write a parallel text on a different theme. Use the same outline/model to write a new text. Quarry words from text A to write text B. Use the same title, but write a new text. Add lines or sentences to reshape text. Combine texts to create new text.

11. **Analysis.** The text must be submitted to some form of language-focused scrutiny. Work out the ratio of one-word to two-word verbs. How many different tenses? Frequency? How many content or function words does the text contain? List the different ways in which word X is referred to in the text (Anaphoric reference). List all the words to do with a particular topic in the text (e.g. sea, movement, ecology, etc.).

12. **Project work.** The text is used as a springboard for some related practical work with a concrete outcome. Use the text as a centerpiece for an advertising campaign. Pose the text as the core of a problem, then formulate a questionnaire, and tabulate the results. Use the text as an example of a particular point of view, and then organize supporting and dissenting statements from classmates. (Alan Maley, in *Materials Development in Language Teaching*, Brian Tomlinson, 2011.)

Classroom choreographies for using these procedures would include individual, pairs/trios and group work. The procedures can be used in combination or solo depending upon the needs of the class and the inclination of the teacher. This article has not included the lesson content that would be shuffled about to make the lesson. Let me suggest that assembling the content is, in and of itself a meaningful classroom activity. Thus, the teacher's role becomes one of organizer and editor. I see no reason why students cannot be engaged in constructing their own lessons.

This article is incomplete in that it suggests, but does not DO the content or the compilation. I have no doubt that most teachers out there put together their own "shuffle" lessons all the time, combining different elements of text, authentic inputs and meta-procedures as appropriate for their classes. It would be nice to hear more about "teachers as course developers" (Graves), and see examples of their composite lessons.

Breaking the Deal *By Mary Giles*

My trusty Muslim neighbors on our way to Friday prayers gave me some heartfelt advice. If I ever suffer from air turbulence of the digestive tract, I should please take care not to manifest this during service at the *masjid*. This negates one's ritual cleanliness, nullifies prayer, and signals disrespect to the worship leader and assembly. They knew that Christians have no such teaching, hence the friendly hint for my first visit. This is why good native informants are such a treasure to have around.

Every social group is prepared for certain mistakes, bad temper, and boorish behavior. But every group (Yeshiva, Tupperware club, frat house) also defines its deal-breakers. These are context-specific actions large or small which slam the door on communication, derail the transaction, and even affect membership in the group. At one large bus terminal years ago I was asking "Excuse me, what time is it?" Some people snapped at me, which didn't surprise me. But it did when one man covered his ears and yelled "It's time to shut your stupid stupid face!" Every social setting has a borderline between rude or tiresome gaffes, versus things that a group member wouldn't normally think of doing, and believes that no sensible person would either.

- Many families the world over will endure years of tyranny from one relative, but disown a relative who reports a problem even (or especially) to a qualified helping professional.

- In the U.S., even a violent TV villain will keep his front zipper tucked in, won't use the Ladies' room even if it is closer to the bar, and won't kick his beagle if he wants another acting job, because the dog is protected by media regulations. In 1992 the audience of "Saturday Night Live" was primed for mockery and laughter, but they had no social provision for Sinead O'Connor tearing up a photo of the Pope.

- Restricted contexts (disaster area, airport security, emergency room) hand down special rules and penalties. Some are shown in Chris Rock's YouTube video, "How to *Not* Get [fill in various verbs] by the Police," a "public-service message" addressing fear of law enforcement, cheerfully laced with profanity and skilled clever editing.

- Deal-break power can help us stop cold the rapport-enlisting overtures used by criminals. In

his excellent and beautifully written book *The Gift of Fear*, Gavin de Becker offers women options for overturning convention and cutting off deceptive "invitations."

- A group can reserve the privilege of excusing behaviors that would be deal-breakers otherwise. A man sentenced by a judge to Alcoholics Anonymous threatened the group with a gun, hoping to get kicked out. "Keep comin' back, Sicko," they said. "Put yer piece in the corner if you want coffee." He was so shocked that he took the coffee and got sober. My Muslim neighbors were relieved that I'd still eat their cooking even though my head of state had shoes thrown at him in Iraq, and I was happy that they'd still invite me over.

By the way, these neighbors were shocked when I asked whether people with chronic digestive issues are banned from *masjid*. "Banned? Oh Aunt, no! If he has a MEDICAL problem, means he can't help it. Then, the whole village knows and understands him. We must be kind to his feeling." Not a bad philosophy for me to keep in mind.

It Matters to Us *By Robb Scott*

The consultants of the Solutions Group at ESL MiniConference Online represent a wide range of knowledge, education, and experience on various continents and across different sociolinguistic boundaries. One thing we have in common, though, is that we sincerely believe people can communicate and work more effectively together if they honestly strive to see the world from each other's perspectives.

If you have to plan a lesson for tomorrow, and the stakes are high, you can be confident in sending a note to solutions@eslminiconf.net that one of us will get back to you promptly, by phone if needed, to coach you through the process successfully. If you just want to talk about a teaching challenge, or work through your feelings about a tough problem related to culture or language, please contact us.

If your organization wants to develop a new training course, whether writing a grant proposal or helping you build a program from scratch, the Teaching Solutions Group will design and implement a training for you and your team. And we will work together and get this done promptly and efficiently, on *your* schedule and *your* terms. It matters to us.