

Reading Homework due Week 4

Week 4 Reading Homework

Task: Read Chapter 2 from “Task-Based Language Teaching” starting on the next page, and complete the following exercises.

1. Look at the framework for TBLT and the “Reflect” box on page 25. Find 2-3 activities on a worksheet or from a textbook (look online if needed) and think about how they match with the TBLT framework, e.g. is the activity an activation task or a language exercise?
2. Complete the following table with examples that you find or are familiar with. See the reading for more examples. The first has been done for you.

Tasks	Macrofunctions	Microfunctions	Grammar
Star Game: Give five answers about yourself and let students guess the correct questions. First model and then let students do it in pairs. Finally students introduce their partner to the class.	Meeting new people. Introducing people to others.	Asking and answering common introductory questions. Talking about yourself and others.	Wh-questions First and third person
Your ideas...			
Your ideas...			

Bring your answers next week for discussion. I will not collect this homework but have it ready to present in groups.

2 A framework for task-based language teaching

Introduction and overview

In the first section of this chapter, I introduce a framework for task-based language teaching. The framework defines and exemplifies the key elements in the model that underlies this book including real-world/target tasks, pedagogical tasks and enabling skills. The next section outlines a procedure for creating an integrated syllabus around the concept of the pedagogic task. The section that follows is devoted to materials design considerations. It provides a procedure that can be used for planning lessons, materials and units of work. In the final section, the principles underlying the procedures described in the body of the chapter are laid out.

A task framework

As we saw in Chapter 1, the point of departure for task-based language teaching is real-world or target tasks. These are the hundred and one things we do with language in everyday life, from writing a poem to confirming an airline reservation to exchanging personal information with a new acquaintance. These three examples, by the way, illustrate Michael Halliday's three macrofunctions of language. Halliday argues that at a very general level, we do three things with language: we use it to exchange goods and services (this is the transactional or service macrofunction), we use it to socialize with others (this is the interpersonal or social macrofunction), and we use it for enjoyment (this is the aesthetic macrofunction).

Typically, in everyday interactions, the macrofunctions are interwoven, as in the following (invented) example:

A: Nice day.

B: That it is. What can I do for you?

A: I'd like a round-trip ticket to the airport, please.

In order to create learning opportunities in the classroom, we must transform these real-world tasks into pedagogical tasks. Such tasks can be placed on a continuum from rehearsal tasks to activation tasks.

A framework for task-based language teaching

A rehearsal task bears a clear and obvious relationship to its corresponding real-world counterpart. For example, the other day I was teaching on a course designed to help my students develop job-seeking skills. The task that my students had to complete was as follows.

Pedagogical task: rehearsal rationale

Write your resumé and exchange it with a partner. Study the positions available advertisements in the newspaper and find three that would be suitable for your partner. Then compare your choices with the actual choice made by your partner.

This task has a rehearsal rationale. If someone were to visit my classroom and ask why the students were doing this task, my reply would be something along the lines of, ‘Well, I’m getting them, in the security of the classroom, to rehearse something they’re going to need to do outside the classroom.’

Notice that the task has been transformed. It is not identical to the process of actually applying for a job in the world outside the classroom. In addition to the work with a partner, the students will be able to get feedback and advice from me, the teacher, as well as drawing on other resources.

Not all pedagogical tasks have such a clear and obvious relationship to the real world. Many role plays, simulations, problem-solving tasks and information exchange tasks have what I call an *activation* rationale. The task is designed not to provide learners with an opportunity to rehearse some out-of-class performance but to activate their emerging language skills. In performing such tasks, learners begin to move from reproductive language use – in which they are reproducing and manipulating language models provided by the teacher, the textbook or the tape – to creative language use in which they are recombining familiar words, structures and expressions in novel ways. I believe that it is when users begin to use language creatively that they are maximally engaged in language acquisition because they are required to draw on their emerging language skills and resources in an integrated way.

Here is an example of an activation task. It is one I observed a group of students carrying out in a secondary school classroom. It formed the basis of an extremely engaging lesson to which all students actively and animatedly contributed.

Pedagogical task: activation rationale

Work with three other students. You are on a ship that is sinking. You have to swim to a nearby island. You have a waterproof container, but

can only carry 20 kilos of items in it. Decide which of the following items you will take. (Remember, you can't take more than 20 kilos with you.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Axe (8 kilos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Box of novels and magazines (3 kilos)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cans of food (500 grams each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Packets of sugar, flour, rice, powdered milk, coffee, tea (each packet weighs 500 grams)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bottles of water (1.5 kilos each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical kit (2 kilos)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short-wave radio (12 kilos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Portable CD player and CDs (4 kilos)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Firelighting kits (500 grams each)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rope (6 kilos)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notebook computer (3.5 kilos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waterproof sheets of fabric (3 kilos each)

This task, which worked very well, does not have a rehearsal rationale in that the teacher was not expecting the students to be shipwrecked in the foreseeable future. The aim of the task was to encourage students to activate a range of language functions and structures including making suggestions, agreeing, disagreeing, talking about quantity, how much/how many, wh-questions, etc. (It is worth noting, however, that learners are not constrained to using a particular set of lexical and grammatical resources. They are free to use any linguistic means at their disposal to complete the task.)

One interpretation of TBLT is that communicative involvement in pedagogical tasks of the kind described and illustrated above is the necessary and sufficient condition of successful second language acquisition. This 'strong' interpretation has it that language acquisition is a subconscious process in which the conscious teaching of grammar is unnecessary: 'Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning' (Krashen and Terrell 1983: 55).

The argument by proponents of a 'strong' interpretation of TBLT is that the classroom should attempt to simulate natural processes of acquisition, and that form-focused exercises are unnecessary. Elsewhere, Krashen (see, for example, Krashen 1981, 1982) argues that there *is* a

role for grammar, but that this role is to provide affective support to the learner – in other words it makes them feel better because, for most learners, a focus on form is what language learning is all about, but it does not fuel the acquisition process. In fact, Krashen and Terrell argue that even speaking is unnecessary for acquisition: ‘We acquire from what we hear (or read), not from what we say.’ (p. 56). The role of a focus on form remains controversial, as we shall see in Chapter 5.

My own view is that language classrooms are unnatural by design, and that they exist precisely to provide for learners the kinds of practice opportunities that do not exist outside the classroom. Learners, particularly those in the early stages of the learning process, can benefit from a focus on form (Doughty and Williams 1998; Long 1985; Long and Robinson 1998), and learners should not be expected to generate language that has not been made accessible to them in some way. In fact, what is needed is a pedagogy that reveals to learners systematic interrelationships between form, meaning and use (Larsen-Freeman 2001).

In the TBLT framework presented here, form-focused work is presented in the form of enabling skills, so called because they are designed to develop skills and knowledge that will ultimately facilitate the process of authentic communication. In the framework, enabling skills are of two kinds: *language exercises* and *communicative activities*. (See Kumaravadivelu 1991, 1993 for elaboration.)

Language exercises come in many shapes and forms and can focus on lexical, phonological or grammatical systems. Here are examples of lexically and grammatically focused language exercises:



Language exercise: lexical focus

A Complete the word map with jobs from the list.

architect, receptionist, company director, flight attendant, supervisor, engineer, salesperson, secretary, professor, sales manager, security guard, word processor

Professionals

architect

.....
.....
.....
.....

Service occupations

flight attendant

.....
.....
.....
.....

JOBS

Management positions

company director

.....
.....
.....
.....

Office work

receptionist

.....
.....
.....
.....

B Add two jobs to each category. Then compare with a partner.

(Richards 1997: 8)

Language exercise: grammatical focus

A Complete the conversation. Then practise with a partner.

A. What you

B. I'm a student. I study business.

A. And do you to school?

B. I to Jefferson College.

A. do you like your classes?

B. I them a lot.

(Richards 1997: 8)

The essential difference between these practice opportunities and those afforded by pedagogical tasks has to do with outcomes. In each case above, success will be determined in linguistic terms: 'Did the learners get the language right?' In pedagogical tasks, however, there is an outcome that transcends language: 'Did the learners select the correct article of clothing according to the weather forecast?' 'Did they manage to get from the hotel to the bank?' 'Did they select food and drink items for a class party that were appropriate and within their budget?'

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Communicative activities represent a kind of ‘half-way house’ between language exercises and pedagogical tasks. They are similar to language exercises in that they provide manipulative practice of a restricted set of language items. They resemble pedagogical tasks in that they have an element of meaningful communication. In the example that follows, students are manipulating the forms ‘Have you ever . . .?’, ‘Yes, I have’ and ‘No, I haven’t.’ However, there is also an element of authentic communication because, presumably, they can not be absolutely sure of how their interlocutors are going to respond.

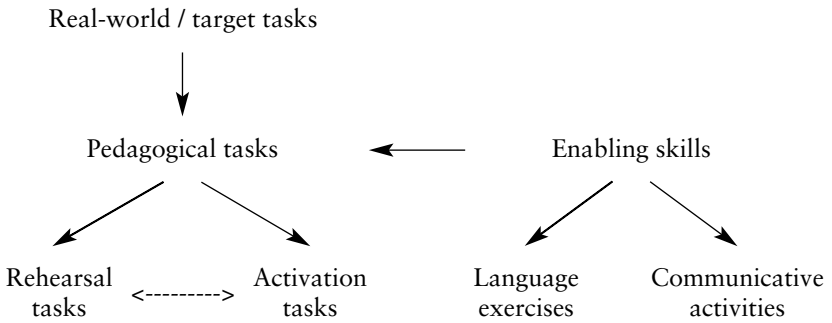
Communicative activity

Look at the survey chart and add three more items to the list. Now, go around the class and collect as many names as you can.

Find someone who has . . .	Name
. . . driven a racing car	
. . . been to a Grand Prix race	
. . . played squash	
. . . run a marathon	
. . . had music lessons	
. . . ridden a motorcycle	
. . . flown an airplane	
. . . been to a bullfight	
. . . been scuba diving	
. . . played tennis	

(Nunan 1995: 96)

These then are the basic building blocks of TBLT. After a discussion of syllabus design considerations, we shall look at how these elements can be combined to form units of work. The framework described in this section is represented diagrammatically on the next page.



A framework for TBLT

Reflect

Find examples of these different task, activity and exercise types in a textbook you are currently using or one with which you are familiar. How are they combined?

Syllabus design considerations

One of the potential problems with a task-based program is that it may consist of a seemingly random collection of tasks with nothing to tie them together. In my own work, I tie tasks together in two ways. In terms of units of work or lessons, they are tied together through the principle of 'task chaining'. At a broader syllabus level, they are tied together topically/thematically, through the macrofunctions, microfunctions and grammatical elements they express. I will explore the principle of task chaining in the next section. In this section I will look at broader syllabus design consideration.

A framework for task-based language teaching

Consider the following tasks:

1. Look at the map with your partner. You are at the hotel. Ask your partner for directions to the bank.
2. You are having a party. Tell your partner how to get from the school to your home.

Syllabus design considerations: Example 1

Tasks	Macrofunctions	Microfunctions	Grammar
Look at the map with your partner. You are at the hotel. Ask your partner for directions to the bank.	Exchanging goods and services	Asking for and giving directions	Wh-questions Yes/no questions Imperatives
You are having a party. Tell your partner how to get from the school to your home.			

These are both underpinned by the same macrofunction (exchanging goods and services), the same microfunction (asking for and giving directions) and the same grammatical elements (among others, wh-questions and imperatives).

Example 2 provides a different set of tasks realizing the same macrofunction of ‘exchanging goods and services’. But here the three tasks have different microfunctions. One of the grammatical items, ‘yes/no questions’ is recycled from example 1.

Syllabus design considerations: Example 2

Tasks	Macrofunctions	Microfunctions	Grammar
Role play. You are in a clothing store and have \$150 to spend. Your partner is the sales assistant. Look at the clothing items on the worksheet. Find out the prices and decide what to buy.	Exchanging goods and services	Asking about and stating prices	How much?/ how many? Yes/no questions
Listen to the automated ticketing service for ‘What’s on around town this weekend’. Make a list of movies and concerts and how much they cost. Work with three other students and decide where to go.			
Look at a set of ‘to let’ ads, and decide with three other students on the most suitable place to rent.			

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The third example illustrates the second macrofunction, that of socializing. The microfunction and two of the grammar items are new but, again, yes/no questions are used.

Syllabus design considerations: Example 3

Tasks	Macrofunctions	Microfunctions	Grammar
You are at a party. Introduce your partner to three other people.	Socializing	Exchanging personal information	Stative verbs Demonstrative: this Yes/no questions
Role play. You and a friend have started at a new school. Circulate and find out about your classmates.			

These considerations can all be pulled together and integrated by taking a non-linguistic organizing principle such as topics or themes and a content-based approach in which other subjects on the school curriculum, for example science, maths or geography, provide the content.

The table on p. 29 illustrates how a theme such as ‘the neighbourhood’ integrates several tasks which are underpinned by a range of linguistic elements.

Theme: The neighbourhood

Tasks	Macrofunctions	Microfunctions	Grammar
Look at the map with your partner. You are at the hotel. Ask your partner for directions to the bank.	Exchanging goods and services	Asking for and giving directions	Wh-questions Yes/no questions Imperatives
You are having a party. Tell your partner how to get from the school to your home.	Exchanging goods and services	Asking for and giving directions	Wh-questions Yes/no questions Imperatives
You've decided to move to a new suburb/neighbourhood. Make a list of the facilities and services that are important to you and then decide on the best place to live based on brochures from local councils.	Exchanging goods and services	Making comparisons	Comparisons with adjectives
You have just moved to a new neighbourhood. Introduce yourself to your neighbours.	Socializing	Exchanging personal information	Stative verbs Demonstrative: this Yes/no questions

At this point, two questions arise. Firstly, what is the difference between a 'task' and a 'function'? Secondly, in what way does a syllabus organized according to 'task' represent an advance over a functional or even a grammatical syllabus? A related question might be: won't a syllabus organized according to tasks be disorganized according to functions and grammar? We have already seen in the boxes above that certain functional and grammatical items appear more than once.

Tasks and functions are obviously closely related. Any task will be underpinned by at least one (and sometimes several) functions. Tasks can be thought of as functions + context. They allow for functions (and grammar) to be activated in a particular communicative context.

Functions are more abstract realizations than tasks of the things we do with language.

In a program based on a synthetic syllabus (whether this be a grammatical or functional syllabus), the learner, typically, will only get one or two ‘shots’ at the item in question. Synthetic syllabuses, sharing as they do ‘a static target language product orientation’, have other problems as well.

Syllabus content is ultimately based on an analysis of the language to be learned, whether this be overt, as in the case of structure, word, notion or function, or covert, as has usually been the case with situation and topic. . . . it is assumed that the unit, or teaching point, which is presented will be what is learned and that it is efficient to organize and present material in an isolating fashion. SLA research offers no evidence to suggest that any of these synthetic units are meaningful acquisition units, that they are (or even can be) acquired separately, singly, in linear fashion, or that they can be learned prior to and separate from language use. In fact, the same literature provides overwhelming evidence against all those tacit assumptions.

(Long and Crookes 1993: 26–7)

In contrast with synthetic syllabuses, a task-based syllabus allows for a great deal of naturalistic recycling. In a task-based syllabus, grammatical and functional items will reappear numerous times in a diverse range of contexts. This would appear to be healthy for second language acquisition because it allows learners to ‘restructure’ and develop an elaborated understanding of the item in question. It is therefore consistent with an ‘organic’ view of acquisition in which numerous items are acquired simultaneously, albeit imperfectly.

From research, we know that if we test a learner’s ability to use a particular grammatical form several times over a period of time their accuracy rates will vary. Their mastery of the structure will not increase in a linear fashion from zero to native-like mastery. At times their ability will stabilize. At other times they will appear to get worse, not better. That is because, as Long and Crookes have pointed out, linguistic items are not isolated entities. Rather, any given item is affected by, and will affect, numerous others. As Rutherford (1987) has argued, language acquisition is an organic process and, in acquiring a language, learners go through a kind of linguistic metamorphosis. Task-based learning exploits this process and allows the learner to ‘grow’ into the language (Nunan 1999).

Reflect

Select one or two pedagogical tasks and elaborate them in terms of macrofunctions, microfunctions and grammatical exponents.

Developing units of work

In the preceding section, we looked at broader syllabus design issues. In this section, I would like to describe how we can develop instructional sequences around tasks. Consider the following target task taken from example 2 in the preceding section:

Look at a set of ‘to let’ ads, and decide with three other students on the most suitable place to rent.

With a group of pre-intermediate level students, how can we create a linked sequence of enabling exercises and activities that will prepare learners to carry out the task? I would like to propose a six-step procedure, and this is set out below.

Step 1: Schema building

The first step is to develop a number of schema-building exercises that will serve to introduce the topic, set the context for the task, and introduce some of the key vocabulary and expressions that the students will need in order to complete the task. For example, students may be given a number of newspaper advertisements for renting accommodation of different kinds such as a house, a two-bedroom apartment, a studio apartment, etc., a list of key words and a series of photos of families, couples and single people. They have to identify key words, some written as abbreviations, and then match the people in the photos to the most suitable accommodation.

Step 2: Controlled practice

The next step is to provide students with controlled practice in using the target language vocabulary, structures and functions. One way of doing this would be to present learners with a brief conversation between two people discussing accommodation options relating to one of the advertisements that they studied in step 1. They could be asked to listen to and read the conversation, and then practise it in pairs. In this way, early in the instructional cycle, they would get to see, hear and practise the target language for the unit of work. This type of controlled practice extends the scaffolded

learning that was initiated in step 1. They could then be asked to practise variations on this conversation model using other advertisements in step 1 as cues. Finally, they could be asked to cover up the conversational model and practice again, using only the cues from step 1, and without the requirement that they follow the conversational model word for word.

At this point, the lesson might be indistinguishable from a more traditional audiolingual or situational lesson. The difference is, however, that the learners have been introduced to the language within a communicative context. In the final part of the step, they are also beginning to develop a degree of communicative flexibility.

Step 3: Authentic listening practice

The next step involves learners in intensive listening practice. The listening texts could involve a number of native speakers inquiring about accommodation options, and the task for the learner would be to match the conversations with the advertisements from step 1. This step would expose them to authentic or simulated conversation, which could incorporate but extend the language from the model conversation in step 2.

Step 4: Focus on linguistic elements

The students now get to take part in a sequence of exercises in which the focus is on one or more linguistic elements. They might listen again to the conversations from step 3 and note the intonation contours for different question types. They could then use cue words to write questions and answers involving comparatives and superlatives: 'The two-bedroom apartment is cheaper than the three-bedroom apartment', 'Which house is closer to public transport?', 'This flat is the most spacious', etc.

Note that in a more traditional synthetic approach, this language focus work would probably occur as step 1. In the task-based procedure being presented here, it occurs relatively late in the instructional sequence. Before analyzing elements of the linguistic system, they have seen, heard and spoken the target language within a communicative context. Hopefully, this will make it easier for the learner to see the relationship between communicative meaning and linguistic form than when linguistic elements are isolated and presented out of context as is often the case in more traditional approaches.

Step 5: Provide freer practice

So far, students have been involved in what I call 'reproductive' language work; in other words, they have been working within the constraints of

language models provided by the teacher and the materials. At this point, it is time for the students to engage in freer practice, where they move beyond simple manipulation. For example, working in pairs they could take part in an information gap role play in which Student A plays the part of a potential tenant and Student B plays the part of a rental agent. Student A makes a note of his or her needs and then calls the rental agent. Student B has a selection of newspaper advertisements and uses these to offer Student A suitable accommodation.

The student should be encouraged to extemporize, using whatever language they have at their disposal to complete the task. Some students may ‘stick to the script’, while others will take the opportunity to innovate. Those who innovate will be producing what is known as ‘pushed output’ (Swain 1995) because the learners will be ‘pushed’ by the task to the edge of their current linguistic competence. This will result in discourse that begins to draw closer to the discourse of normal conversation, exhibiting features such as the negotiation of meaning. In this process, they will create their own meanings and, at times, their own language. To begin with, this will result in idiosyncratic ‘interlanguage’, but over time it will approximate more and more closely to native speaker norms as learners ‘grow’ into the language. (See Rutherford 1987, and Nunan 1999, for an account of language acquisition as an ‘organic’ process.) As we shall see in Chapter 4, it has been hypothesized that such creative language work is healthy for second language acquisition (Long 1985; Martyn 1996, 2001).

Step 6: Introduce the pedagogical task

The final step in the instruction sequence is the introduction of the pedagogical task itself – in this case a small group task in which the participants have to study a set of newspaper advertisements and decide on the most suitable place to rent.

This six-step instructional sequence is summarized on pp. 34–5. When using this sequence, I sometimes at the outset show the students the final task in the sequence and ask them if they can do it. The usual response from most students is a negative one (and sometimes one of outright horror). Generally speaking, however, students find it highly motivating, having worked through the sequence, to arrive at step 6 and find that they are able to complete the task more or less successfully.

A framework for task-based language teaching

A pedagogical sequence for introducing tasks

Step 1	Example
Create a number of schema-building tasks that introduce initial vocabulary, language and context for the task.	Look at newspaper advertisements for renting accommodation. Identify key words (some written as abbreviations), and match people with accommodation.
Step 2	Example
Give learners controlled practice in the target language vocabulary, structures and functions.	Listen to a model conversation between two people discussing accommodation options and practise the conversation. Practise again using the same conversation model but information from the advertisements in step 1. In the final practise, try to move away from following the conversation model word for word.
Step 3	Example
Give learners authentic listening practice.	Listen to several native speakers inquiring about accommodation and match the conversations with newspaper ads.
Step 4	Example
Focus learners on linguistic elements, e.g. grammar and vocabulary.	Listen again to conversations and note intonation contours. Use cue words to write complete questions and answers involving comparatives and superlatives (cheaper, closer, most spacious, etc.).
Step 5	Example
Provide freer practice.	Pair work: information gap role play. Student A plays the part of a potential tenant. Make a note of needs and then call rental agent. Student B plays the part of a rental agent. Use ads to offer partner suitable accommodation.

Step 6	Example
Pedagogical task	Group work discussion and decision making task. Look at a set of advertisements and decide on the most suitable place to rent.

Reflect

Select a target task and develop your own instructional sequence using this six-step procedure as a model.

Seven principles for task-based language teaching

In this final section of the chapter, I will summarize the underlying principles that were drawn on in developing the instructional sequence outlined above.

Principle 1: Scaffolding

- Lessons and materials should provide supporting frameworks within which the learning takes place. At the beginning of the learning process, learners should not be expected to produce language that has not been introduced either explicitly or implicitly.

A basic role for an educator is to provide a supporting framework within which the learning can take place. This is particularly important in the case of analytical approaches such as TBLT in which the learners will encounter holistic ‘chunks’ of language that will often be beyond their current processing capacity. The ‘art’ of TBLT is knowing when to remove the scaffolding. If the scaffolding is removed prematurely, the learning process will ‘collapse’. If it is maintained too long, the learners will not develop the independence required for autonomous language use.

Principle 2: Task dependency

- Within a lesson, one task should grow out of, and build upon, the ones that have gone before.

The task dependency principle is illustrated in the instructional sequence above which shows how each task exploits and builds on the one that has gone before. In a sense, the sequence tells a ‘pedagogical’ story, as

learners are led step by step to the point where they are able to carry out the final pedagogical task in the sequence.

Within the task-dependency framework, a number of other principles are in operation. One of these is the receptive-to-productive principle. Here, at the beginning of the instructional cycle, learners spend a greater proportion of time engaged in receptive (listening and reading) tasks than in productive (speaking and writing) tasks. Later in the cycle, the proportion changes, and learners spend more time in productive work. The reproductive-to-creative-language principle is also used in developing chains of tasks. This principle is summarized separately below.

Principle 3: Recycling

- Recycling language maximizes opportunities for learning and activates the ‘organic’ learning principle.

An analytical approach to pedagogy is based on the assumption that learning is not an all-or-nothing process, that mastery learning is a misconception, and that learning is piecemeal and inherently unstable. If it is accepted that learners will not achieve one hundred per cent mastery the first time they encounter a particular linguistic item, then it follows that they need to be reintroduced to that item over a period of time. This recycling allows learners to encounter target language items in a range of different environments, both linguistic and experiential. In this way they will see how a particular item functions in conjunction with other closely related items in the linguistic ‘jigsaw puzzle’. They will also see how it functions in relation to different content areas. For example, they will come to see how ‘expressing likes and dislikes’ and ‘yes/no questions with do/does’ function in a range of content areas, from the world of entertainment to the world of food.

Principle 4: Active learning

- Learners learn best by actively using the language they are learning.

In Chapter 1, I gave a brief introduction to the concept of experiential learning. A key principle behind this concept is that learners learn best through doing – through actively constructing their own knowledge rather than having it transmitted to them by the teacher. When applied to language teaching, this suggests that most class time should be devoted to opportunities for learners to use the language. These opportunities could be many and varied, from practising memorized dialogues to completing a table or chart based on some listening input. The key point,

however, is that it is the learner, not the teacher, who is doing the work. This is not to suggest that there is no place at all for teacher input, explanation and so on, but that such teacher-focused work should not dominate class time.

Principle 5: Integration

- Learners should be taught in ways that make clear the relationships between linguistic form, communicative function and semantic meaning.

Until fairly recently, most approaches to language teaching were based on a synthetic approach in which the linguistic elements – the grammatical, lexical and phonological components – were taught separately. This approach was challenged in the 1980s by proponents of early versions of communicative language teaching who argued that a focus on form was unnecessary, and that all learners needed in order to acquire a language were opportunities to communicate in the language. This led to a split between proponents of form-based instruction and proponents of meaning-based instruction, with proponents of meaning-based instruction arguing that, while a mastery of grammar is fundamental to effective communication, an explicit focus on form is unnecessary. More recently, applied linguists working within the framework of systemic-functional linguistics have argued that the challenge for pedagogy is to ‘reintegrate’ formal and functional aspects of language, and that what is needed is a pedagogy that makes explicit to learners the systematic relationships between form, function and meaning.

Principle 6: Reproduction to creation

- Learners should be encouraged to move from reproductive to creative language use.

In reproductive tasks, learners reproduce language models provided by the teacher, the textbook or the tape. These tasks are designed to give learners mastery of form, meaning and function, and are intended to provide a basis for creative tasks. In creative tasks, learners are recombining familiar elements in novel ways. This principle can be deployed not only with students who are at intermediate levels and above but also with beginners if the instructional process is carefully sequenced.

Principle 7: Reflection

- Learners should be given opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how well they are doing.

Becoming a reflective learner is part of learner training where the focus shifts from language content to learning processes. Strictly speaking, learning-how-to-learn does not have a more privileged place in one particular approach to pedagogy than in any other. However, I feel this reflective element has a particular affinity with task-based language teaching. TBLT introduces learners to a broad array of pedagogical undertakings, each of which is underpinned by at least one strategy. Research suggests that learners who are aware of the strategies driving their learning will be better learners. Additionally, for learners who have done most of their learning in 'traditional' classrooms, TBLT can be mystifying and even alienating, leading them to ask, 'Why are we doing this?' Adding a reflective element to teaching can help learners see the rationale for the new approach.

Reflect

Evaluate the materials or textbook you are currently using or one that you are familiar with in terms of the seven principles articulated in this section.

Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter has been to develop a framework for transforming target or real-world tasks into pedagogical tasks. I devoted the first part of the chapter to a description and exemplification of the various elements that go in to a curriculum in which the task is the basic organizing principle. This was followed by a section that sets out a procedure for integrating other elements including functions and structures. I then provided a detailed example of how an instructional sequence, integrating all of these elements, can be put together. The chapter concluded with a summary of the principles underlying the instructional sequence.

In the next chapter, we will look at the core components that go to make up a task, including goals, input data, procedures, teacher and learner roles and task settings.

References

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