http://www.tblsig.org

Task-based Learning Special Interest Group

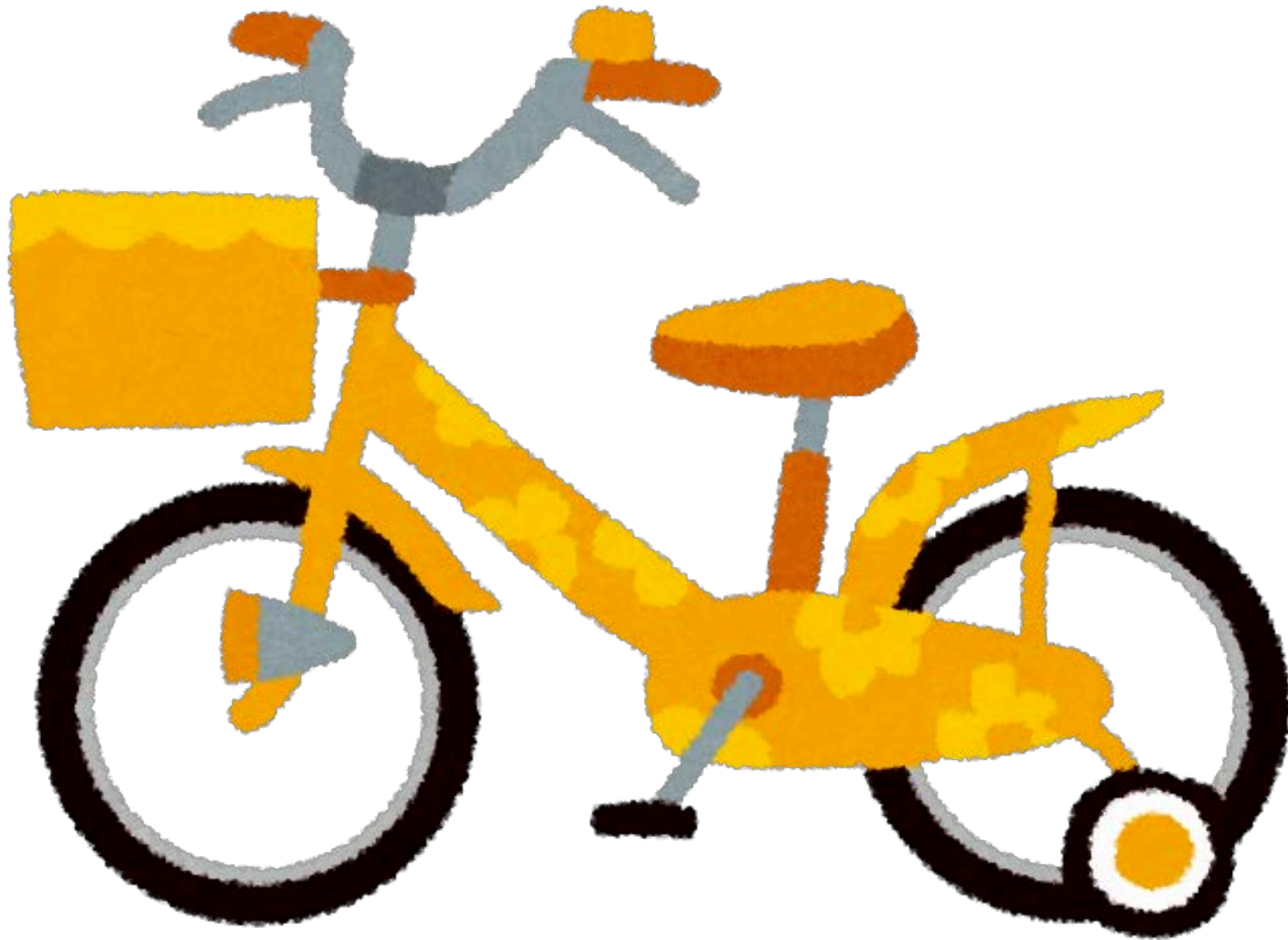| Home | Conference | JALT 2018 | What is TBL? | SIG Publications | Join | Contact Us |

Announcement

Lourdes Ortega's PowerPoint slides are now available for download here.

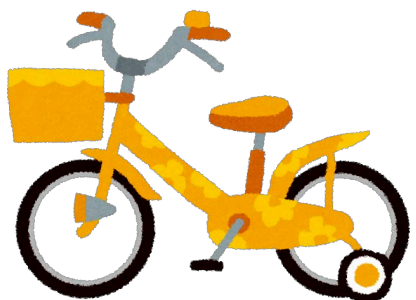## Welcome to the JALT Task-based Special Interest Group

Task-based Learning

Task-based Learning

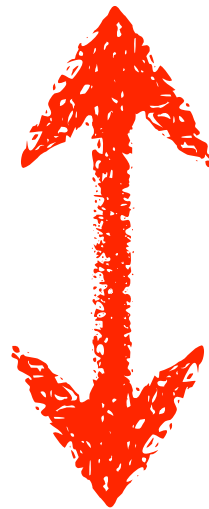# Task-based Learning

Learning sub-skills by practicing them one by one

Being able to use the sub-skills in an integrated way

Task-based Learning

Learning sub-skills by practicing them one by one

gap

Being able to use the sub-skills in an integrated way
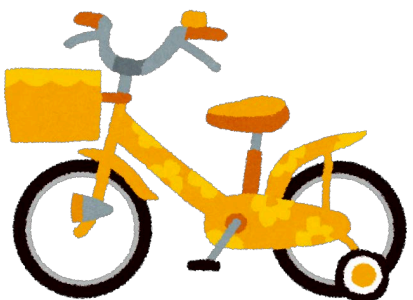
Instead of learning sub-skills separately, trying to learn them together by doing the task

Task-based learning
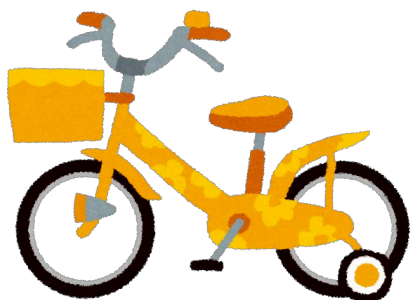
Task-based Learning

Task-based learning

is based on the concept of *learning by doing,*

and is common in learning in general,

at school and in our daily lives.
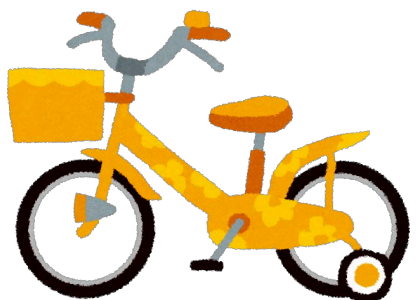
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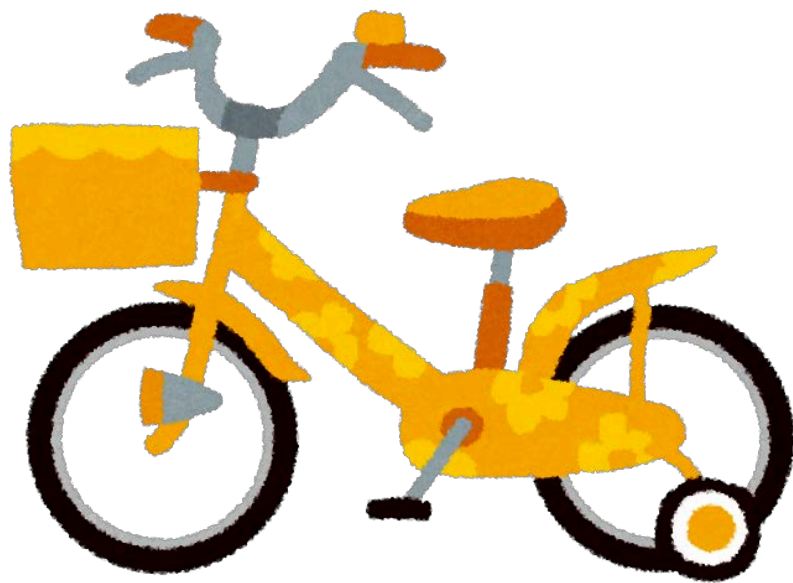
Task-based Learning

If the ultimate goal is very high…

Training sub-skills separately may be necessary,

but it does not have to come in the beginning.

Task-based Learning
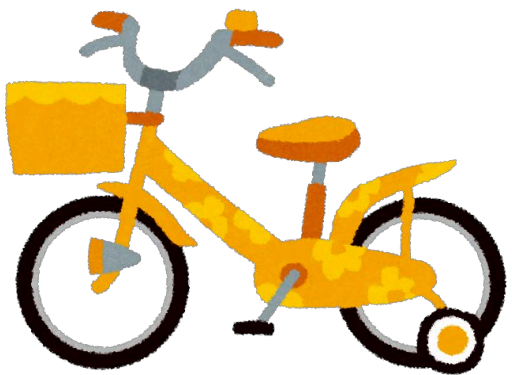
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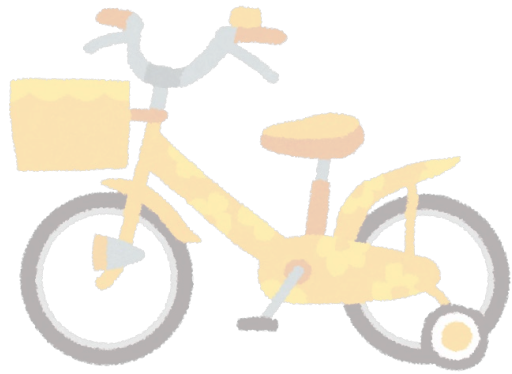
What about language learning?
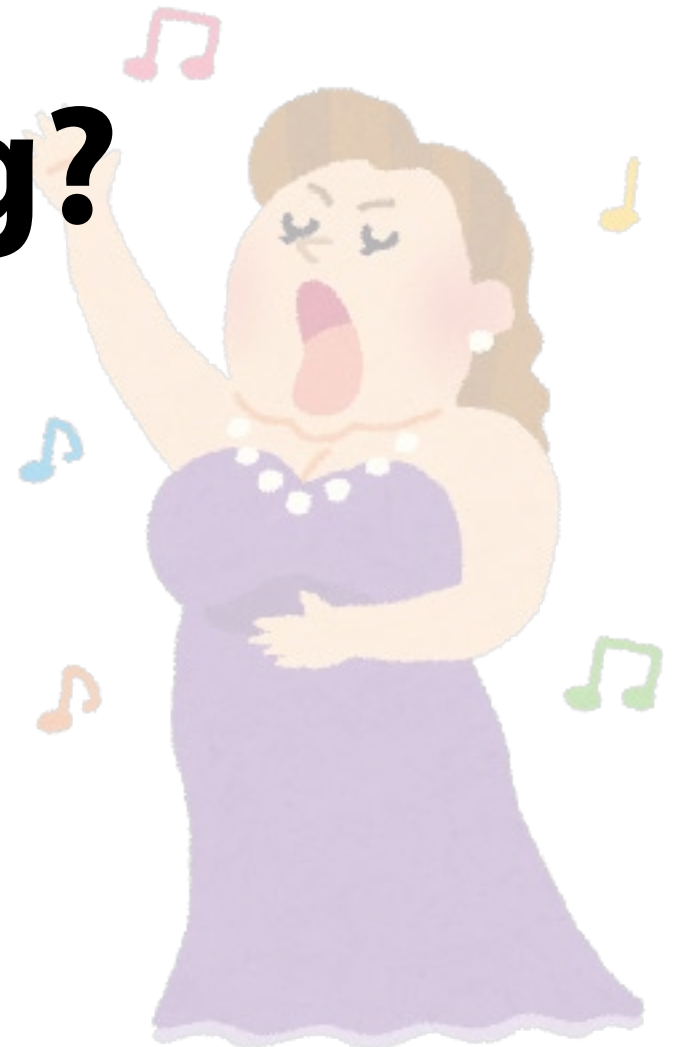
What Is a Task?

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(Long, 1985, p. 89)

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Tasks in Language Teaching

Tasks in Language Teaching

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed.

(Ellis, 2003, p. 16)

Tasks in Language Teaching

Criteria for a task:

1. The primary focus should be on "meaning."

2. There should be some kind of "gap."

3. Learners should largely rely on their own resources.

4. There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language.

(Ellis, 2012, p. 198)

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

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- **Basic steps in task-based syllabus design:**

  1. **Set a (communicative) goal as a target task.**

  2. **Create a series of pedagogic tasks by adjusting task complexity.**

  3. **Sequence the pedagogic tasks from the simplest to the most complex (= target task).**

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Target Tasks

- **Are concrete examples of what the learners are expected to do (in the future).**

- **Are ideally identified through a needs analysis.**

- **Are usually too difficult for the learners to perform.**

Pedagogic Tasks

- **Are derived from a target task-type by:**

  - **dividing it into sub-tasks.**

  - **adjusting task complexity.**

  - **including use of pre-tasks that build schema.**

  - **elaborating the input.**

Pedagogic Tasks

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Task Complexity

- **Is the result of the attentional, memory, reasoning, and other information processing demands imposed by the structure of the task (Robinson, 2001, p. 29).**

Task Complexity, Conditions, & Difficulty

Task complexity
(cognitive factors)
(a) resource-directing
e.g., +/− few elements
+/− here-and-now
+/− no reasoning demands
(b) resource-depleting
e.g., +/− planning
+/− single task
+/− prior knowledge

Sequencing criteria
Prospective decisions
about task units

Task conditions
(interactional factors)
(a) participation variables
e.g., open/closed
one-way/two-way
convergent/divergent
(b) participant variables
e.g., gender
familiarity
power/solidarity

Methodological influences
On-line decisions
about pairs and groups

Task difficulty
(learner factors)
(a) affective variables
e.g., motivation
anxiety
confidence
(b) ability variables
e.g., aptitude
proficiency
intelligence
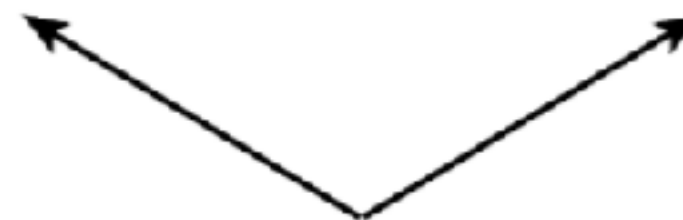
(Robinson, 2001, p. 30)

Task Complexity (Cognitive)

- **Resource-directing**

  - **e.g., ± few elements, ± here-and-now, ± no reasoning demands**

- **Resource-depleting**

  - **e.g., ± planning, ± single task, ± prior knowledge**

Task Conditions (Interactional)

- **Participation variables**

  - **e.g., open/closed, one-way/two-way, convergent/divergent**

- **Participant variables**

  - **e.g., gender, familiarity, power/solidarity**

Task Difficulty (Learner)

- **Affective variables**

  - **e.g., motivation, anxiety, confidence**

- **Ability variables**

  - **e.g., aptitude, proficiency, intelligence**

Task Sequencing

- **Pedagogic tasks are classified and sequenced according to their intrinsic complexity.**

- **Sometimes same or similar tasks are repeated to help learners improve accuracy and fluency of their performance.**

Task Repetition

- **Task repetition is considered to improve task performance.**

Task Repetition

- **Fukuta (2016)**

  - **The participants engaged in narrative tasks of six-frame cartoons (Heaton, 1997) twice, with a one-week interval.**

  - **Complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the transcribed performance data were analyzed.**

  - **Stimulated recall data were also analyzed to investigate attention orientation to syntactic encoding, lexical choice, and phonological encoding.**

Task Repetition

Task Repetition

Not available online.
Please contact urano@hgu.jp for further information.

Task Repetition

Changes in attention orientation
(Fukuta, 2016, p. 331)

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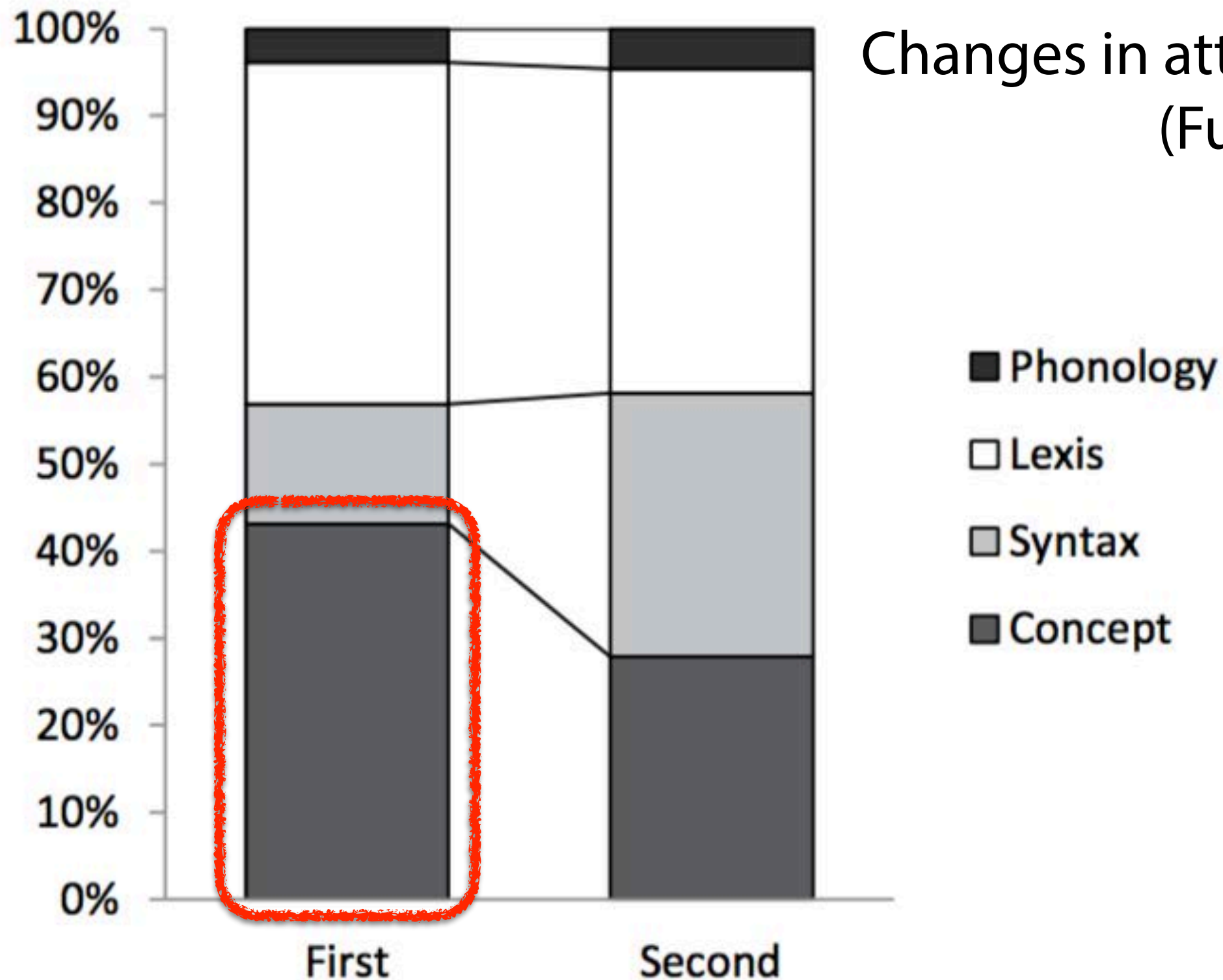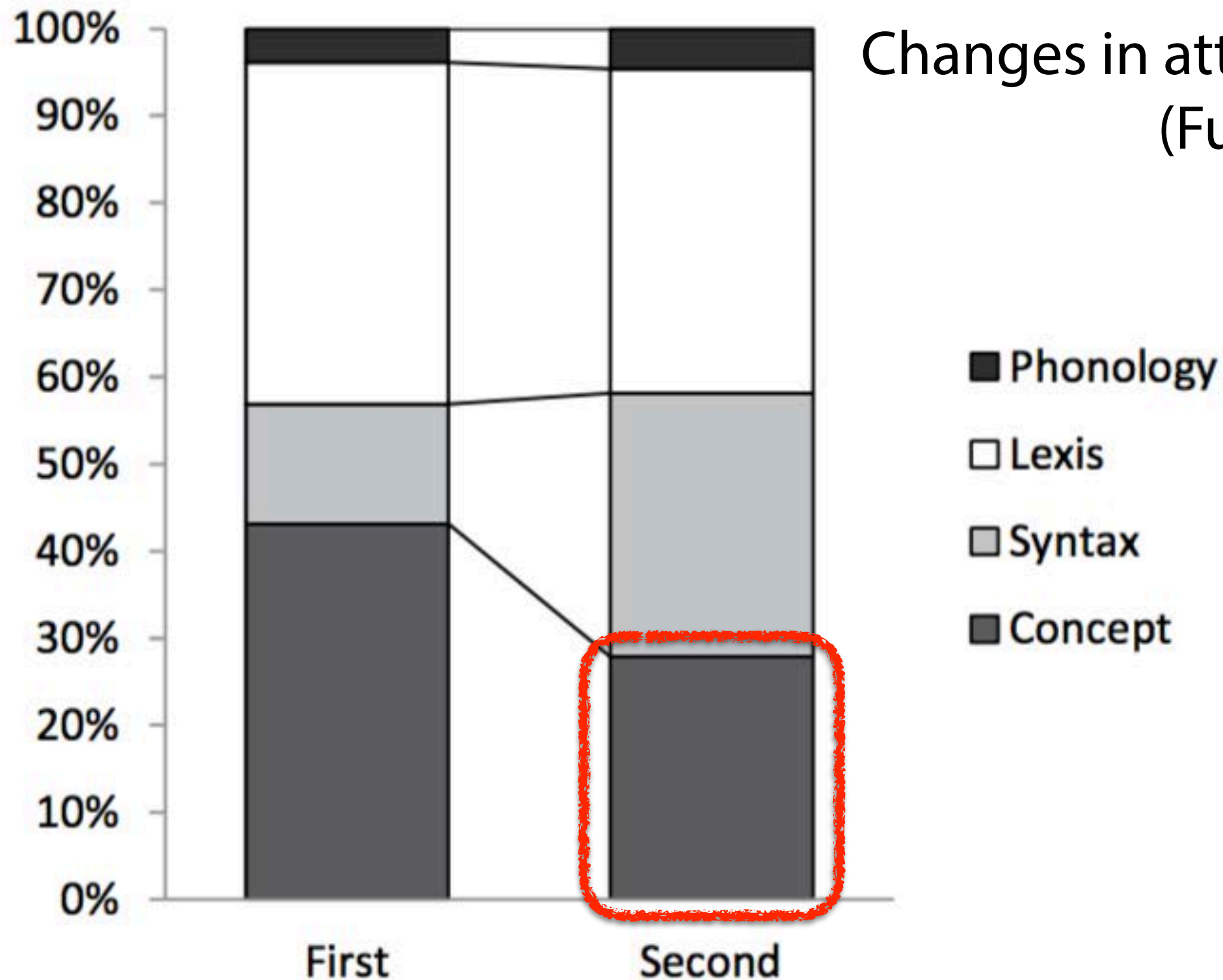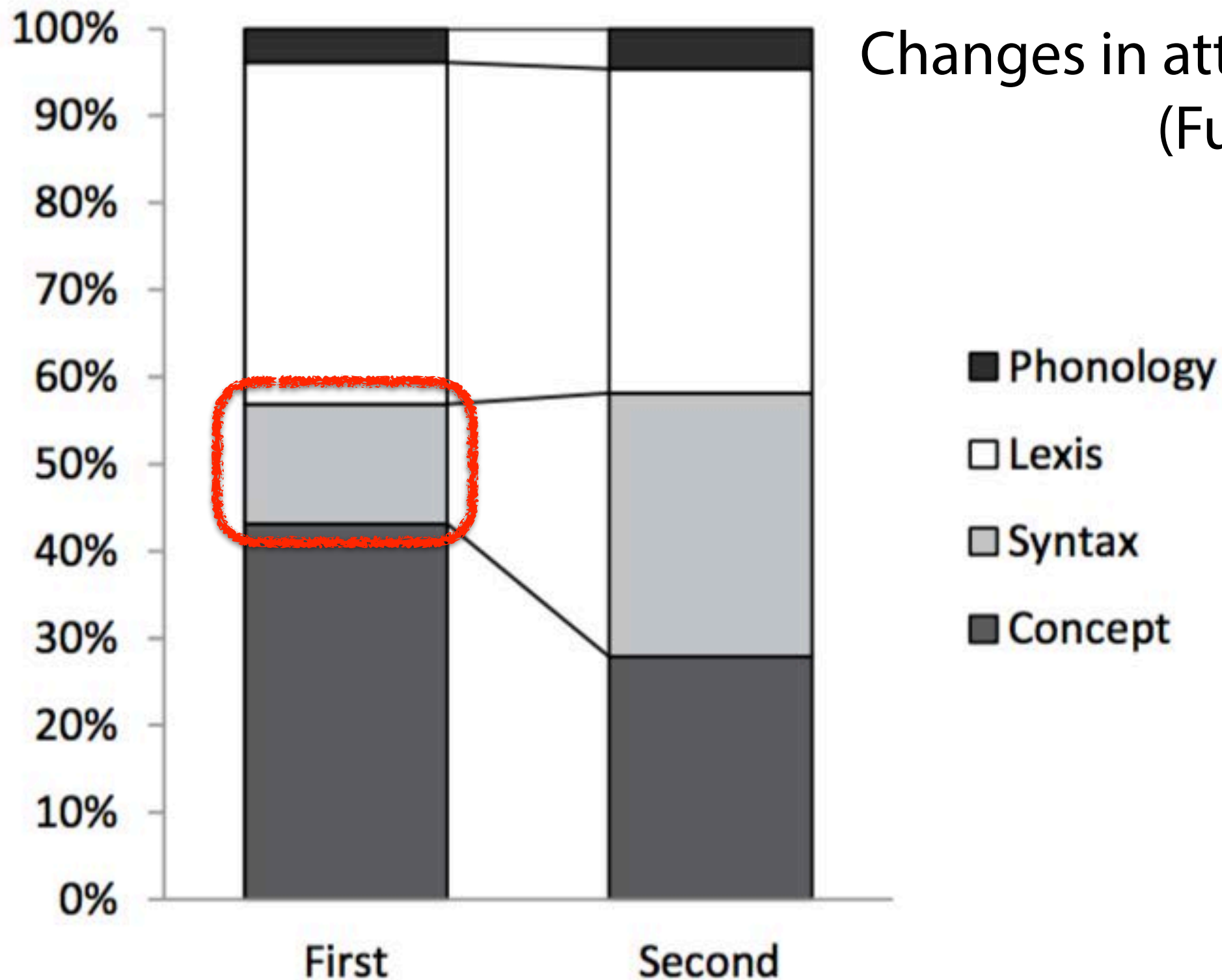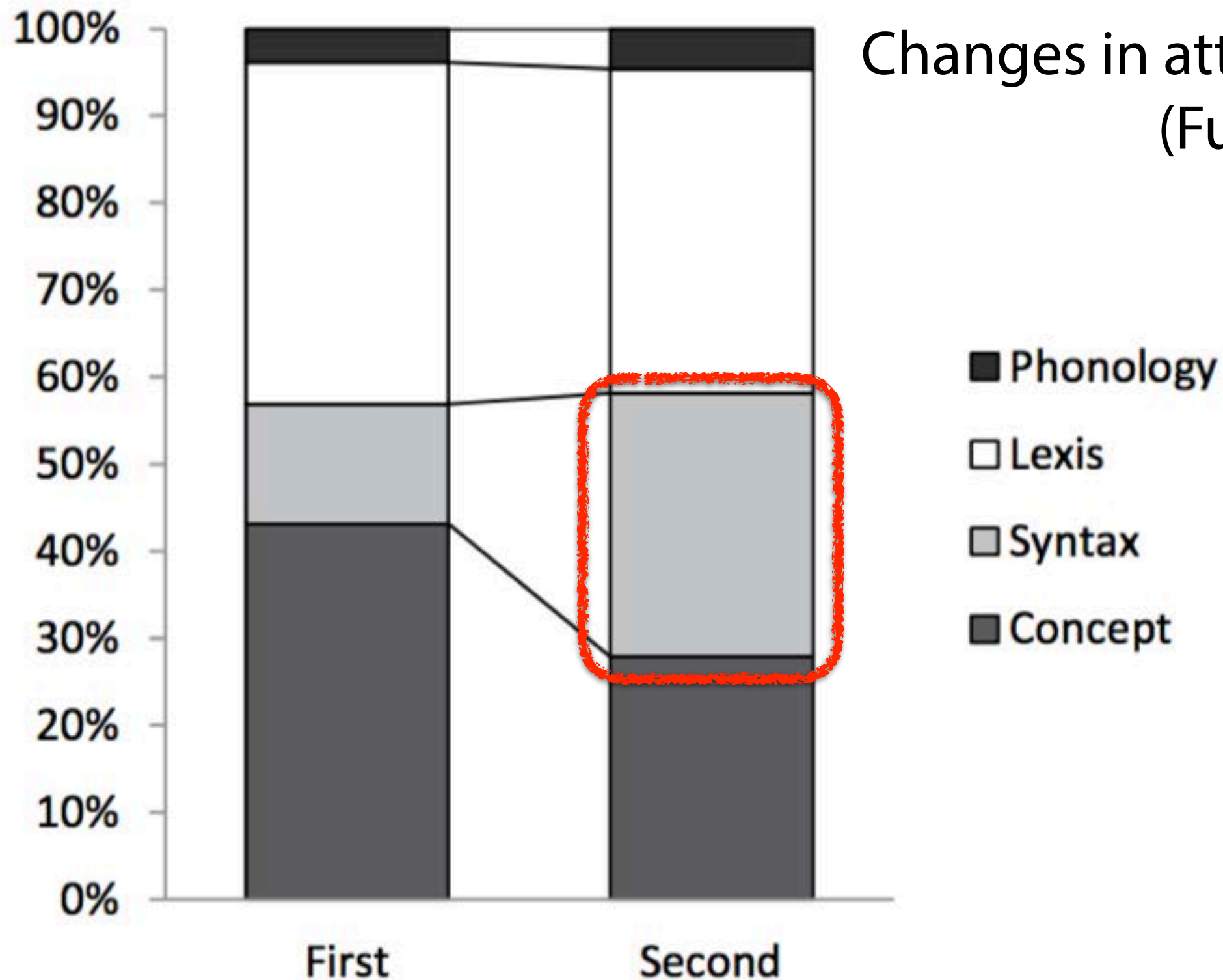
Task Repetition

- **When the same task is repeated, learners need to use less attentional resources for the conceptualizing process (meaning), and thus they can use them for the syntactic encoding process (form).**

- **More attention to form (during meaningful use of language) is expected to help language learning.**

Task Repetition

- **Exact repetition**

  - **Doing the same task again.**

- **Procedural repetition**

  - **Doing the same task type, but with a different topic/content.**

Quick Summary

Quick Summary

- **Task-based learning**

- **Definitions of a task**

- **Steps in TBLT**

  1. **Target task**

  2. **Pedagogic tasks & task complexity**

  3. **Task sequencing & task repetition**

Sample Tasks

The "Bicycle" Task

Target task:

To ride a bicycle on their own in the neighborhood.

The "Bicycle" Task

Target task:
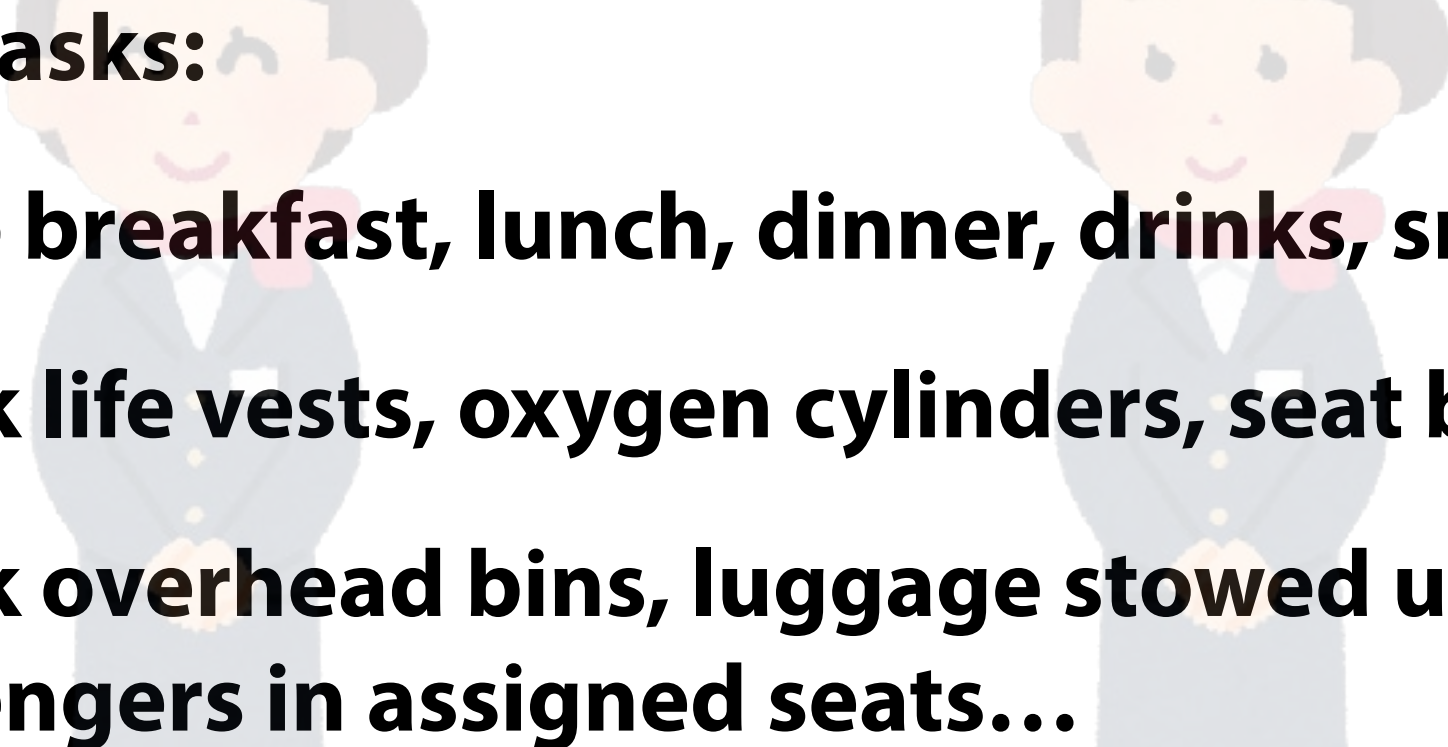
To ride a bicycle on their own in the neighborhood.

Airline Flight Attendant (Long, 2015)

Airline Flight Attendant (Long, 2015)

- **Target tasks:**

  1. **Serve breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks, snacks…**

  2. **Check life vests, oxygen cylinders, seat belts…**

  3. **Check overhead bins, luggage stowed under seats, passengers in assigned seats…**

Airline Flight Attendant (Long, 2015)

- **Target task types:**

  1. **Serve food and beverages**

  2. **Check safety equipment**

  3. **Prepare for takeoff**
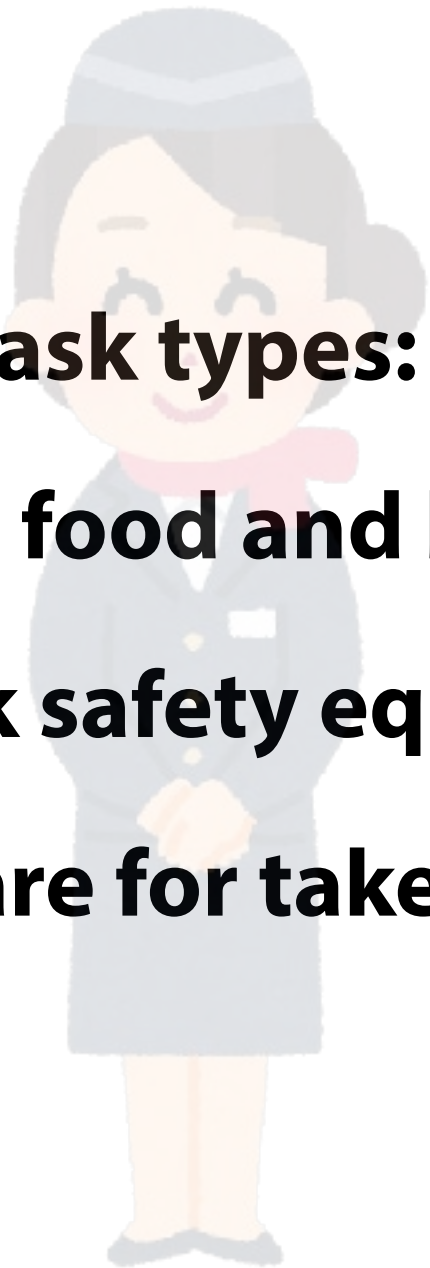
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Airline Flight Attendant (Long, 2015)

- **Pedagogic tasks for "serve food and beverages"**

  0. Experience the task as a passenger (input)

  1. Identify choices between two food items

  2. Identify choices among multiple items

  3. Respond to choices when some items are unavailable

  .
  .
  .

  n. Full simulation (the *exit* task)

A Case of a University EBP Curriculum

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- **English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

  - **English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**

  - **English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)**

    - **English for Medical Purposes (EMP)**

    - **English for Business Purposes (EBP)**

    - **…**

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A Case of a University EBP Curriculum

- **A private university located in Sapporo, the 5th largest city in Japan on the island of Hokkaido.**

- **Largest and oldest private university in Hokkaido.**

- **Five faculties: Economics, Law, Engineering, Humanities, and Business Administration**

- **The Faculty of Business Administration has its own English program.**

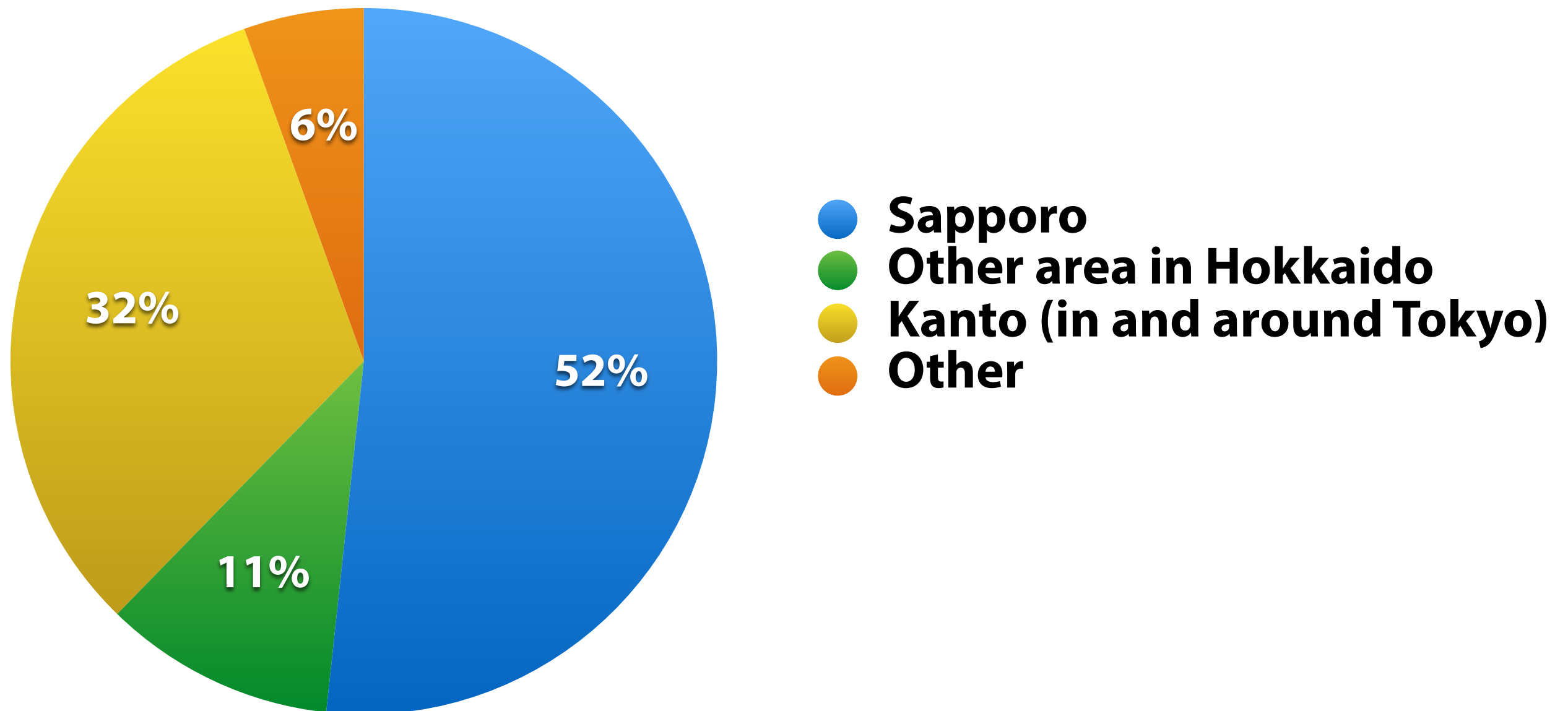# A Case of a University EBP Curriculum

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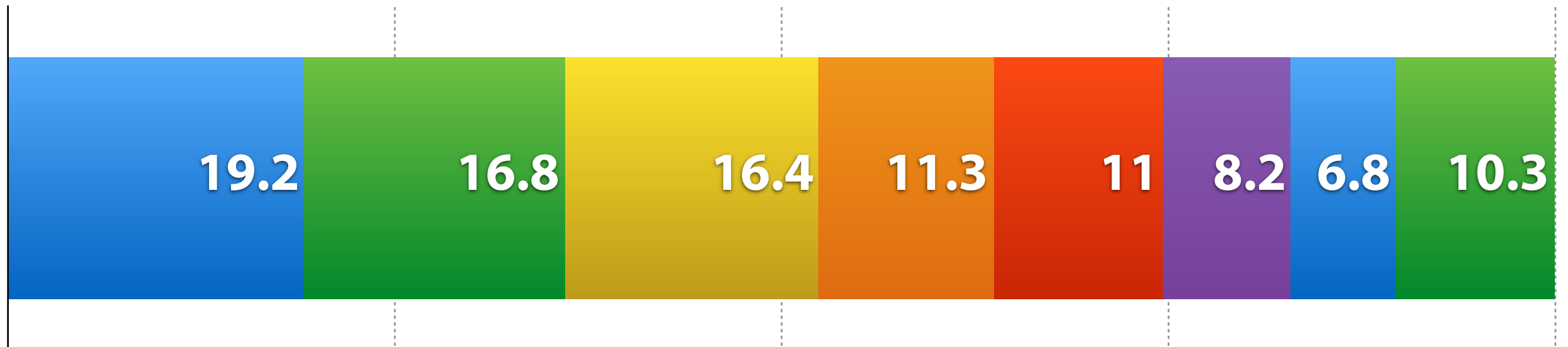
Needs Identification

- **Needs to use English in Hokkaido (Naito et al., 2007)**

  - **Internet survey for business people in Hokkaido**

    - **Data in 2005 ($N = 1,085$)**

    - **"How often do you use English for work?"**

"Every day."	4.7%
"A few times a week."	4.6%
"A few times a month."	4.4%

Needs Identification

- **Frequent tasks (Naito et al., 2007)**

Reading

websites	43%
manuals	38%
emails	34%

Writing

emails	34%
reports	12%
research papers	9%

Needs Identification

- **Frequent tasks (Naito et al., 2007)**

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Writing

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Needs Identification

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Listening

customers	30%
phone calls	16%
office conversation	13%

Speaking

customers	34%
phone calls	16%
office conversation	14%

Needs Identification

- **Frequent tasks (Naito et al., 2007)**

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Speaking

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phone calls	16%
office conversation	14%

Case 1: Task-based Writing Class

Case 1: Task-based Writing Class

- **Goals of the business email writing class**

  1. **To understand different types of business emails and ways to write them effectively**

  2. **To learn frequent expressions used in business emails**

  3. **To be able to write effective business emails for different purposes**

- **Materials:**

  - **Combination of a commercial textbook (for practicality) and original writing tasks that are partly derived from target discourse samples**

Case 1: Task-based Writing Class

Overall increase in task complexity

Beginning → → → → → → → → → → → → → **End**

Syllabus

Overall Increase in Task Complexity

Unit 01	Course introduction		Unit 09	Responding to inquiries
Unit 02	Basics of business email (1)		Unit 10	Quotation
Unit 03	Basics of business email (2)		Unit 11	Order
Unit 04	Thank you message		Unit 12	Shipment
Unit 05	Announcement		Unit 13	Complaint
Unit 06	Appointment		Unit 14	Apology
Unit 07	Request		Unit 15	Course Summary
Unit 08	Inquiry			

Overall Increase in Task Complexity

Unit 01	Course introduction		Unit 09	Responding to inquiries
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Tasks

Overall Increase in Task Complexity

Unit 01	Course introduction		Unit 09	Responding to inquiries
Unit 02	Basics of business email (1)		Unit 10	Quotation
Unit 03	**Simpler**		Unit 11	Order
Unit 04	Thank you message		Unit 12	Shipment
Unit 05	Announcement		Unit 13	Complaint
Unit 06	Appointment		Unit 14	Apology
Unit 07	Request		Unit 1	**More Complex**
Unit 08	Inquiry			

Overall Increase in Task Complexity

Unit 01	Course introduction		Unit 09	Responding to inquiries
Unit 02	Basics of business email (1)		Unit 10	Quotation
Unit 0_	**Simpler**		Unit 11	Order
Unit 04	Thank you message		Unit 12	Shipment
Unit 05	Announcement		Unit 13	Complaint
Unit 06	Appointment		Unit 14	Apology
Unit 07	Request		Unit 1_	**More Complex**
Unit 08	Inquiry			

Increased Complexity within Sub-tasks

Pre-task	Authentic input (target discourse)
Pre-task	Modified input (from the textbook)
Sub-task 1	Group writing assignment
	Instructor's feedback
Sub-task 2	Individual writing assignment (homework)
	Peer feedback + instructor's feedback
Sub-task 3	Revision (homework)
	Instructor's feedback

Increased Complexity within Sub-tasks

Pre-task	**Authentic input (target discourse)**
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sub-task 3	**Revision (homework)**
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Increased complexity

Same complexity

Authentic Input (Target Discourse)

Not available online.
Please contact urano@hgu.jp for further information.

Authentic Input (Target Discourse)

Not available online.
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Modified Input (Textbook)

Dear Sales Manager:

We import computer components in Japan.

We are interested in your Product A, which was covered in an article in the April 2 issue of *Business Week*. If you ship your products abroad, please inform us of the formal order procedure.

Thank you.

Shiokawa (2012, p. 35)

Sub-task 1 (less complex)

You run a small cookware shop in Nagoya, and the shop is gaining popularity thanks to its selection of unique kitchen items.

You are now looking at a product catalog of a kitchenware company in the US. You are particularly interested in a dinnerware set on p. 15. Write an inquiry email asking:

- If the company sells its products overseas.
- If the company has distributers in Japan.

Based on Shiokawa (2012, p. 39)

Sub-task 2 & 3 (more complex)

You work for Orchard Food Trading in Singapore. Last week, you requested a catalog from Tokyo Liquor, and they sent you the PDF version of their catalog.

In the catalog, a few of the items, especially sake and craft beer from Hokkaido, seem to be promising as items for the Japan Fair scheduled this autumn. You are going to meet them in Tokyo next month to discuss this, but are going to send email to them before hand, asking:

- If it is possible to taste some of the sake at the meeting in Tokyo.
- What the minimum and maximum units of order are for Otaru Beer.
- If Otaru Beer is available in cans, rather than in bottles.

Sample Student Work

Case 2: Task-based Presentation Class

Case 2: Task-based Presentation Class

- **Goals of the business presentation class**

    1. **To understand different types of presentations and ways to give presentations effectively**

    2. **To learn frequent expressions used in business presentations**

    3. **To be able to give effective business presentations for different purposes**
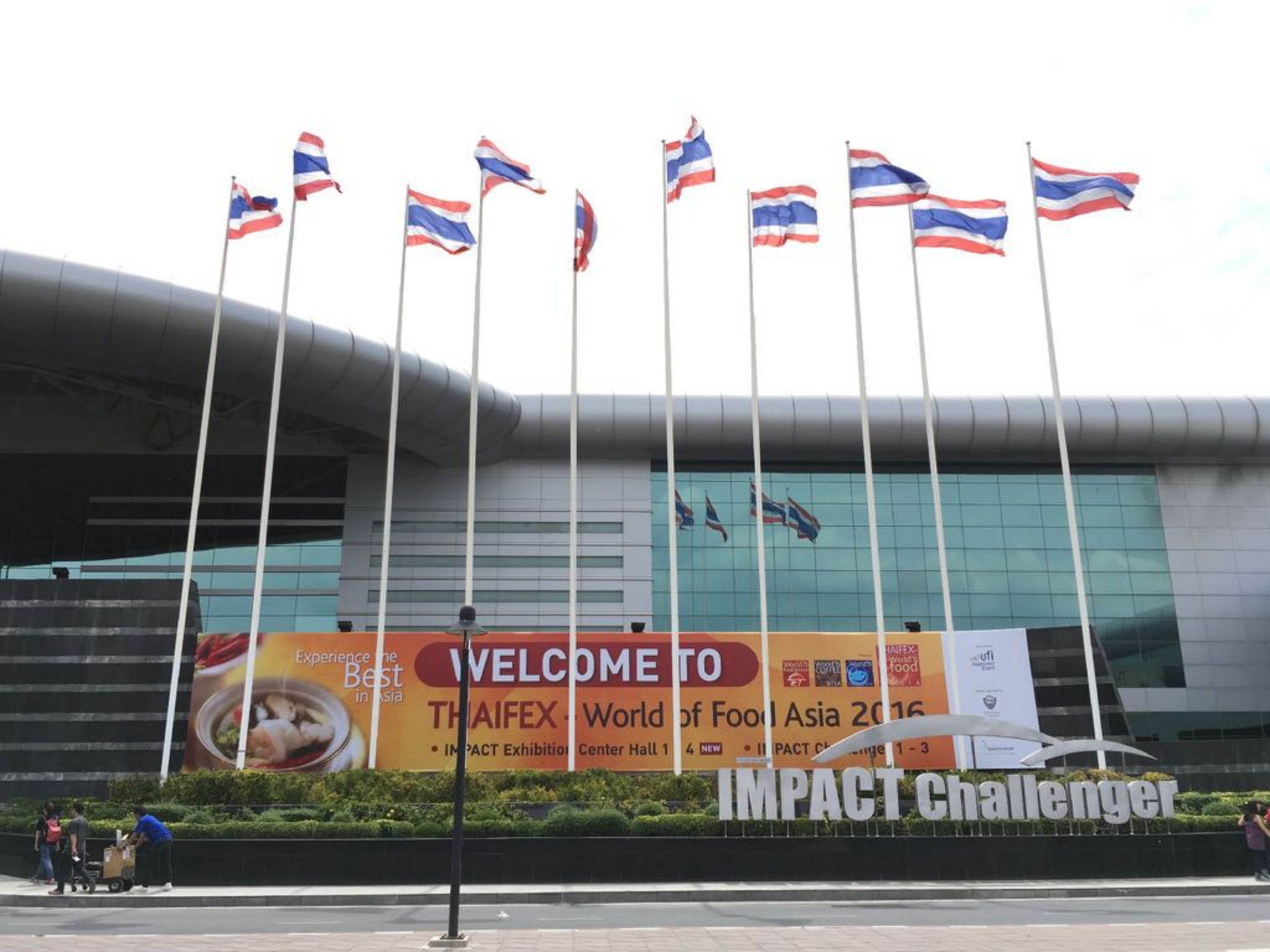
- **Target task:**

  - **Give a quick introduction to a product to potential buyers.**

"Sales Talk" Module

- **Materials:**

  - **Original speaking tasks that are partly derived from target discourse samples**

  - **Semi-structured interview with an in-service learner**

    - **Experience in internship at various business transactions**

"Sales Talk" Module

- **Business exchange at an international food expo**

"Sales Talk" Module

- **Target task:**

  - **Give a quick introduction to a product to potential buyers.**

- **Pedagogic tasks and task sequencing/repetition**

"Sales Talk" Module

- **Pedagogic tasks and task sequencing/repetition**

  1. **Show-and-tell a favorite item.**

  2. **Show-and-tell another favorite item.**

  3. **Give a sales talk of an item of their own choice.**

  4. **Give a sales talk of a familiar product.**

  5. **Give a sales talk of an unfamiliar product.**

  6. **Give a sales talk and answer questions from buyers.**

Hands-on Activity

1. Business Reading Task

- **Target task:**

  - **You are working for a company in Tokyo, and your boss, who doesn't speak English, often asks you to summarize newspaper articles he wants to read. He only reads the headlines and does not want to spend time reading English. Read the following article titled *Government plans 5% rebates for some cashless payments after 2019 tax hike* and write a short summary in Japanese.**

https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/11/22/business/government-plans-5-rebates-cashless-payments-2019-tax-hike/

Create a series of pedagogic tasks and sequence them.

Task Complexity, Conditions, & Difficulty

Task complexity
(cognitive factors)
(a) resource-directing
e.g., +/− few elements
+/− here-and-now
+/− no reasoning demands
(b) resource-depleting
e.g., +/− planning
+/− single task
+/− prior knowledge

Task conditions
(interactional factors)
(a) participation variables
e.g., open/closed
one-way/two-way
convergent/divergent
(b) participant variables
e.g., gender
familiarity
power/solidarity

Task difficulty
(learner factors)
(a) affective variables
e.g., motivation
anxiety
confidence
(b) ability variables
e.g., aptitude
proficiency
intelligence

Sequencing criteria
Prospective decisions
about task units

Methodological influences
On-line decisions
about pairs and groups

(Robinson, 2001, p. 30)

2. Food Ordering Task

- **Target task:**

  - **You are a Japanese businessperson visiting Mumbai, India, and are at a hamburger shop in town with two colleagues, one is local and the other is from Australia. Look at the menu and place orders for your lunch.**

Create a series of pedagogic tasks and sequence them.

Task Complexity, Conditions, & Difficulty

Task complexity (cognitive factors)	Task conditions (interactional factors)	Task difficulty (learner factors)
(a) resource-directing	(a) participation variables	(a) affective variables
e.g., +/− few elements	e.g., open/closed	e.g., motivation
+/− here-and-now	one-way/two-way	anxiety
+/− no reasoning demands	convergent/divergent	confidence
(b) resource-depleting	(b) participant variables	(b) ability variables
e.g., +/− planning	e.g., gender	e.g., aptitude
+/− single task	familiarity	proficiency
+/− prior knowledge	power/solidarity	intelligence

Sequencing criteria
Prospective decisions
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(Robinson, 2001, p. 30)

A Note on Target Tasks

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- **Basic steps in task-based syllabus design:**

  Conduct needs analysis to identify target tasks.

  (Long, 2005, 2015)

  1. **Set a (communicative) goal as a target task.**

  2. **Create a series of pedagogic tasks by adjusting task complexity.**

  3. **Sequence the pedagogic tasks from the simplest to the most complex (= target task).**

Needs Analysis

In an era of shrinking resources, there are growing demands for accountability in public life, with education a particularly urgent case and foreign language education a prime example within it…. There is an urgent need for courses of all kinds to be relevant… to the needs of specific groups of learners and of society at large.

(Long, 2005, p. 19)

Needs Analysis

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(Long, 2005, p. 19)

Sources of Needs Analysis

- **Learning situation analysis (LSA)**

  - **Ask the learners what they want.**

- **Target situation analysis (TSA)**

  - **Analyze what the learners actually need to do.**

- **Present situation analysis (PSA)**

  - **Evaluate the present situation against LSA & TSA**

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Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

- **Closest to the actual needs**

- **Sources:**

  - **In-service people**

  - **Domain experts**

  - **Relevant documents**

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Steps in Target Discourse Analysis

1. **Identify the target discourse.**

   - **"Where will the students use English?"**

2. **Collect target discourse samples.**

   - **"What do they actually do there?"**

3. **Analyze the discourse samples.**

   - **"Are there any patterns?"**

Importance of Target Discourse Analysis

- **Discrepancy between commercial textbooks and the actual target discourse**

  - **Bartlett (2005)**

    - **Collected dialogs at coffee shops and compared the discourse with dialogs found in commercial textbooks.**
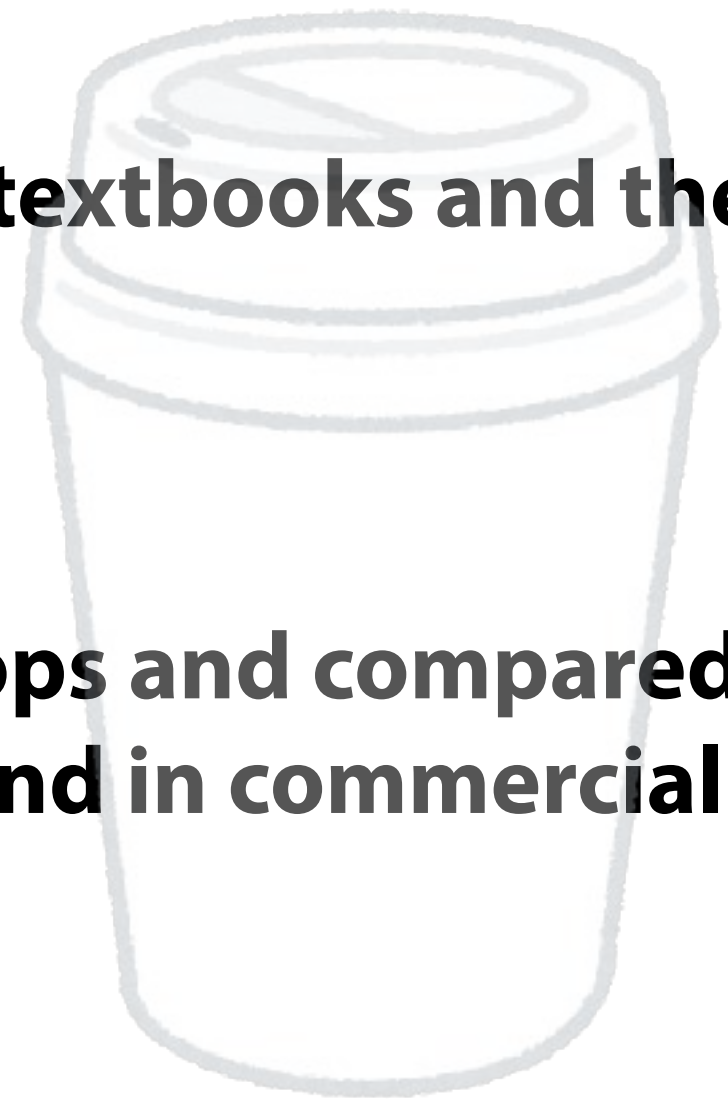
Sample Textbook Dialog
(Bartlett, 2005, p. 331)

Wait person	Customer
Are you ready to order?	
	Yes. Could I have (*choose an entreé*)?
What kind of potatoes would you like?	
	Let me see. I'd like…
And would you like peas or asparagus?	
	May I have…?
Would you like Italian or French dressing with your salad?	
	Could I have…?
What would you like for dessert?	
	What do you have?
…	…

Sample Prototypical Dialog
(Bartlett, 2005, p. 338)

1	S:	Hi. Can I help you?
2	C:	Can I get a grande latte with vanilla?
3	S:	Did you want that blended or on the rocks?
4	C:	Blended, I guess.
5	S:	2% or skimmed?
6	C:	Uhm 2%.
7	S:	2% OK. Any whipped cream?
8	C:	Sorry?
9	S:	Did you want whipped cream on that?
10	C:	Yes.
11	S:	Anything else?
12	C:	No, that's it. Oh no. Can I get—are those scones?
13	S:	Yeah, we have cranberry and blueberry.
14	C:	I think I'll have one of those (pointing).
		…

Importance of Target Discourse Analysis

As witnessed during the researcher's own language teaching experience and supported by previous target discourse analyses, many current textbook materials ill-equip learners to handle real-life discourse. The present analysis attempts to show that although natural interactions are somewhat complex and reveal variability, there is a predictable overall nature.

(Bartlett, 2005, p. 338)

# Importance of Target Discourse Analysis

As witnessed during the researcher's own language teaching experience and supported by previous target discourse analyses, many current textbook materials ill-equip learners to handle real-life discourse. The present analysis attempts to show that although natural interactions are somewhat complex and reveal variability, **there is a predictable overall nature.**

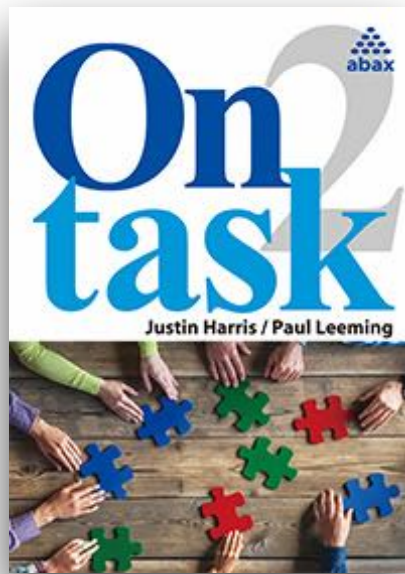**(Bartlett, 2005, p. 338)**

One more thing…

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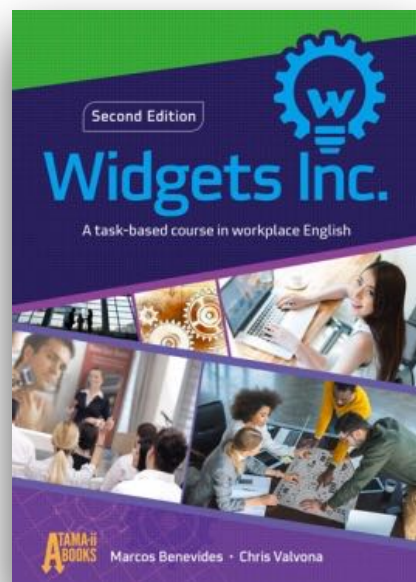## Our TBL SIG friends have written task-based textbooks!
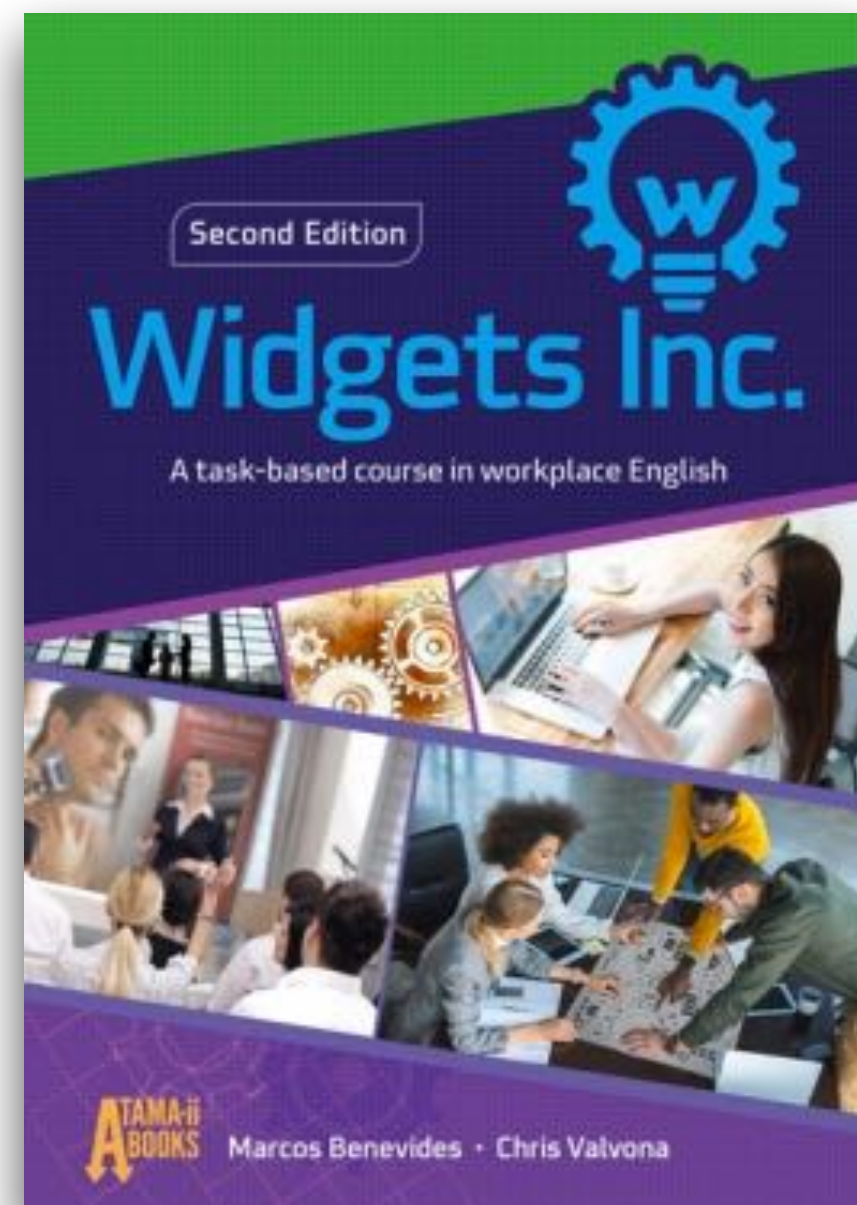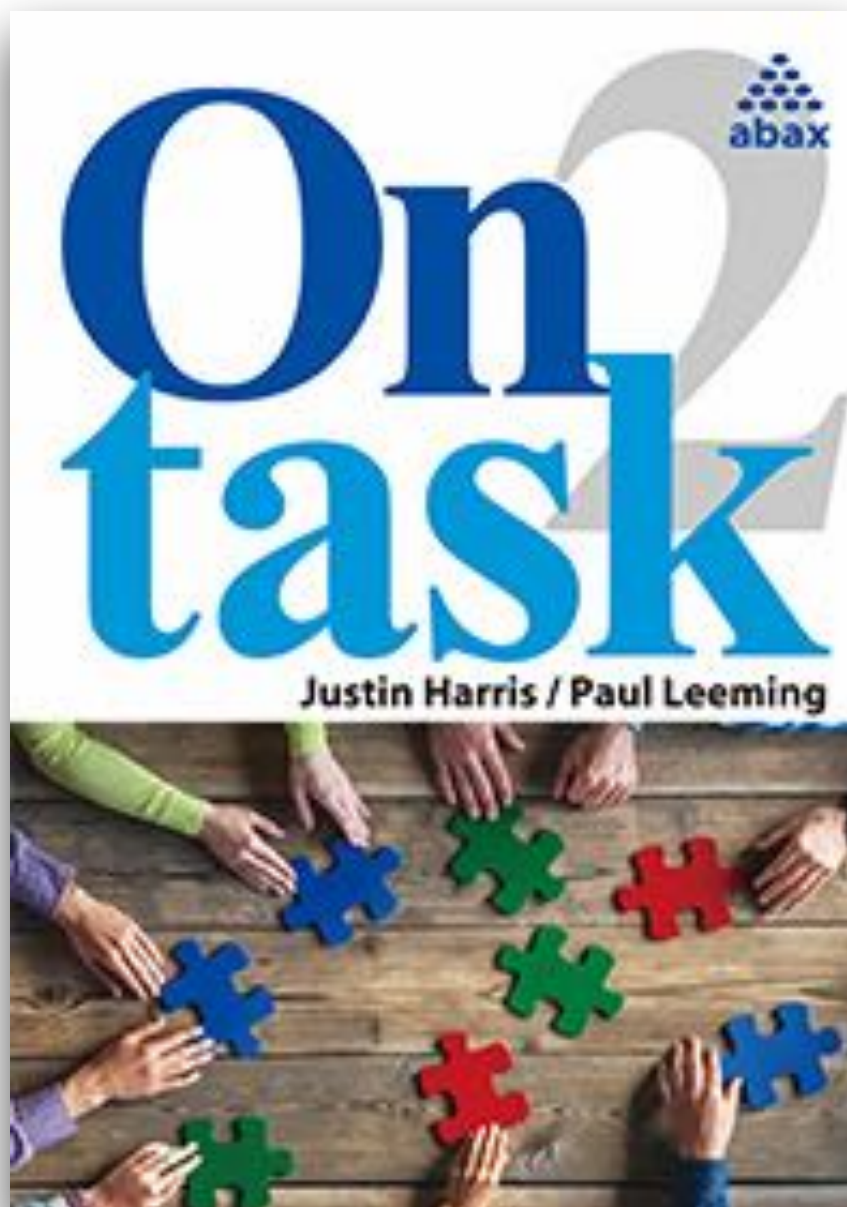
One more thing…

Our TBL SIG friends have written task-based textbooks!

- ***On task*** **series by Justin Harris & Paul Leeming (2018) from ABAX ELT Publishing.**

- ***Widgets Inc.*** **(2nd ed.) by Marcos Benevides & Chris Valvona (2018) from Atama-ii Books.**

Summary

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- **Task-based learning**

- **Definitions of a task**

- **Steps in TBLT**

- **Hands-on activity**

- **Needs analysis**

- **Target discourse analysis**

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