

## Exemplar 6: Task-based Learning

### Overview



This exemplar features an approach to task-based learning at [Christian Alliance Cheng Wing Gee College](#), which involves developing a unit from the Form One textbook. The decision by teachers in Form One to add "enhancement" or extension activities to the existing textbook (*Longman Express 1*) was based on the school's awareness of Hong Kong trends in task-based learning (TBL). The aim of TBL is to provide students with an authentic situation in which to use the language they learn in class from their textbooks.

In this exemplar, the students are shown preparing menus as part of a textbook unit that focused on the language of requests within the context of restaurants and food. The teacher, Mrs May Tam, felt there was a need to extend the task in order to make it more communicative and meaningful. With the support of the school management and the tuck-shop staff, the school tuck-shop was converted into a restaurant, and the S.1B students took on the role of waiters and waitresses to serve students from other forms. They took orders from their peers in English, collected orders and payment, and served the food. English was used at all times, and the task helped to extend the target language introduced in the textbook towards a more genuine, "real-life" communicative task outside the classroom.

This exemplar includes a description of the activity, the planning process and the implementation process, as well as interviews with teachers and student participants. From the study, it can be seen that the task had several benefits:



- Students enjoyed the task and were motivated to use English throughout the activity.
- Students' confidence was boosted.
- It was seen that the S.1B students started to take more responsibility for their own learning in and out of class.
- Teachers noted that students were more willing to speak up in class and to take risks with the language.

## Background

The decision by Form One teachers to add "enhancement" or extension activities to complement the existing textbook (*Longman Express 1*) was based on the school's awareness of local trends in task-based learning (TBL). As a starting point, it was felt that enhancement programmes should be introduced in junior forms. Teachers wanted to provide students with a more authentic situation to use the language they had learnt in lessons. In the task featured in this exemplar, students take on the role of waiters and waitresses so that they use the language in the textbook in a more meaningful and challenging way. Mrs Tam, the S.1B teacher, wanted to involve the whole class as well as other students in the school in a task that extended and developed language opportunities outside of the textbook and the classroom.



Mrs Tam and her colleagues attempted to devise an extension, or enhancement, programme that took a "pedagogic" task and then extended it to make the focus more authentic.

Briefly, the chapter of the textbook focused on the language of requests within the context of restaurants and food. Students were asked to write menus for "imaginary" restaurants by incorporating different lexical items from the "food" theme.

This pre-task introduces rhyme and gives students an opportunity to have some fun with poetry. It also introduces more new names of food and prepares students for Task 1, Task 2 and Task 3.

### PRE-TASK 3 Chef Iggy's poem

**A** Chef Iggy sends Alan his favourite poem. Some parts of the poem are missing. Help Alan to complete the poem using some of the phrases from the poster below.

**Help Bubble**

When two words rhyme, they sound the same (e.g. 'toast' and 'most', 'fry' and 'why').

**Common error**  
Students may get confused between the words 'rhyme' and 'rhythm'. If words 'rhyme', they have the same sound. 'Rhythm' is a regular, repeated pattern of sounds.

**Note**  
In Cantonese, *yum cha* is a verb phrase. On this page, the term has been borrowed into English as a noun phrase.

## What do you eat ?

What do you eat in the morning?  
Do you have <sup>(1)</sup> eggs on toast ?  
Or do you make some congee?  
And which do you like the most?

What do you eat when it's lunchtime?  
Do you have <sup>(2)</sup> fries and steak ?  
Or do you boil some noodles?  
And when do you take a break?

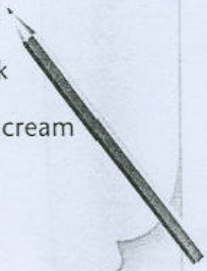
What do you eat in the evening?  
Do you have <sup>(3)</sup> cheese and bread ?  
Or do you fry some chicken?  
And when do you go to bed?

What do you eat at the weekend?  
Do you have <sup>(4)</sup> rice and stew ?  
Or do you go for *yum cha*?  
And who do you take with you?

What do you eat at Christmas time?  
Do you have <sup>(5)</sup> turkey breast ?  
Or do you roast a chicken?  
And which do you like the best?

*Alan Elder*

cake and soup  
cheese and bread  
eggs on toast  
fries and steak  
pizza and ice cream  
rice and stew  
turkey breast



Look! The word 'toast' rhymes with the word 'most' in the first stanza. This phrase is therefore the first answer.




**B** Now listen to the poem. Did you fill in the correct missing words? Read the poem aloud as a class.

## PRE-TASK 4 Ordering from a menu

This pre-task revises the names of food, and provides students with an opportunity to practise ordering from a menu. It prepares them for Task 2.

**A** Work in pairs. Look at the restaurant menu below. Do you know how to pronounce these words? Take turns to read out the food items and the prices.


**Globo Trotters Restaurant**  
 A world of great food

<p><b>Appetisers</b></p> <p>chef's salad ..... \$32</p> <p>mushroom soup ..... \$30</p> <p>vegetable soup ..... \$30</p> <p><b>Snacks</b></p> <p>bagel (ham/cheese/bacon) ..... \$22</p> <p>croissant (butter/tuna/turkey) ..... \$18</p> <p>hot dog ..... \$38</p> <p>steamed mussels ..... market price</p> <p><b>Main courses</b></p> <p>baked pork chops ..... \$60</p> <p>grilled hamburger ..... \$45</p> <p>spaghetti bolognaise ..... \$58</p> <p>supreme pizza ..... \$79</p>	<p><b>Desserts</b></p> <p>banana pancake ..... \$28</p> <p>Black Forest gateau ..... \$24</p> <p>fruit salad ..... \$22</p> <p>ice cream sundae (chocolate/mango/strawberry) ..... \$28</p> <p><b>Beverages</b></p> <p>coffee hot ..... \$18</p> <p>iced ..... \$20</p> <p>lemon tea hot ..... \$15</p> <p>iced ..... \$18</p> <p>fruit juice (orange/apple) ..... \$20</p> <p>Coke / Sprite / Diet Coke ..... \$12</p>
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**Note**

You may want to remind students that 'croissant' is a countable noun.

**Note**

The pronunciation of the word 'croissant', is /'krwɑ:snɑ:nt/. It is a word borrowed from French. The word 'mussels' is pronounced /'masəlz/.

**B** Alan and Danny go to Globo Trotters Restaurant and order some food. Listen to what they order and help the waitress to fill in the order form below.


**Globo Trotters Restaurant**  
 A world of great food

### ORDER FORM

	Item	Price
Appetisers	chef's salad, vegetable soup	\$62
Snacks	hot dog	\$38
Main courses	grilled hamburger	\$45
Desserts	chocolate ice cream sundae	\$28
Beverages	orange juice, iced lemon tea	\$38
<b>Total cost of order</b>		<b>\$211</b>

**C** Work in pairs. Student A is a customer and Student B is a waiter. Student A should read Role card A on page 101 and then order food from the menu on page 72. Student B should take the order. You can order food and take the order like this.

Can I take your order?

Yes, I'll have mushroom soup and a cheese bagel, please.

Mushroom soup and a cheese bagel.  
Anything to drink?

Iced coffee, please.

Anything for dessert?

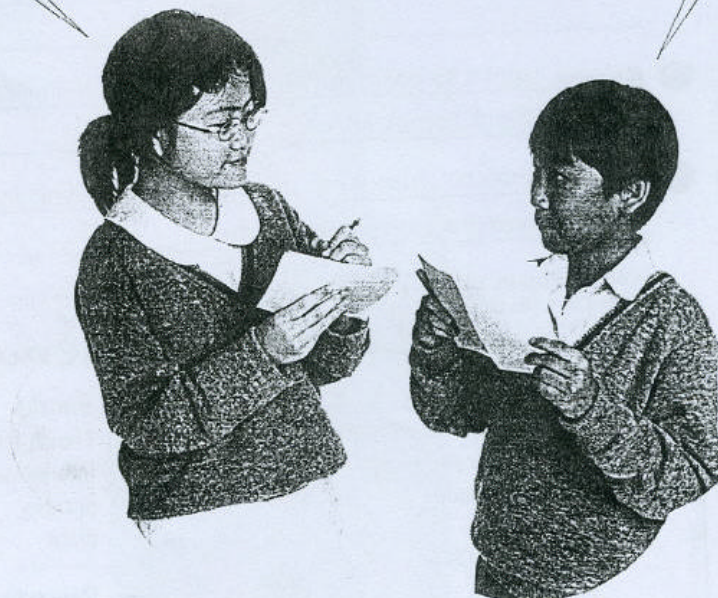
Yes, fruit salad, please.

Anything else?

No, that's all.

OK. So you're having mushroom soup, a cheese bagel, fruit salad and iced coffee.

That's right. Thank you.



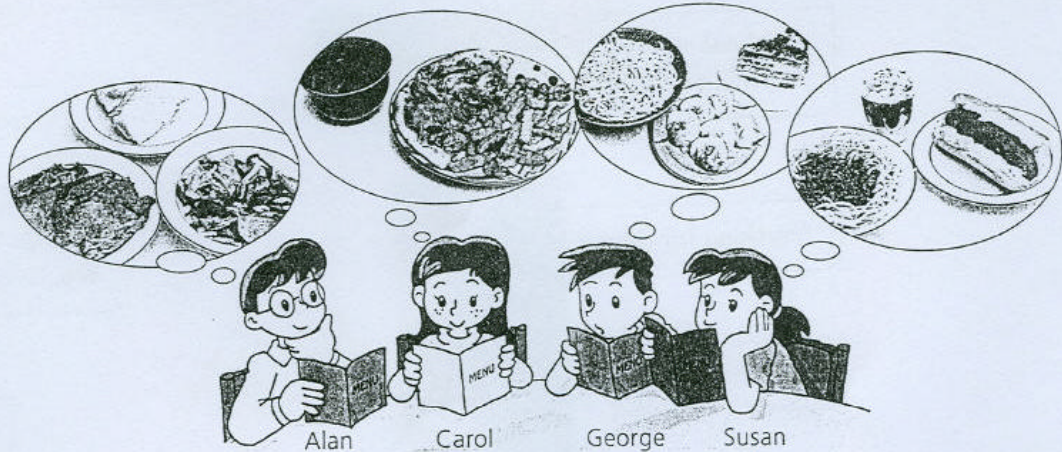
**D** Now change roles. This time, Student B should read Role card B on page 103. Student A should take the order.



# PRE-READING

These pre-reading exercises (Parts A and B) prepare students for the reading material on pp. 64–65. They also prepare students for Task 1, Task 2 and Task 3.

**A** Alan and his friends are in a restaurant. What do they want to order? Look at the picture and read the menu. Then write the answers in the spaces below.



Note  
You may want to go over the pronunciation of the words 'chef' /ʃef/, 'bolognaise' /bɒlə'neɪz/, 'sundae' /sʌndaɪ/, and 'hamburger' /hæmbɜːɡə/. (See p. T62.) You may want to draw students' attention to the pronunciation of the word 'hamburger' in particular. The stress of the word is on the first syllable, not the second one.

- Alan wants to order fried pork chops and mixed vegetables. For dessert, he wants to order a banana pancake
- Carol wants to order vegetable soup, pizza and French fries
- George wants to order noodles and steamed dumplings. For dessert, he wants to order Black Forest gateau
- Susan wants to order a hot dog and spaghetti bolognese. For dessert, she wants to order an ice cream sundae

**Note**  
In British English, 'pancakes' are thin, flat, round cakes made from flour, milk and eggs, that have been cooked in a flat pan. In American English, these are called 'crepes'.

## Help bubble

The following words need an article.  
a hamburger  
a hot dog  
a pizza  
a banana pancake  
an ice cream sundae

**Note**  
In American English, 'appetisers' is spelt 'appetizers'. The word 'appetiser' is pronounced /æpɪtaɪzə/.

## Lunchtime Menu

Appetisers	
chef's salad	\$32
mushroom soup	\$30
vegetable soup	\$30
Main courses	
congee	\$35
fried pork chops	\$60
mixed vegetables	\$32
noodles	\$28
spaghetti bolognese	\$58
steamed dumplings	\$45

Snacks	
French fries	\$25
hamburger	\$45
hot dog	\$38
pizza	\$48

Desserts	
banana pancake	\$28
Black Forest gateau	\$24
ice cream sundae	\$28

**Note**  
In British English, 'French fries' are called 'chips'.  
**Note**  
The plural form of 'gateau' /'gætau/ is 'gateaux' /'gætauz/.

### Common error

You may want to draw students' attention to the spelling of 'dessert' /dɪ'zɜːt/ (sweet food served after the main part of a meal). Students often forget the second 's', spelling 'desert', which has different meanings (/dɪ'zɜːt/ (n) a large area of sand where it is always hot and dry, and /dɪ'zɜːt/ (v) to leave someone alone and refuse to help them).

## Preparation for the Activity


The preparation started with the logistics. Teachers decided that it would be useful to have students play the parts of waiters and waitresses in a restaurant setting. This meant that other students could be involved as customers. To make the task more authentic, teachers got permission from the principal to use the school tuck-shop as the venue for the activity. Then students and teachers designed a menu.

The tuck-shop staff were willing to talk to student "waiters" and "waitresses" in English and deserve great credit for participating in this whole-school approach to English. The atmosphere in the tuck-shop was made more inviting by asking students from other forms to provide background music. Once the venue had been organised and the menus decided (using language items that were covered in the "food" section of the textbook), Mrs Tam focused on the pedagogical features of the task.



The key factor in designing the task was that it had to be related to what students had already been exposed to in their English lessons. The teacher followed the steps below to prepare students for the task:



- Students were grouped in class and asked to think of a restaurant that they would like to open. Students were then asked to think of a name for their restaurant.
- Students were asked to design a menu. 
- Different groups were asked to present their menus to the class in the form of a role-play, where some group members acted as customers while others assumed the role of waiter/waitress/manager, etc.

At the end of this classroom activity, students were told about the extended task in the tuck-shop that was to be held one week later. It should be noted that the performance of each group in class and each individual in the extended task was not assessed by the teacher. Mrs Tam simply wanted the students to be present, to produce the required language and enjoy the activity.



To make the task more authentic, Mrs Tam involved students from S.1 in the restaurant task, which meant that waiters and waitresses had to converse in English with strangers. Therefore, students were very aware of the underlying goal of the task. The extension of the task from the classroom to the "real world" was successful in creating a meaningful language context for genuine communication in English.

Students reported that they developed several strategies to help them prepare for the activity. Some of these strategies were

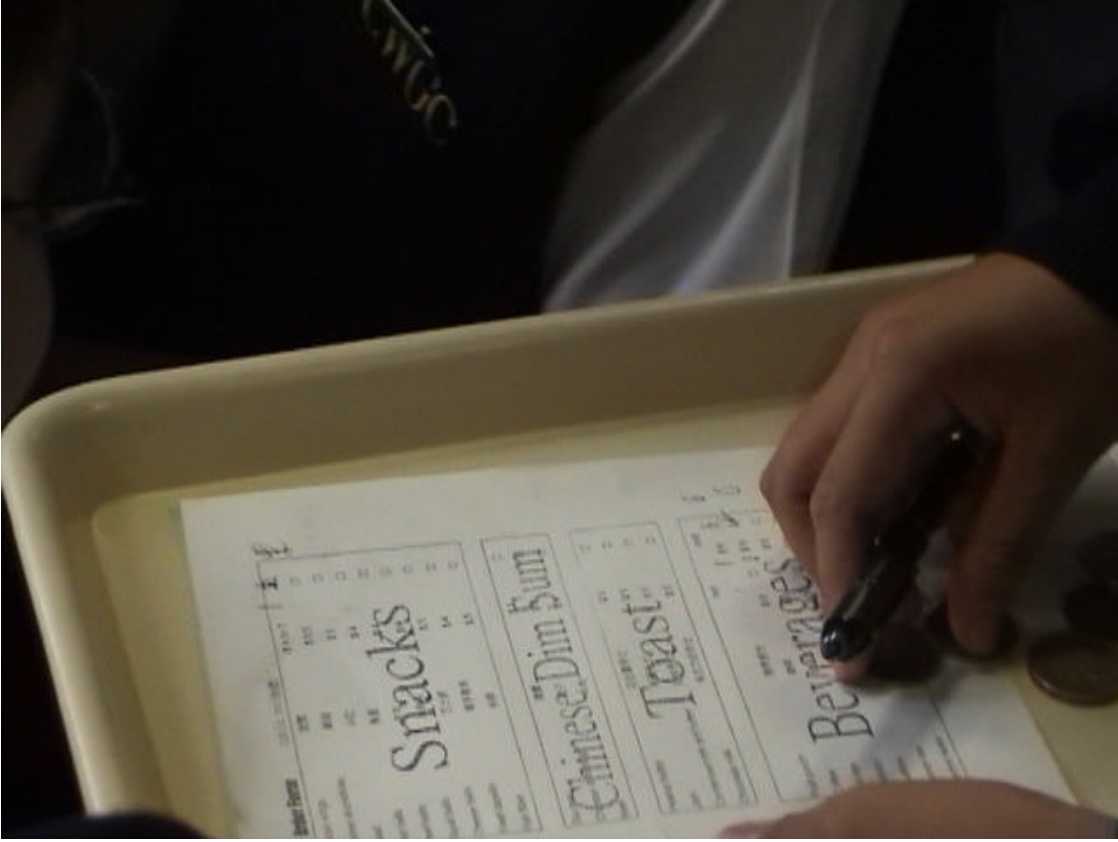
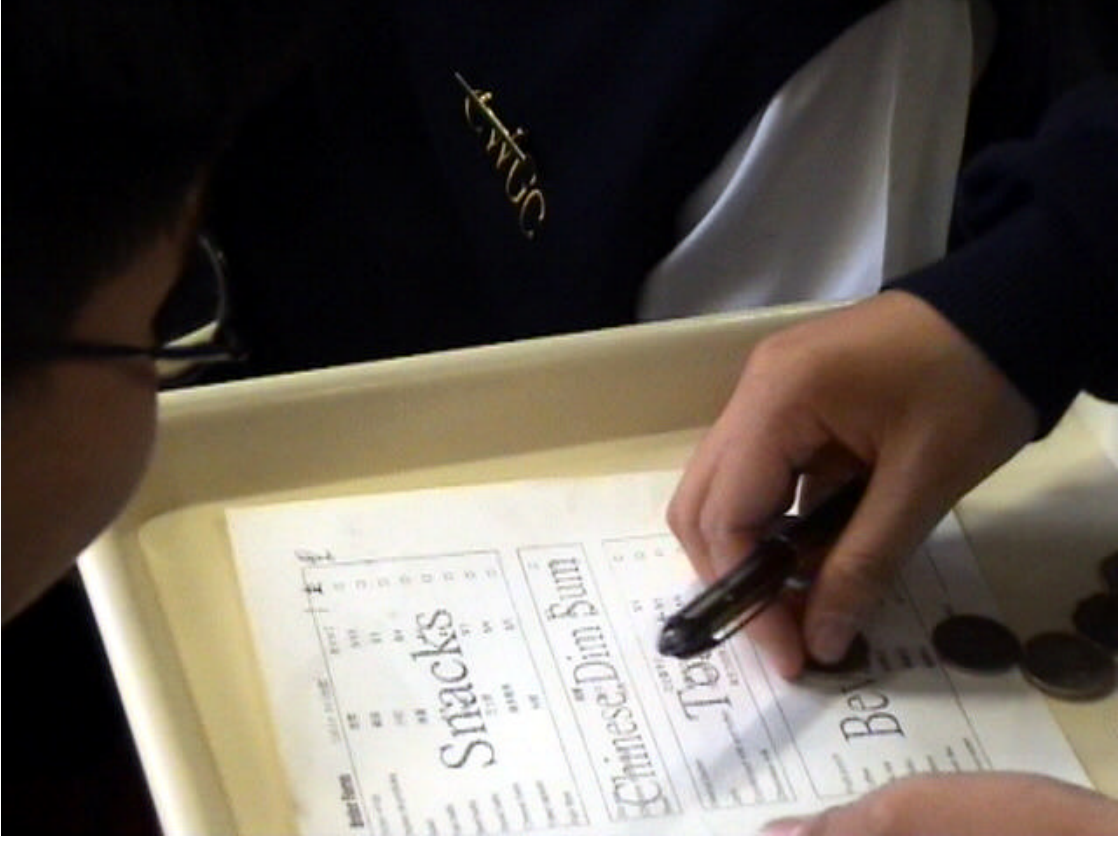


employed by students in the preparation work they did in class, but now they took on an additional meaning. Some of the students' strategies involved:

- Talking about the subject together
- Looking for information in books and on the internet
- Going to restaurants and reading the menus

Mrs Tam successfully tapped the interest of her learners and this interest motivated them throughout the lessons leading up to the task. Students were well prepared in class but, significantly, also took the initiative to prepare and research the task outside of class. Most notably, several students mentioned that they visited restaurants and watched the waiters and waitresses. One student even went to a restaurant where English was used. This enthusiasm and responsibility for their own learning was a key benefit of the extension task.





## The Restaurant Task

The restaurant task was conducted on a Friday immediately after school finished. The tuck-shop area was closed to all students, except those involved in the activity. The tuck-shop staff had prepared various food items chosen earlier by Mrs Tam and her co-teacher. Menus describing the food that could be purchased were placed on each table. Click on the video clip to view the restaurant task.

Mrs Tam gave the "waiters" and "waitresses" the signal to start taking orders from "customers". From observation of the task, it was noted that other English teachers attended the activity and offered help. Students arrived from other forms and Mrs Tam asked several senior students to provide help. The student waiters and waitresses worked hard and used English all the time in a very communicative way. Other students (not from 1B) competed with each other to be served, so the waiters and waitresses had to listen, respond and write down orders at the same time. Once they had an order, they took it to the tuck-shop where they presented the order in English to another student and the tuck-shop staff. The food was then delivered to the tables and the waiters took new orders.

Another interesting feature of the task was that students were given responsibility for collecting money from their "customers" and then giving it to the tuck shop staff at the paying counter. This added responsibility and further enhanced the authenticity of the task, as many had to return change to their peers in the same way as a real restaurant staff would do.



Students mentioned that they enjoyed the task, and that they liked using English in this way. One student said that she felt she no longer "had a reason to be scared".

Students' enthusiasm was genuine, and throughout the task, they were encouraged by their teachers and peers. The benefits were also recognised by the teachers concerned.



## Long-term Benefits of the Task

The students and the teachers enjoyed the task and recognised one another's contributions to the activity. They had clearly gained valuable experience and confidence in using English in a meaningful way.

The teachers observed some very significant changes in students. Apart from enhanced self-esteem and confidence in using English, it was clear that the students were taking a more active role in the learning process. This perception of the students' development in taking the initiative in the learning process is interesting. The teaching approach has had a powerful effect on students' motivation and attitudes towards English in Christian Alliance Cheng Wing Gee College.



The teacher who coordinated the restaurant task is keen to build upon this "real-life" task in future classes. Before the end of the task, she was already planning adjustments and modifications, including soliciting help from senior students to act as more "challenging" customers (linguistically). There is also a plan to include similar activities as part of English-Speaking days held in the school.

## Conclusion

Although the restaurant task was just a single extension activity that lasted only one hour, its importance should not be underestimated. Students were highly motivated and challenged by the task, and willingly participated as waiters, waitresses and customers. Students used English without coercion from teachers or prefects, and all teachers involved commented on how excited the students were. Pedagogically, students were given the chance to produce language that they had learnt in class or through the textbook within a meaningful and genuine communicative context.

The involvement of the tuck-shop and its staff made the task realistic, in contrast to traditional "pedagogical" tasks, which are often carried out in artificial and contrived classroom situations. The cooperation between the English teachers and the tuck-shop staff also reveals a commitment to providing students with opportunities for language use.

