# Lyster's Register Variation Activity*

Lyster (1994), a Canadian researcher who focuses on French immersion classrooms, was interested in raising students' awareness about language, in this case, about sociolinquistic aspects of language—differences that occur between written and oral texts, and between formal and informal contexts. Using the "jigsaw" cooperative learning technique, he gave each 'home' group in the [8th grade] class four texts, each expressing the same message: how to make a tape recording. Two texts were oral, provided on a tape recorder; and two were written. The oral, formal tape was of a salesperson telling a customer how to make a recording; the oral, informal tape was of one kid telling his friend how to make a recording. Of the two written texts, the formal one was from a user's manual; the informal one was a note written to a friend—again, both explaining how to make a recording. Students, in their home groups, compared these four texts, looking for vocabulary and expressions that distinguished them. Students in each group then chose one domain in which they wanted to become an expert—formal speech, informal speech, formal writing, or informal writing. With others, who chose the same "expertise," they worked together to identify characteristics of their particular type of text.

Eventually, each expert returned to his or her own home group, where together they had to decide on a theme, for example, how to make a banana split, and produce four texts that said the same thing but each in its own sociolinguistically appropriate way. In the case of the banana split, the four texts might related to a TV cooking show, a friend telling a friend, a recipe from a cookbook, and a note from mother to daughter.

This jigsaw activity could involve the content from any lesson, for example, a news item in current events—how a radio broadcaster would say it; how your brother would tell it to you; how it would be written up in a newspaper; how your buddy would write it to you in [an e-mail message]. This activity is highly contextualized and meaningful, yet analytical and focused on language form, helping students to become aware of how differently the target language is used in different contexts.

*summarized in Swain (1996, pp. 543-544).

## References:

Lyster, R. (1994). La Négociation de la forme: Stratégie analytique en classe d'immersion. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 50*(3), 446-465.

Swain, Merrill. (1996). Integrating language and content in immersion classrooms: Research perspectives. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 52*(4), 529-548.