

FINDING THE GROOVE:

PLANNING FOR TEACHABLE MOMENTS IN ESOL

Rob Sheppard



Sorting and Ordering

MAIN PRINCIPLE

Learners need to collaboratively put a set of items or words in an order or into categories. Engagement and interaction emerge from differences in personal judgments that students need to bring together into a single product. Differences in judgments force explanation and negotiation to arrive at a single product.

BENEFITS

- Highly engaging and generates a lot of language
- All negotiation
- Draws on learners' knowledge and beliefs
- Differentiates: students participate according to their abilities
- No right answer
- Easily expanded or shortened
- Same activity is fun again with new content

VARIATIONS

- Prioritizing expenses on a limited monthly budget.
- Candidates for mayor on one axis, important on other, and students plot policies/issues.
- Turn the axes into physical locations in the classroom

VARIABLES

- Additional axes and points of comparison create more interaction
- Axes can be more subjective or objective
- More students contributing to the decision requires more communication
- Modality: digital, pencil/paper, manipulables

CONTEXTUALIZE

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Jigsaw and Info Gap

MAIN PRINCIPLE

Learners have only part of the information needed to complete a task.

Engagement and interaction emerge from the task itself and the explanation and negotiation required to complete it.

BENEFITS

- Feels like a puzzle or game
- Adaptable to a wide range of content
- Can be a light, fun activity or an academic, serious one
- Adaptable to a range of grouping configurations

VARIATIONS

In *info gaps*, the activity is more designed and the “information” that one group has may not be declarative.

- Students have different parts of a weekly schedule.

Jigsaws (arguably a type of info gap) are generally micro research projects, with each group assigned a portion of the overall body of information that is brought together.

Students each take 3 aisles at the supermarket and then reconstruct a map

VARIABLES

- Pairs, small groups, whole class
- Complexity of task
- Nature of info (declarative, linguistic, visual, familiar)
- Which stages of task require L2 use

CONTEXTUALIZE

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Collab Writing

MAIN PRINCIPLE

Learners “co-construct” a text about a shared experience or shared knowledge base. Engagement and interaction emerge from the negotiation of how best to convey the message.

BENEFITS

- Allows for student voice, agency, and differentiated contributions.
- Multiple phases means it’s not a single “activity”
- Lots of built-in meaning-based retelling
- Collaborative nature requires that we articulate writerly choices that are otherwise internal

VARIATIONS

Language Experience Approach: Class trip to a hardware/ grocery/ furniture store, followed by a collaborative retelling of the experience.

Genre Analysis: Analyze the steps or “moves” in a particular genre of writing, such as a restaurant review or resume or research paper. Then write one collaboratively as a class.

VARIABLES

- Shared knowledge can be a planned trip or experience, a common knowledge base, a class discussion, a book you’ve read together.
- Brainstorming and prewriting can take many forms.
- Emphasis can be on meaning-making, writing, or fluency development

CONTEXTUALIZE

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Key Terms

**reflective
practice**

**task-based
language
teaching**

**synthetic
syllabus**

**analytic
syllabus**

**backward
design**

**think-pair-
share**

**sociocultural
theory**

**EASIER TO
TEACH**

**HARDER
TO TEACH**

**MORE
IMPORTANT**

**LESS
IMPORTANT**

SPEAKING

LISTENING

READING

WRITING

GRAMMAR

PRONUNCIATION

VOCABULARY

DISCOURSE

CULTURE

SPEAKING

LISTENING

READING

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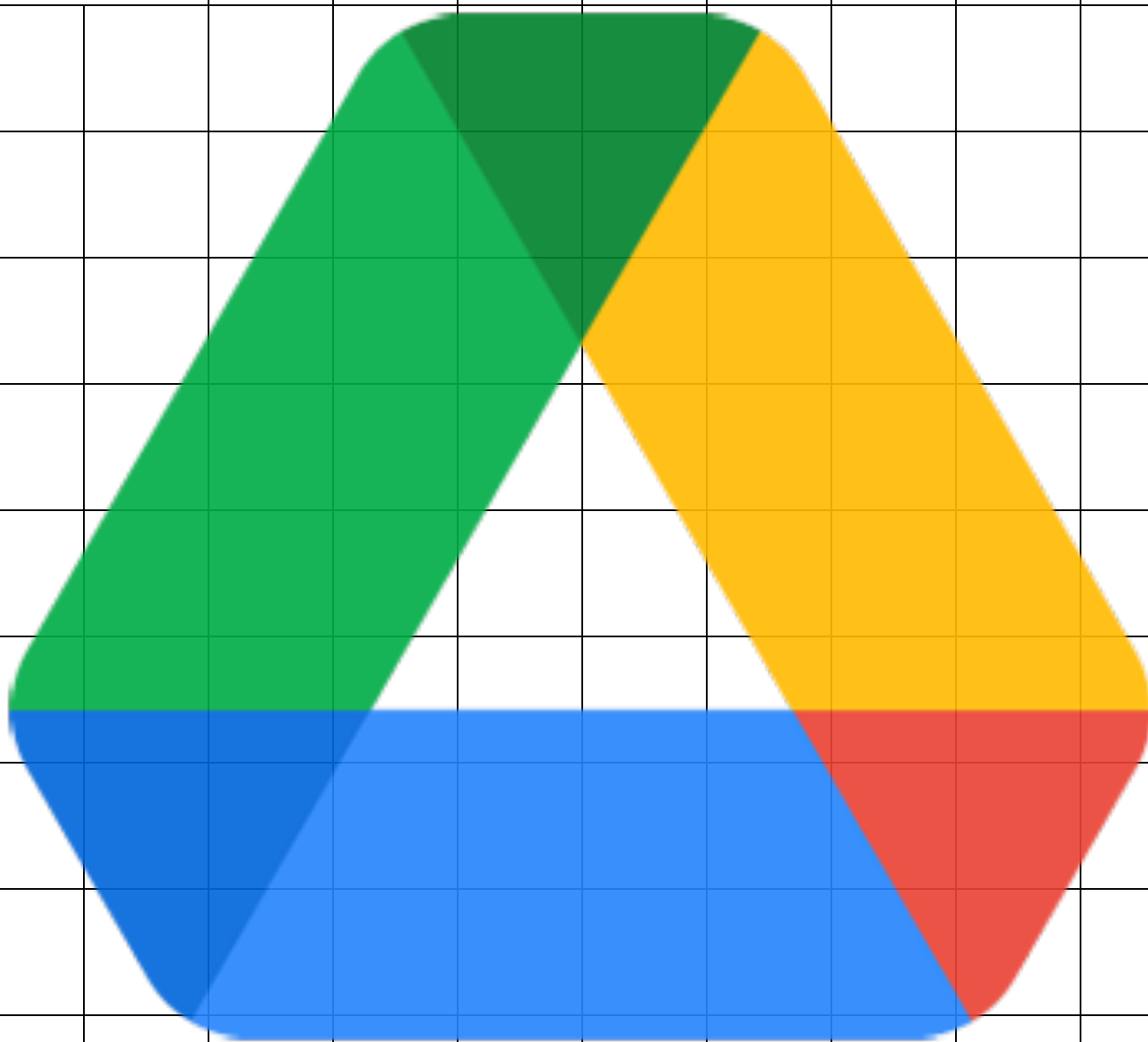
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VOCABULARY

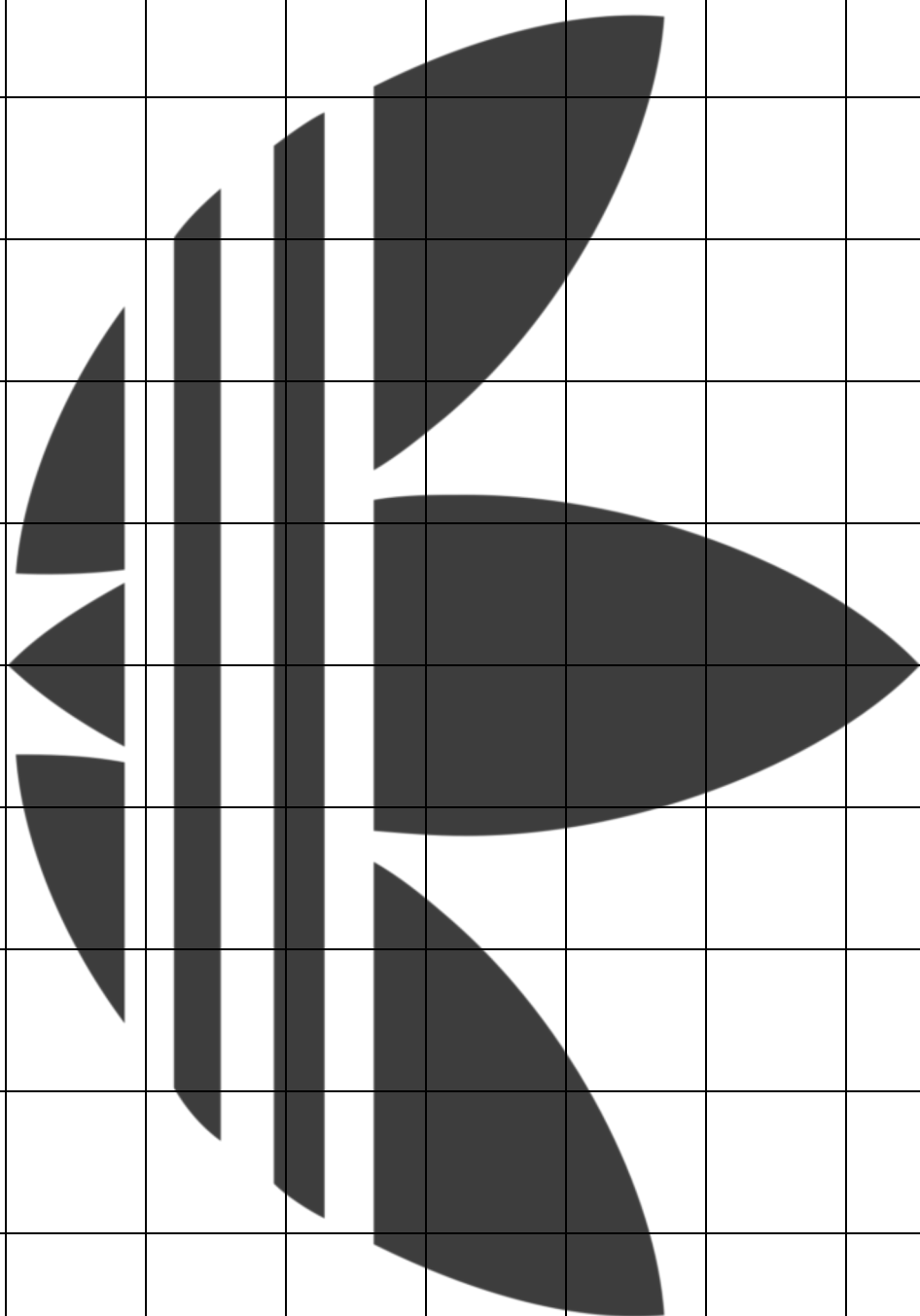
DISCOURSE

CULTURE

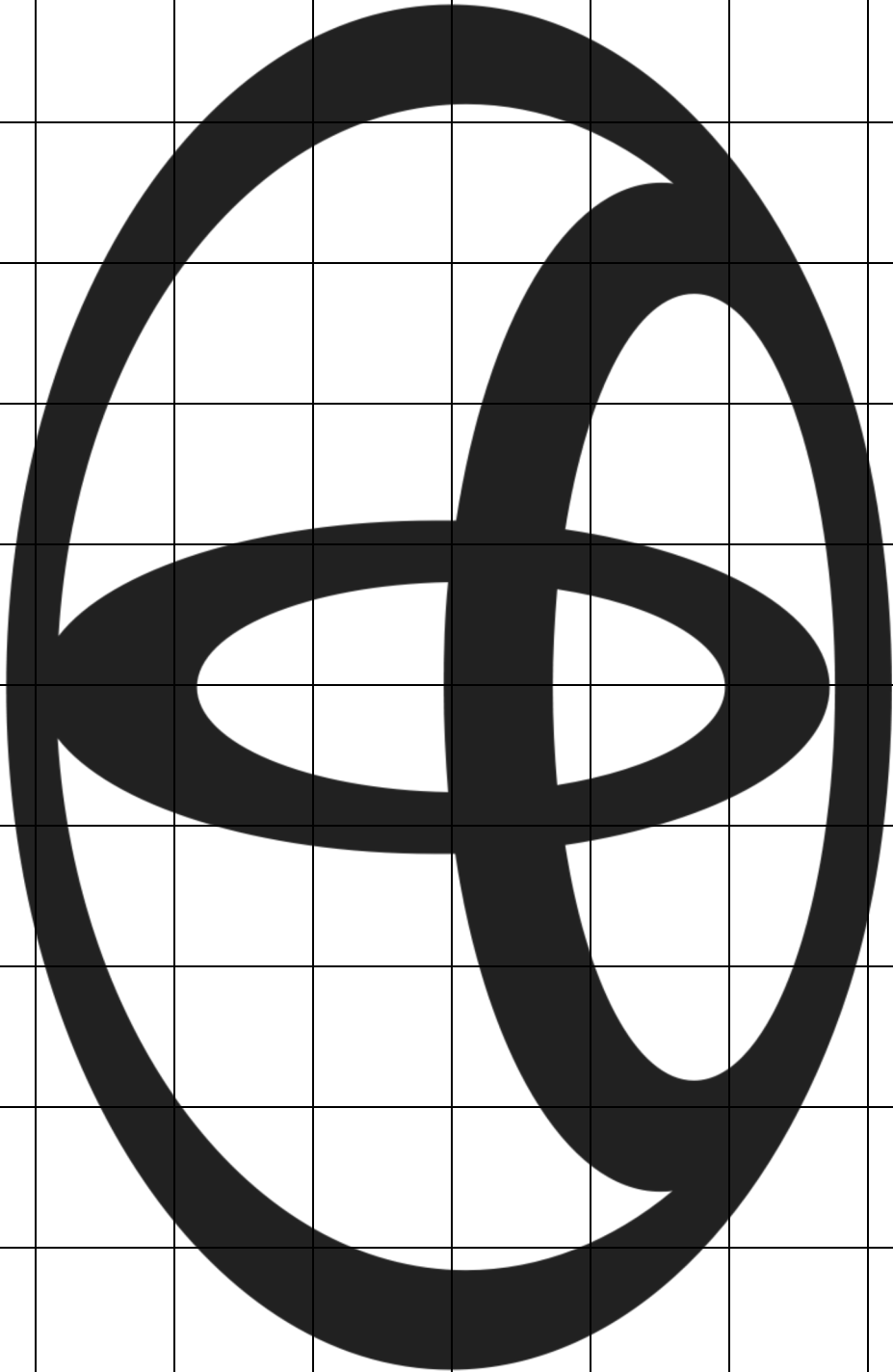
A



B



C



D

