

ESL: An ecological perspective

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The New School

‘With ever greater demand for ESOL classes and a high level of insistence from governments that migrants learn English for purposes of integration, the job of ESOL teachers goes way beyond teaching the forms and structure of the English language.’

Simpson, J. 2016. ‘English for speakers of other languages: language education and migration.’ In Hall, G. (Ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Routledge, p.184.

‘In contrast with learning as internalisation, learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world.’

Lave, J. & Wenger, E 1991. *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 49.

‘A learning curriculum is essentially situated. It is not something that can be considered in isolation... A learning curriculum is thus characteristic of a community...’

Lave, J., and Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 97.

‘Classroom-based research... has tended to insulate the classroom itself from its surrounding context, defining its object by looking inwards at the routines, activities, and interactions which constitute the classroom. Here we propose the need to situate the classroom itself in social and in multilingual sociolinguistic space.’

Baynham, M. & Simpson, J. (2010). Onwards and upwards: Space, placement, and liminality in Adult ESOL classes. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44 (3),p.425.



world

nation/state

local community

institution

classroom

learner

‘The ecological approach looks at the entire situation and asks, what is it in this environment that makes things happen the way they do? How does learning come about? Ecology therefore involves the study of context.... In addition, things are happening all the time, in schools, classrooms, at desks and around computers. So, ecology is also the study of movement, process, and action.’

van Lier, L. (2004). *The Ecology and Semiotics of Language Learning: A Sociocultural Perspective*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, p. 11.

‘The affordance perspective assumes an active learner establishing relationships with and within the environment. In terms of language learning, affordances arise out of participation and use, and learning opportunities arise as a consequence of participation and use.’

Auyang, 2000, as cited in Van Lier, 2004, op. cit. p.92.

'In China, it was just a road. I don't see what is in front of me or my friends. The teacher mentioned that direction of this road is very good, but I don't know I'm not sure why she says it is good. But in Australia, it's like a forest. So many people are in this forest and every green plant is English. See or not see, it's up to you. And nobody give me the direction, I just walk around in this forest, explore everything, and I can ask others that sort of things. I think it's more interesting.'

Kashiwa, M. & Benson, P. (2018). 'A road and a forest: conceptions of in-class and out-of-class learning in the transition to study abroad.' *TESOL Quarterly*, 52/4, p.739

“The environment is full of meaning potential, especially if it has a rich semiotic budget, which may not be true of all classrooms, textbooks, or pedagogical interactions.”

Van Lier, 2000, p. 96

Place-based learning

Location as a trigger for learning

Potential impact: Medium

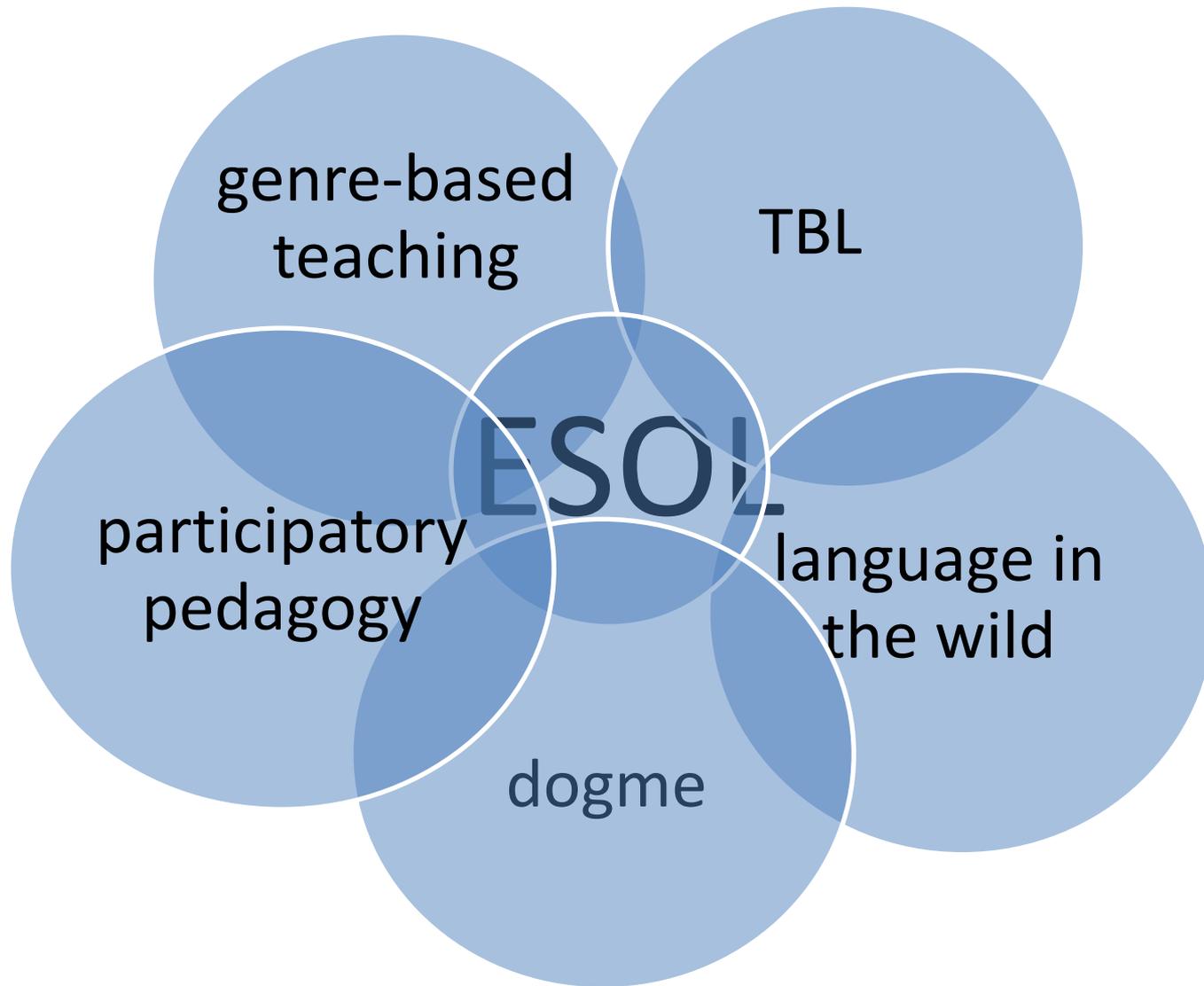
Timescale: Ongoing

What is place-based learning?

Place-based learning makes use of learning opportunities within a local community. It could involve a project that answers questions such as:

- How were the mountains nearby formed?
- What are the important social issues in the community?
- How does the transportation system work?
- What was life like for people who lived here in the past?





‘An ecological approach sees the learner as a whole person, not a grammar production unit. It involves having meaningful things to do and say, being taken seriously, being given responsibility, and being encouraged to tackle challenging projects, to think critically, and to take control of one’s own learning. The teacher provides assistance, but only just enough and just in time (in the form of pedagogical scaffolding), taking the learners’ developing skills and interests as the true driving force of the curriculum.’

Leo van Lier (2004: 223-224)

Task-based learning

‘Task-based language teaching starts from the basic principle that people learn a language not only *in order to* use the language for functional purposes, but also *by doing so*... Task-based syllabuses do not chop up language into small pieces, but take holistic, functional tasks as the basic unit for the design of educational activity.’

van den Branden, K. 2012. ‘Task-based language education’ in *The Cambridge Guide to Pedagogy and Practice in Second Language Teaching*, Burns, A. & Richards, J. C. (Eds.) Cambridge University Press, p.133.

‘The strength of task-based language education in Flanders has been its multidimensional character: it has been far more than a pedagogical concept related to language education, but has been conceived as a powerful tool with which to emancipate learners from deprived backgrounds and underprivileged citizens in society. As such, the implementation of task-based language education has gradually developed into one of the emblems symbolising the fight against social inequity in Flemish society.’

Van den Branden, K. 2009 ‘Training teachers: task-based as well?’ In van den Branden, Bygate, Norris, (Eds.) *Task-based Language Teaching: a reader*. John Benjamins. p.427

Dogme/teaching
unplugged

1. Teaching should be done using only the resources that teachers and students bring to the classroom – i.e. themselves – and whatever happens to be in the classroom. If a particular piece of material is necessary for the lesson, a location must be chosen where that material is to be found (e.g. library, resource centre, bar, students' club...)

2. No recorded listening material should be introduced into the classroom: the source of all “listening” activities should be the students and teacher themselves.

- Home
 - Messages
 - Pending
 - Spam? [Empty]
 - Post
 - Files
 - Photos
 - Pending
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 - Database
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 - Members
 - Pending
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Invite
- Management

Info Settings

Group Information

Members: 741

Category: English as a



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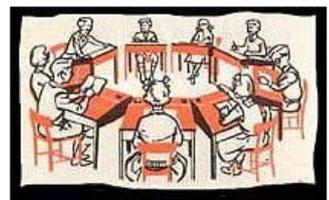
Home

Activity within 7 days: [2 New Members](#) - [5 New Messages](#) - [New Questions](#)

Description [\(Edit\)](#)

For a pedagogy of bare essentials - with special reference to the teaching of English as a foreign or second language.

You are welcome to join the dogme ELT discussion site. We are a mix of teachers, trainers and writers working in a wide range of contexts, who are committed to a belief that language learning is both socially motivated and socially constructed, and to this end we are seeking alternatives to models of instruction that are mediated primarily through materials and whose objective is the delivery of "grammar mcnugets". We are looking for ways of exploiting the learning opportunities offered by the raw material of the classroom, that is the language that emerges from the needs, interests, concerns and desires of the people in the room.



From a recent posting: "As for dogme being this or being that, isn't it mostly irrelevant? Surely the most important thing is that it exists, and that we can contribute to it and benefit from it as much or little as we like. It's a resource, not a club."

Note: This is an open source site. This means you can freely copy, adapt and distribute material from this site so long as you explicitly mention the source of the material, attribute the original writer(s), and advise the group moderator accordingly. People posting messages on this site should bear in mind its open nature).

Clov: What is there to keep me here?
Hamm: The dialogue.

- Samuel Beckett, Endgame

Most Recent Messages [\(View All\)](#)
[\(Group by Topic\)](#)

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“We are looking for ways of exploiting the learning opportunities offered by the raw material of the classroom, that is the language that emerges from the needs, interests, concerns and desires of the people in the room”.

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/dogme

Language learning in the wild



<http://languagelearninginthewild.com/>

Language Learning in the Wild is “an experiential second language pedagogy that puts the user into the center of the learning process. The premise is that language as a phenomenon occurs in its use and is therefore learned in and through use.”

“However, experiential language learning will not give up the classroom as a learning space. It will develop methods to bring a second language user out into the ‘wild’ where the target language is spoken, it will also develop methods to harvest the experiences from the ‘wild’ and to bring them back into the classroom.”

<http://languagelearninginthewild.com/>

Genre-based teaching

‘Language always happens as text; and as text, it inevitably occurs in a particular generic form. That generic form arises out of the action of social subjects in particular social situations.’

Kress, G. 1993. Genre as social process. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (eds). *The powers of literacy*. London: Farmer Press, p.27.

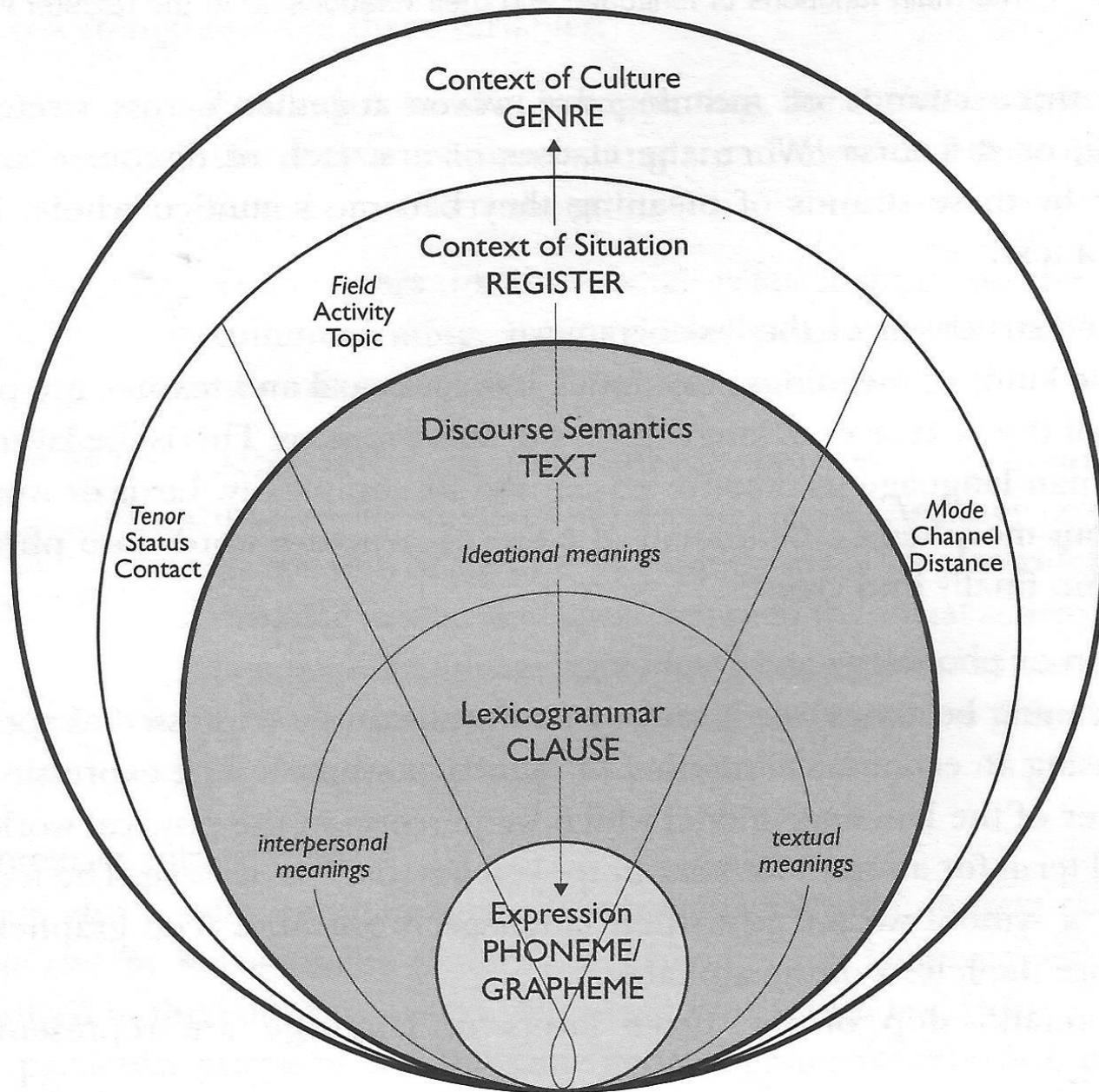


Figure 1.2 Language and context (Adapted from Martin and Mattheisson 1991)

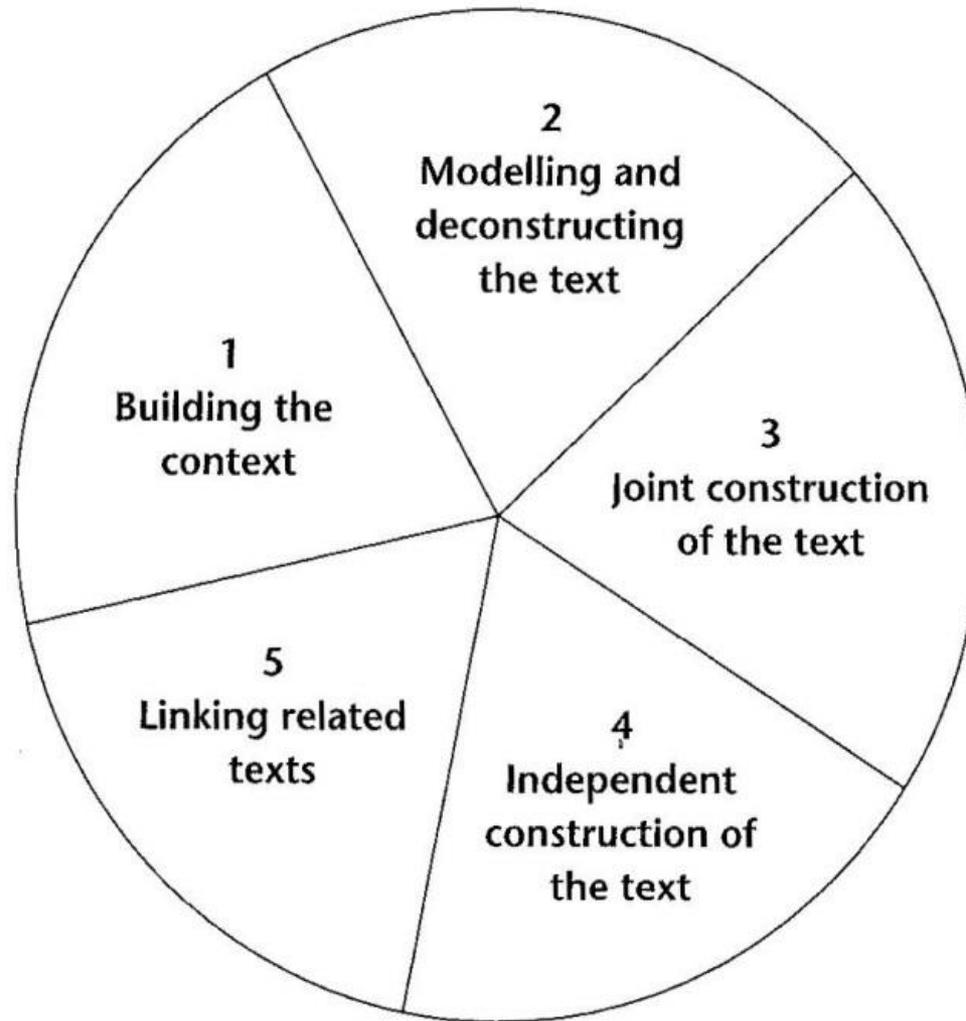


Figure 2.2 Stages of the teaching/learning cycle
(adapted from Callaghan and Rothery 1988, Green 1992, Cornish 1992)

“The objectives of a course based on a text-based syllabus are always related to the use of whole texts in context.”

Feez, S. (1998) *Text-based syllabus design*. Sydney, NSW: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, p. 23.

‘[Genres] offer the capacity for initiating students into ways of making meaning that are valued in English-speaking communities.’

Christie, F. (1999) Genre theory and ESL teaching: A systemic-functional perspective.’ *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(4), p. 762.

Participatory pedagogy

“Instead of a teacher, we had a co-ordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants...”

“Whoever enters into dialogue does so with someone about something; and that something ought to constitute the new content of our proposed education.”

(Paulo Freire)

PARTICIPATORY ESOL **ABOUT** **HOW TO HELP** **ABOUT**



About

ENGLISH FOR ACTION LONDON

EFA London provides free English language courses for communities across London.

<https://efalondon.wordpress.com/about/>



Accessible

We deliver courses in community locations that are familiar and convenient for the participants we want to reach. Our students tell us what day and time suits them and we arrange free crèches where we can. Our classroom is a place where people are valued, listened to, included, supported and have an active involvement in the content of their classes.

From start to finish the atmosphere and approach of the classroom differed wildly from EFL. Each session begins in the hands of the students, and, prompted by photographs or a text, discussion is initiated. Critical thinking, language analysis and English learning germinate from this learner-led scenario; actively building on knowledge, rather than passively banking it.

Learners are encouraged to accumulate language by participating in discussion. Language acquisition comes as part of discussion which challenges the learners to critically assess their world, and learners become better able to critically engage with their world with increased language acquisition.

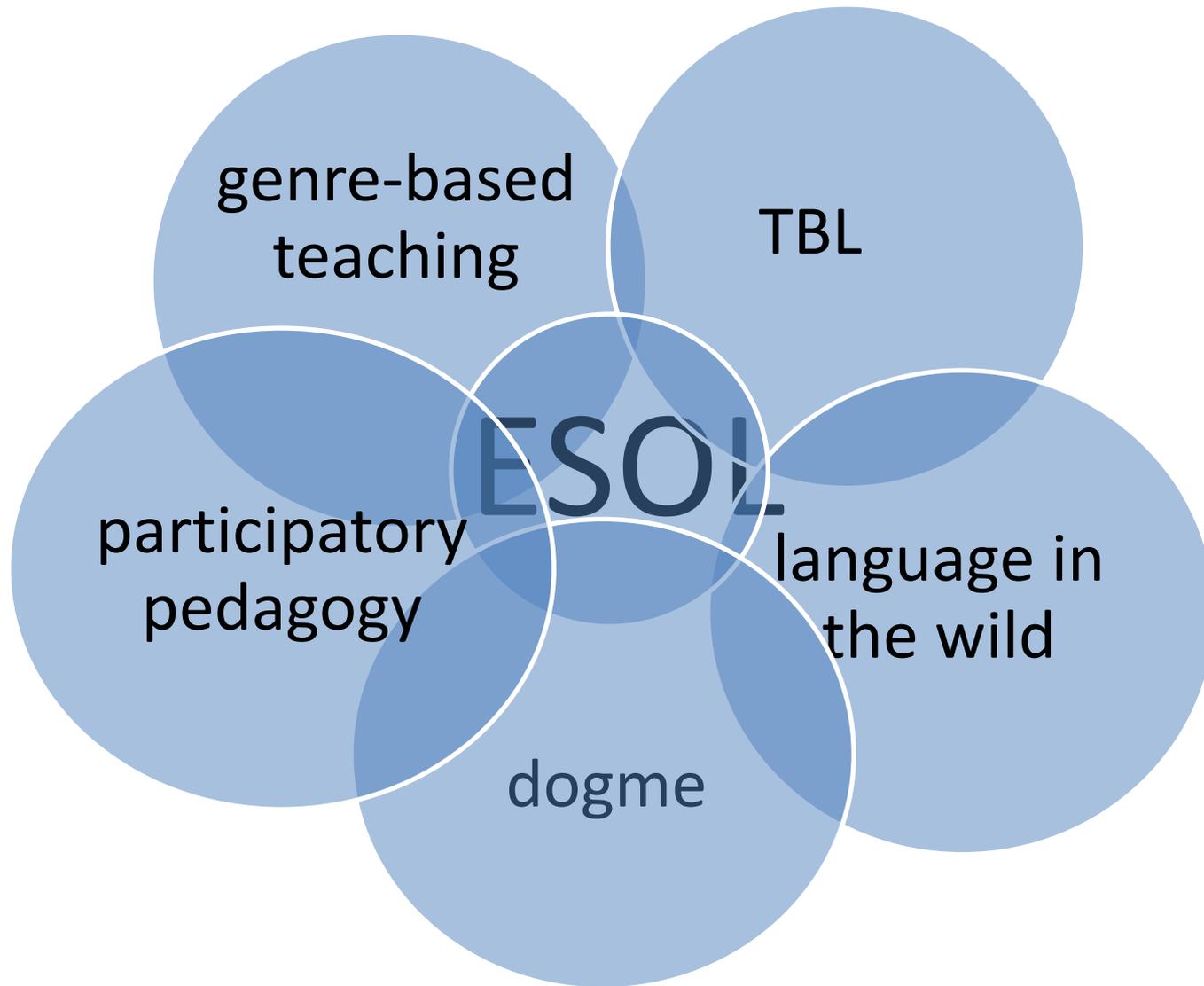
<https://efalondon.wordpress.com/2013/11/01/volunteering-with-english-for-action-discovering-participatory-learning/#more-270>

‘Learners will invest effort in any task if they perceive benefit from it. [Therefore,] require learners to seek out and choose content which *they* perceive as appropriate to their learning needs and interests’.

(Breen, M. 2009. p.349, 353)

‘Ideally, teachers and students alike should be involved in the co-construction of the curriculum, even if only in a light-touch way. Being involved in such a process is empowering and increases the agency of the participants, and the material itself is likely to be more relevant and appropriate.’

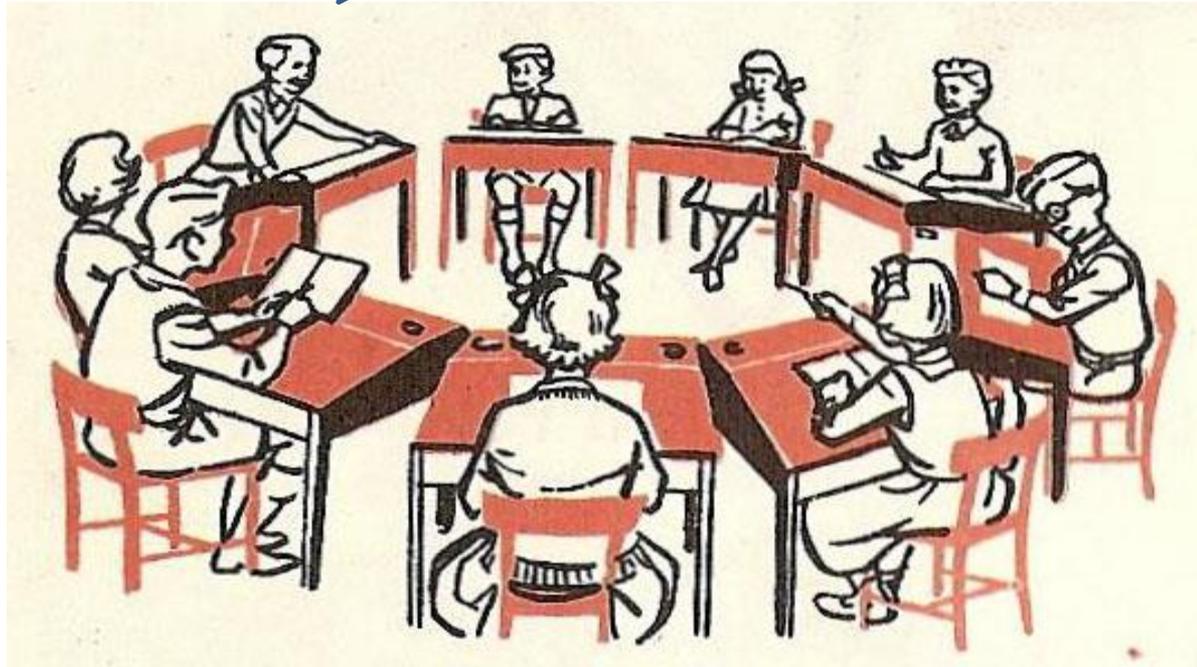
Sowton, C. (2018) ‘Involve stakeholders, measure impact and scaffold teacher development.’ In Capstick, T. (ed.) *Language for Resilience*. British Council. p. 85



“Language is not a sterile subject to be confined to the classroom. One of two things must be done: either life must be brought to the classroom or the class must be taken to life.”

Stevens, P. 1956. *Spoken Language*. Longmans, Green & Co: p. 69.

Thanks!



www.scottthornbury.com