

Issues Analysis Tasks for Year 12 ESL Studies in the South Australian Curriculum

Anne-Marie Morgan

anne-marie.morgan(at)unisa.edu.au

University of South Australia (Adelaide, South Australia)

An 'issues analysis' is a requisite component of the South Australian Year 12 ESL Studies subject. This paper explores programming for an issues analysis of rites/rights of teenagers, using comparative data and texts on drinking and driving ages for young people in different states and nations. Two assessment tasks are explained; one a formative task and the other a summative task. Both invite learners to draw on their own experiences and knowledge, so that the tasks have relevance for them and can be related to real life experiences. A range of text genres is explored, and the tasks involve reading, writing, listening and speaking elements, and allow for individual, small group and whole class activities to support learners in a range of learning styles. All activities are also designed to support exam preparation, as the exam constitutes 50% of the final grade for this subject.

Context and Overview

English as a Second Language (ESL) Studies is a South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) Level 2 (Year 12) examinable subject. The examination represents 50% of the total marks for the subject, with the other 50% being comprised of classroom based, externally moderated, assessment.

Classroom based assessment items include an 'issue analysis'; an extended 'investigation'; and a collection of 'text production' tasks, determined by the class teacher, in relation to the formula indicated below:

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|--------------------|-----|
| 1. Issue analysis | 10% |
| 2. Text production | 15% |
| 3. Investigation | 25% |
| 4. Examination | 50% |
- (SACE Board 2008)

Teachers of ESL Studies are aware of the significance of the final examination for their learners, and therefore use classroom work not only to generate meaningful learning experiences tailored to the particular group of learners, but also to provide learners with opportunities to prepare for the exam. Teachers do this through scaffolded teaching, modelled construction, formative feedback, joint construction of texts and through assessment tasks for individual construction by the students (Scarino et al 2007; SACE Board 2008).

This paper focuses on the 'issues analysis' component of classroom based assessment, with a view to providing classroom work that recognises and provides for the individual learners and their learning contexts and histories, while also preparing students for the end of year exam through concentrating on the skills and knowledge needed for the exam components. The 'issue' selected for analysis is 'rites/rights of adolescents', with a focus on driving and drinking ages and ramifications and implications of these for young people and the wider community. The issue is considered through a selection of texts (some provided by the teacher and some the students will source themselves) across a range of contexts, including Australian print and audio-visual media; online 'wiki' type informational sites; public perceptions; political and public service views; as well as the cultural backgrounds of the learners within the class.

The aims of the lessons are to provide students with opportunities to develop strategies to interpret and analyse English language texts focused on a particular issue, and to construct both oral and written responses to these in a range of genres. The issue has been chosen as it is one that affects their lives as young people living in Australia, and to which they may bring experience and understanding of alternative contexts. The tasks will provide students with opportunities to consider texts critically, and to examine how genre, field, tenor and mode determine the language and structure of the texts (SACE Board 2008). Students will be asked to consider how authors of texts (even when not identified) write for particular audiences and use persuasive language. Students will be asked to deconstruct texts, following modelled and scaffolded examples, and then to construct texts, firstly jointly, and then individually, in line with the South Australian ESL learning model (DECS 2008).

Two tasks have been chosen for elaboration. These are:

1. Preparing a blog response to the question ‘should the minimum driving age be raised to 18?’ and a set of supporting dot points (formative assessment item).
2. Oral discussion of the issue with the teacher (summative assessment item).

The texts supplied by the teacher are provided as Appendix 1. It should be noted that alternative, contemporary texts that address this issue could be used instead, with the teacher selecting the most relevant and up to date materials. Of the texts suggested in the Appendix, the first two of these have been used in elaborating the first task, and the full set for the second task. These texts will be augmented by further texts and information located by students in their own research of the issue.

Some assumptions have been made about the context of teaching, which have framed the development of the tasks. These are:

- the tasks are part of a unit of work and a whole year plan, conceived to cover all the components of assessment as a total program (Byram 1997; Black et al 2004; Scarino et al 2007)
- topics and texts are selected with consideration of the extent to which they are meaningful to the particular group of learners (Smith & Lovat 2006)
- learners are involved in selection of issues for analysis
- all tasks have a relationship to the exam, with several exam elements being addressed in a task (Black et al 2004)
- formative feedback from both the teacher and classroom peers is ongoing and integral to classroom practice and culture (Black et al 2004)
- learners are required to self assess and reflect on their learning (Black et al 2004)
- learners are given opportunities to engage with texts from a variety of genres and modes, and to prepare a range of responses in different formats (SACE Board 2008)
- learners are provided with opportunities to engage with a range of English language structures to enable them to understand, critique and appreciate their world and to be able to use these language structures with increasing confidence and capability (SACE Board 2008).

Task One

Context of Task

Immediately prior to undertaking this task, the class and teacher would have discussed the nature of blogs as a genre, and the type of language and language forms that were suitable for this type of writing (e.g. acceptable structure, level of informality of language, use of slang, alternative punctuation, length of response, consideration of target audience, other contributors’ interactions). Students would then undertake the task, which is to create their own blog entry, together with a set of dot points as a reflection in which they justify their position and relate it to the arguments presented in the texts they have considered.

Task Description (Given to Students)

- a. Taking into account the views explored in the texts on driving age, and your own opinions, prepare a blog response to the question ‘Should the minimum driving age be raised to 18?’ that could be posted on the website ‘drive blog’. The blog entry needs to argue a point of view. Your response should be between 150-200 words.
- b. Write a justification of your response in the form of dot points, linking the views you expressed in your blog entry to

the texts you have considered, or to other evidence including your own experiences.

Aim

The aim of this task is to write appropriately within a specific genre- an internet blog- and to self- and group analyse your responses in relation to ongoing aims for the unit and for the year. SACE learning outcomes addressed are to:

- understand, analyse, and critically reflect on, the relationship between context and text in a variety of genres
- compose coherent and cohesive texts, for social and creative purposes, taking into consideration genre, field, tenor and mode
- demonstrate, when writing, clear and accurate language skills that reflect increasing complexity (SACE Board 2008)

Relationship to Examination

This task relates to the essay, listening and comprehension and letter exam components.

Assessment

This is a formative assessment task, aimed at giving you feedback that will assist your learning and provide you with useful information in preparation for subsequent tasks. You will be required to share your response with the class and to give feedback on the responses to other members of the class using the criteria listed below. You will receive written feedback from the teacher related to these criteria. A marking rubric for feedback is provided. An indicative mark in relation to a similar exam task is provided, for your information.

Marking Criteria

Structure

1. How effectively you structure, format and develop the blog response and dot point justification

Understanding

2. To what extent you demonstrate depth of understanding of the issue in the blog response and in your dot point justification
3. To what extent you use subject-specific vocabulary
4. To what extent you demonstrate understanding of the interrelationships of the issue and the context in which it is occurring (i.e. minimum driving age in Australian states)

Appropriateness

5. How appropriately you express opinions
6. To what extent you use language that is appropriate to the context of the genre in which you are writing by using appropriate language and language structures for a blog entry and for a series of dot point notes

Accuracy

7. To what extent you demonstrate grammatical control and complexity of language

Task Two

Context of Task

The second task occurs at the end of the unit. It is the culminating task and counts towards the student's year grade (10%). The task is the oral discussion of the issue analysis, in which students are required to have a discussion with the teacher in which they present information and explain and substantiate their opinions about the issue, with reference to the texts studied. The teacher guides the interview with open-ended, inquiring questions that encourage students to respond in an extended way. Students would have practiced interviewing each other in trial sessions from which formative and peer feedback would have been provided. They would also have written expository pieces analysing the issue. Students will be familiar with the type of questions asked, and the length of responses they are expected to give, including the nature and extent of supporting evidence they should provide. They will have kept a record of the texts studied and the arguments discussed, and written journal entries to support their learning.

Task Description

Issue analysis: Discuss with your teacher the issue of adolescent rights, in relation to drinking and driving ages. You are expected to present information and explain and substantiate your opinion with reference to the texts studied. You will be asked open-ended questions and are required to give an extended response where possible. Most of the talking should be done by you.

You must refer to at least two of the texts studied. These texts include the newspaper articles, blogs, documentary films and other texts you have researched individually.

The analysis (discussion) should take between 4-6 minutes. You will be allowed to use cue cards, but these may only contain brief notes and key terms.

Aim

The aim of this task is to for you to be able to analyse and discuss an issue studied in class, and to respond appropriately and spontaneously to the teacher's questions on the issue. It is your opportunity to demonstrate, orally, your point of view on the issue, supported by evidence from texts you have studied. SACE learning outcomes addressed are to:

- understand, analyse, and critically reflect on, the relationship between context and text in a variety of genres
- obtain, evaluate, and synthesise information from a variety of sources, including electronic
- exchange opinions and convey information appropriately
- demonstrate, when speaking and listening, clear and accurate language skills that reflect increasing complexity (SACE Board 2008)

Relationship to Examination

This task relates to the listening and comprehension, essay and letter components of the exam.

Assessment

This is a summative assessment task, which will count for 10% of your total ESL Studies mark. Criteria for assessment are included below, together with a marking rubric that will be used by the teacher. You will receive a written assessment from the teacher related to these criteria.

Marking Criteria

Structure

1. To what extent you structure your side of the discussion to make it easy to follow by using language that links ideas logically

Understanding

2. To what extent you demonstrate depth of understanding of the issue by extended responses to open-ended questions
3. To what extent you demonstrate depth of understanding of the issue by the use of subject-specific vocabulary
4. To what extent you demonstrate understanding of the connection between events and ideas by using language to express sequence, cause and effect, condition, and contrast

Interaction

5. To what extent you effectively interact with the teacher by the appropriate use of eye contact, body language, and voice

Appropriateness

6. To what extent you use language that is appropriate to the context
7. How appropriately you express opinions and attitudes

Accuracy

8. To what extent you demonstrate grammatical control and complexity of spoken language

Appendix 1: Texts used for Tasks One and Two

- Gilmore, H 2008, 'We need to raise driving age to 18', Sydney Morning Herald, March 16 2008, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/we-need-to-raise-driving-age-to-18/2008/03/15/1205472157863.html> retrieved 29 October 2008.
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Additional References

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- SACE Board of South Australia 2008, English as a Second Language Studies, <http://www.ssabsa.sa.edu.au/english/publ.php>, retrieved 22 August 2008.
- Smith, D & Lovat, T 2006, Curriculum: action on reflection, 4th edn, Thomson, Melbourne.

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<http://iteslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Morgan-IssuesAnalysis.html>