

3 Task components

Introduction and overview

In this chapter, the definition of task laid out in Chapter 1 is elaborated on, and the task framework introduced in Chapter 2 is looked at from a slightly different perspective. What I would like to do in this chapter is to explore the elements that make up a task. These are task goals, input data and learner procedures, and they are supported by teacher and learner roles and the settings in which tasks are undertaken.

Three early conceptualizations of task components are useful here. These are Shavelson and Stern (1981), Candlin (1987) and Wright (1987a).

Shavelson and Stern (1981) articulated their concept of task-based language teaching within the context of education in general, rather than TESOL in particular. Task designers, they suggest, should take into consideration the following elements:

- Content: the subject matter to be taught.
- Materials: the things that learners can observe/manipulate.
- Activities: the things that learners and teachers will be doing during a lesson.
- Goals: the teachers' general aims for the task (these are much more general and vague than objectives).
- Students: their abilities, needs and interests are important.
- Social community: the class as a whole and its sense of 'groupness'.

(Shavelson and Stern 1981: 478)

Candlin (1987), whose work was specifically referenced against language pedagogy, has a similar list. He suggests that tasks should contain input, roles, settings, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedback. Input refers to the data presented for learners to work on. Roles specify the relationship between participants in a task. Setting refers to where the task takes place – either in the class or in an out-of-class arrangement. Actions are the procedures and sub-tasks to be performed by the learners. Monitoring refers to the supervision of the task in progress. Outcomes are the goals of the task, and feedback refers to the evaluation of the task.

Wright (1987a) is also concerned with tasks in language teaching. He argues that, minimally, tasks need to contain only two elements. These are input data, which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners, and an initiating question, which instructs learners on what to do with the data. He rejects the notion that objectives or outcomes are obligatory on the grounds that a variety of outcomes may be possible and that these might be quite different from the ones anticipated by the teacher. (In Chapter 4, we will see that the distinction between convergent tasks, which have a single intended outcome, and divergent tasks, which allow for multiple outcomes, is a significant one for task-based research.)

Wright's point about the unpredictability of outcomes is well made, and needs to be kept in mind when we consider the role of the learner in task planning and implementation. We should likewise not lose sight of the impact of setting, including social community, and feedback on tasks. However, my own belief is that *goal* is an important task element that provides direction, not only to any given task, but to the curriculum as a whole.

Drawing on the conceptualizations of Candlin, Wright and others, I propose that a minimum specification of *task* will include goals, input and procedures, and that these will be supported by roles and settings. This simple model is represented diagrammatically below.



Reflect

Can you think of any other elements that might contribute to this model of task?

Goals

'Goals' are the vague, general intentions behind any learning task. They provide a link between the task and the broader curriculum. They are more specific than Halliday's three macroskills (interpersonal, transactional and aesthetic) mentioned in the last chapter, but are more general than formal performance objectives. The answer that a teacher might give to a question from a visitor to his or her class about why learners are undertaking a particular task will often take the form of a goal statement, for example:

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'I want to develop their confidence in speaking.'

'I want to develop their personal writing skills.'

'I want to encourage them to negotiate information between each other to develop their interactional skills.'

'I want to develop their study skills.'

Goals may relate to a range of general outcomes (communicative, affective or cognitive) or may directly describe teacher or learner behaviour. Another point worth noting is that goals may not always be explicitly stated, although they can usually be inferred from the task itself. Additionally, there is not always a simple one-to-one relationship between goals and tasks. In some cases, a complex task such as a simulation with several steps and sub-tasks may have more than one underlying goal.

It should be noted in passing that goals are not value-free. Embracing one set of goals will entail rejecting others. Emphasizing cognitive goals over affective ones will give a particular cast to a curriculum or program. As Richards (2001) notes, the choices we make will reflect our ideologies and beliefs about the nature of language and learning, and the purposes and functions of education.

In developing goals for educational programs, curriculum planners draw on their understanding both of the present and long term needs of learners and of society as well as the planners' beliefs and ideologies about schools, learners and teachers. These beliefs and values provide the philosophical underpinnings for educational programs and the justification for the kinds of aims they contain. At any given time, however, a number of competing or complementary perspectives are available concerning the focus of the curriculum.

(Richards 2001: 113)

One early version of a task-based curriculum, the Australian Language Levels (ALL) project, used Halliday's macroskills as the point of departure for curriculum development. The communicative goals in this curriculum suggest that language is used for:

1. Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships and, through this, the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings, and to get things done.
2. Acquiring information from more or less 'public' sources in the target language (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, documents, signs, notices, films, television, slides, tapes, radio, public announcements, lectures or written reports, etc.) and using this information in some way.
3. Listening to, reading, enjoying and responding to creative and imaginative uses of the target language (e.g. stories, poems, songs, rhymes, drama) and, for certain learners, creating them themselves.

(Adapted from Clark 1987: 226)

As intimated earlier, goals may relate not just to language, but to other aspects of the learning process. The following classification, again from the ALL project, illustrates how goals can be sociocultural, process-oriented or cultural, as well as communicative.

Goal type	Example
Communicative	establish and maintain interpersonal relations and through this to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings and to get things done
Sociocultural	have some understanding of the everyday life patterns of their contemporary age group in the target language speech community; this will cover their life at home, at school and at leisure
Learning-how-to-learn	to negotiate and plan their work over a certain time span, and learn how to set themselves realistic objectives and how to devise the means to attain them
Language and cultural awareness	to have some understanding of the systematic nature of language and the way it works

(Adapted from Clark 1987: 227–32)

As we have seen, a broad distinction can be drawn between English for social purposes and English for transactional purposes – that is, for obtaining goods and services (although in authentic communication, these two purposes are often interwoven). Another distinction that can be drawn is between general ‘everyday’ English, and English for specific purposes. Specific purpose courses can be academic or non-academic. Non-academic courses would include courses such as English for tourism. Academic courses can focus either on specific subject areas such as science and technology or law, or on more general skills for tertiary study, such as academic writing.

These distinctions can be applied to integrated skills courses or to specific skills courses. For example, a reading program can be designed to equip learners with the skills to carry out the many reading tasks that occur in everyday life, from consulting a TV program guide to reading the sports page of the afternoon newspaper. Another programme might be designed to develop the specialized reading skills needed to undertake graduate study in an English-speaking country. Given the importance of English throughout the world as a medium of tertiary instruction, it is hardly surprising that a great deal of emphasis has been placed on this

second, specialized reading goal. Courses or modules for developing listening, speaking and writing can also be divided into those for general and those for academic purposes. For example, in relation to listening, a distinction could be drawn between courses for understanding the media and courses for understanding university lectures. Again, writing courses can be divided into those concerned with basic functional writing development and those aimed at more formal writing. A task-based program for developing basic functional literacy will include things such as writing notes to the school or teacher, compiling shopping lists, completing postcards and so on. Formal writing skills will include essay and report writing, writing business letters, and note-taking from lectures and books. Such formal writing skills require high levels of language ability that many native speakers never master. For foreign language users, mastery can bring prestige and economic advancement (Forey and Nunan 2002).

The most useful goal statements are those that relate to the student not the teacher, and those that are couched in terms of observable performance. That is, a statement such as, 'The learner will give a five minute presentation on a familiar topic, speaking without notes,' is preferable to 'The learner will appreciate contemporary films.' While 'appreciation' is important, it is impossible to observe, and extremely difficult to measure, as we shall see in Chapter 7 when we examine issues of assessment in the task-based curriculum.

The focus on learner performance has been an important dimension to communicative language teaching since its first appearance. For example, in Europe, the CLT movement was led by applied linguists developing conceptual frameworks for the Council of Europe. In one of the first documents to emerge from this group, it was stated that a performance-based communicative curriculum

... tries to specify foreign language ability as a *skill* rather than *knowledge*. It analyzes what the learner will have to be able to *do* in the foreign language and determines only in the second place what *language-forms* (words, structures, etc.) the learners will have to be able to handle in order to *do* all that has been specified.

(van Ek 1977: 5)

The most recent work coming out of the Council of Europe adheres to the performance-based approach. In the introduction to the *Common European Framework* the authors suggest that the framework

... provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for

communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which the language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.

(Council of Europe 2001: 1)

The *Common European Framework* defines three broad levels of language use (Basic User, Independent User and Proficient User) each of which is broken down into two further levels, giving six levels in all. The table below provides global, behavioural descriptors for learners at each of these six levels.

General levels of language use

Proficient User (C2)	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken or written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
Proficient User (C1)	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much <i>obvious</i> searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User (B2)	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with the degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

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Independent User (B1)	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User (A2)	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
Basic User (A1)	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

(Council of Europe 2001: 24)

In the United States, a similar orientation is adopted by the influential standards movement. One of the most comprehensive and detailed sets of content standards yet developed within the field of language education is the Pre-k-12 standards commissioned by TESOL and developed by a team of specialists working within the United States (TESOL 1997). Within this project, standards are defined as follows:

. . . standards indicate . . . what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction.' [They] . . . list assessable, observable activities that students may perform to show progress toward meeting the designated standard. These progress indicators represent a variety of instructional techniques that may be used by teachers to determine how well students are doing.

(TESOL 1997: 16)

Standards are elaborated as ‘Sample Progress Indicators’ which set out observable behaviours that can be used to determine whether students have met the standards. From the list below, it can be seen that these are what, in the preceding chapter, were called real-world tasks. These are used as the point of departure for designing pedagogical tasks.

- obtain, complete and process application forms, such as driver’s license, social security, college entrance
- express feelings through drama, poetry or song
- make an appointment
- defend and argue a position
- use prepared notes in an interview or meeting
- ask peers for their opinions, preferences and desires
- correspond with pen pals, English-speaking acquaintances, friends
- write personal essays
- make plans for social engagements
- shop in a supermarket
- engage listener’s attention verbally or non-verbally
- volunteer information and respond to questions about self and family
- elicit information and ask clarification questions
- clarify and restate information as needed
- describe feelings and emotions after watching a movie
- indicate interests, opinions or preferences related to class projects
- give and ask for permission
- offer and respond to greetings, compliments, invitations, introductions and farewells
- negotiate solutions to problems, interpersonal misunderstandings and disputes
- read and write invitations and thank you letters
- use the telephone.

Reflect

Review the goals in your own curriculum or a curriculum with which you are familiar. How comprehensive are these? To what extent are they couched in performance terms?

Input

‘Input’ refers to the spoken, written and visual data that learners work with in the course of completing a task. Data can be provided by a teacher, a textbook or some other source. Alternatively, it can be generated by the

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learners themselves. Input can come from a wide range of sources, as the following inventory from Hover (1986) shows:

letters (formal and informal), newspaper extracts, picture stories, Telecom account, driver's licence, missing person's declaration form, social security form, business cards, memo note, photographs, family tree, drawings, shopping lists, invoices, postcards, hotel brochures, passport photos, swap shop cards, street map, menu, magazine quiz, calorie counter, recipe, extract from a play, weather forecast, diary, bus timetable, notice board items, housing request form, star signs, hotel entertainment programme, tennis court booking sheet, extracts from film script, high school year book, note to a friend, seminar programme, newspaper reporter's notes, UK travel regulations, curriculum vitae, economic graphs.

This list, which is by no means exhaustive, illustrates the rich variety of resources that exist all around us. Most, with a little imagination, can be used as the basis for communicative tasks.

The list of items above was used in a set of tasks for developing listening and speaking skills. A similar range of stimulating source materials can be used for encouraging literacy skills development. Morris and Stewart-Dore (1984: 158) make the point that while it is neither necessary nor desirable to teach every possible writing style and register, the number of writing options typically offered to students can be extended by introducing the following into the classroom:

- articles from newspapers, magazines and journals
- reports to different kinds of groups
- radio and television scripts and documentaries
- puppet plays
- news stories and reports
- research reports
- short stories, poems and plays
- press releases
- bulletins and newsletters
- editorials
- progress reports and plans for future development
- publicity brochures and posters
- instructions and handbooks
- recipes
- minutes of meetings
- scripts of group negotiations
- replies to letters and other forms of correspondence
- slide/tape presentations

- caption books to accompany a visual record of an experience
- comic books for entertainment and information sharing.

The inclusion as input of such material raises the question of authenticity. ‘Authenticity’ in this context refers to the use of spoken and written material that has been produced for purposes of communication not for purposes of language teaching. To my mind it is not a matter of whether or not authentic materials should be used, but what combination of authentic, simulated and specially written materials provide learners with optimal learning opportunities.

Much has been written about the differences between authentic and specially written materials. Writing about spoken language, Porter and Roberts (1981) identified the following features as differentiating specially written dialogues from authentic speech.

Feature	Comment
Intonation	Speech is marked by unusually wide and frequent pitch movement
Received pronunciation	Most speakers on British ELT tapes have an RP accent which is different from that which learners will normally hear in Britain
Enunciation	Words are enunciated with excessive precision
Structural repetition	Particular structures/functions recur with obtrusive frequency
Complete sentences	Sentences are short and well formed
Distinct turn-taking	One speaker waits until the other has finished
Pace	This is typically slow
Quantity	Speakers generally say about the same amount
Attention signals	These ‘uhuh’s’ and ‘mm’s’ are generally missing.
Formality	Materials are biased towards standardized language; swearing and slang are rare
Limited vocabulary	Few references to specific, real-world entities and events
Too much information	Generally more explicit reference to people, objects and experiences than in real language
Mutilation	Texts are rarely marred by outside noise

Specially written materials exhibiting the characteristics identified by Porter and Roberts have always had a central place in language learning

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for a very good reason. By simplifying input, they make it easier for learners to process the language. By increasing the frequency of target language items, patterns and regularities are made more ostensible to learners. Slowing down the speed of speech can make it easier to understand. This is particularly valuable for beginning learners.

However, there is also value in exposing learners to authentic input. Specially written texts and dialogues do not adequately prepare learners for the challenge of coping with the language they hear and read in the real world outside the classroom – nor is that their purpose. If we want learners to comprehend aural and written language outside class, we need to provide them with structured opportunities to engage with such materials inside the classroom.

The following extracts have been taken from published course materials.

- A: Hi.
B: Hello.
A: I'm Julia.
B: Nice to meet you Julia. I'm Malcolm – Malcolm Stephenson.
A: Isn't this a great party, Malcolm? I think this music's really cool.
B: Yes, it is a good party.
A: Hey! You're British, aren't you?
B: Well, yes, I am actually.
A: I was in London last year. Do you come from London?
B: No, I come from a town called Brighton – it's quite near London.
A: Oh yeah? I've been there. I went there on the same trip. We visited some sort of castle on the coast, I think. Would that be right?
B: Yes! Brighton Pavilion.

(Nunan 1995: 172)

- A: So, Mark, what do you enjoy doing more than anything else?
B: Oh gosh, I think . . . let me see. I guess I'd have to say playing the banjo.
A: Playing the . . . ?
B: Banjo. Yeah . . .
A: Yeah? OK. So what's your greatest ambition in life?
B: Been playing, trying to play for . . . Sorry, what?
A: Your greatest ambition (yeah) in life.
B: Um, to be as great a banjo player as Doc Boggs.
A: Doc what?
B: Doc Boggs.
A: Who on earth is Doc Boggs?
B: He's one of the greats – from Kentucky.

A: Whatever! Who do you most admire in the world and why?

B: Living, or . . .

A: Yeah.

B: Oh, um, I don't really know. I admire how Doc Boggs plays the banjo. (laughter)

(Nunan 1995: 152)

Reflect

Compare these two extracts. What differences can you discern between them? What are the advantages of both as input to learning? How would you use the second extract – the authentic text – in a language lesson?

The arguments for using authentic written texts in the classroom are similar to those advanced for using authentic spoken texts. In second (as opposed to foreign) language contexts, Brosnan *et al.* (1984) point out that the texts learners will need to read in real life are in the environment around them – at the bank, in the mailbox, on shop doors and windows, on labels, packets, etc. They do not have to be created by the teacher. Given the richness and variety of these resources, it should be possible for teachers to select authentic written texts that are appropriate to the needs, interests and proficiency levels of their students. Brosnan *et al.* (1984: 2–3) offer the following justifications for the use of these real-world resources.

- The language is natural. By simplifying language or altering it for teaching purposes (limiting structures, controlling vocabulary, etc.) we may risk making the reading task more difficult. We may, in fact, be removing clues to meaning.
- It offers the students the chance to deal with small amounts of print which, at the same time, contain complete, meaningful messages.
- It provides students with the opportunity to make use of non-linguistic clues (layout, pictures, colours, symbols, the physical setting in which it occurs) and so more easily to arrive at meaning from the printed word.
- Adults need to be able to see the immediate relevance of what they do in the classroom to what they need to do outside it, and real-life reading material treated realistically makes the connection obvious.

Brown and Menasche (1993) argue that the authentic / non-authentic distinction is an oversimplification, and that input data can be placed on a continuum from 'genuinely authentic' to non-authentic. They suggest that there are at least five distinguishable points along this continuum:

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- **Genuine:** created only for the realm of real life, not for the classroom, but used in the classroom for language teaching.
- **Altered:** While there is no meaning change, the original has been altered in other ways (for example, the insertion of glosses, visual resetting, the addition of visuals).
- **Adapted:** Although created for real life, vocabulary and grammatical structures are changed to simplify the text.
- **Simulated:** Although specially written by the author for purposes of language teaching, the author tries to make it look authentic by using characteristics of genuine texts.
- **Minimal / incidental:** Created for the classroom with no attempt to make the material appear genuine.

For language programs aimed at developing academic skills, or those preparing students for further study, authentic content can be taken from subject areas in the school curriculum (Brinton 2003; Snow and Brinton 1997). Activities can be adapted from relevant academic disciplines. By reading in their intended subject areas, students will begin to develop a feel for their chosen discipline. For example, by reading science texts, learners will develop a feel for scientific discourse (i.e. the way explanations and arguments are presented by scientists working in the particular branch of the discipline in question).

Each area of specialization – science, geography, home economics, physical education, music, art and so on – has its own body of literature, which presents the content of that area in a language style of its own. Once we recognize that different bodies of knowledge have their own literature and language style, we can see that the learning implications extend beyond the school scene to the worlds of work and everyday life (see Morris and Stewart-Dore 1984: 21).

Reflect

Can you envisage any difficulties for a high school English language specialist or university instructor who is asked to help second language learners read science, mathematics or engineering texts? What can the language specialist offer that the content teacher can't offer?

Procedures

'Procedures' specifies what learners will actually do with the input that forms the point of departure for the learning task. In considering criteria for task selection (and, in the next section, we will look at what

research has to say on this matter), some issues arise similar to those as we encountered when considering input.

One of these is authenticity, which we have just looked at in relation to input data. While there is widespread (although not necessarily universal) acceptance that authentic input data have a place in the classroom, less attention has been paid to procedural authenticity. Early on, Candlin and Edelhoff (1982) pointed out that the authenticity issue involves much more than simply selecting texts from outside the arena of language teaching, and that the processes brought to bear by learners on the data should also be authentic. Porter and Roberts (1981) also made the point that, while it is possible to use authentic texts in non-authentic ways (for example, turning a newspaper article into a cloze passage), this severely limits the potential of the materials as resources for language learning.

Reflect

How does this issue relate to the discussion in Chapter 2 on real-world, rehearsal and activation tasks?

In considering the task framework set out in Chapter 2, I suggested that tasks could be analyzed in terms of the extent to which they require learners to rehearse, in class, the sorts of communicative behaviours they might be expected to use in genuine communicative interactions outside the classroom. This issue of task authenticity is somewhat controversial, as can be seen from the following quotes:

Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium. In addition, the purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life: 1) to obtain a specific fact or piece of information (scanning), 2) to obtain the general idea of the author (skimming), 3) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of reading, as in reading a textbook (thorough comprehension), or 4) to evaluate information in order to determine where it fits into our own system of beliefs (critical reading). Our students should become as critical as we are of the purposes for reading, so that they will be able to determine the proper approaches to a reading task.

(Clark and Silberstein 1977: 51)

In the following quote, Widdowson argues against the notion that classroom procedures should necessarily mirror communicative performance in the real world, stating that:

. . . what is wanted is a methodology which will . . . provide for communicative competence by functional investment. [Such a methodology] would engage the learners in problem-solving tasks as purposeful activities but without the rehearsal requirement that they should be realistic or 'authentic' as natural social behaviour. (Widdowson 1987: 71)

Here, Widdowson is advancing an argument in favour of a curriculum consisting exclusively of tasks with an activation rather than rehearsal rationale. (See the beginning of Chapter 2 for a discussion of the difference between these two rationales.) My own view is that both are equally valid.

All too often, discussions of authenticity in language teaching are restricted to authenticity of input data. However, in this section, I have looked at an equally important issue – that of procedural authenticity. Those procedures that attempt to replicate and rehearse in the classroom the kinds of things that learners need to do outside of the classroom have procedural authenticity. However, a case can be made for the inclusion of non-authentic procedures. Widdowson provides one rationale for such procedures above. Another rationale was provided in Chapter 2.

Another way of analyzing procedures is in terms of their focus or goal. One widely cited way of characterizing procedural goals is whether they are basically concerned with skill getting or skill using (Rivers and Temperley 1978). In skill getting, learners master phonological, lexical and grammatical forms through memorization and manipulation. In skill using, they apply these skills in communicative interaction. Proponents of audiolingualism, with its 3Ps (presentation, practice, production), assumed that skill getting should logically precede skill using. However, as we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, this assumption is overly simplistic and does not accurately reflect the complex inter-relationships between language acquisition and use. It also overlooks, or denies, the notion that learners can learn by doing.

Reflect

How does the skill-getting / skill-using distinction play out in your own classroom or a classroom that is familiar to you? Which has the greater focus? Study the following tasks. Are they designed for skill getting or skill using?

A Look at the chart.

Word order of adjectives	
What does it look like?	It has a blue cover. It has a long, black strap.
What do they look like?	It's a small, black, leather wallet with my name on it. They have round, blue lenses and a black, plastic frame.

B Match the materials with the objects.

1. plastic 2. leather 3. glass 4. cotton 5. cardboard

a. shoes b. document file c. T-shirt d. box e. lenses

C Make questions using the materials and objects in 'B.' Include the words shown.

- (clear) Have you seen a clear, plastic document file?
- (black) _____
- (dark) _____
- (large/blue) _____
- (big/yellow) _____

(Nunan 2001: 34)

8 Express Yourself

A Take out an item of yours (for example: a pen, keys, a jacket) and write a description of it on a small piece of paper.



B Put your descriptions in a pile. Take one. Ask questions to find out who has that item. Fill in the information in the chart. Repeat three times.

Name	Item



(Ibid.: 37)

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A third way of analyzing learning procedures is into those that focus the learner on developing accuracy and those that focus on the development of fluency. Brumfit (1984: 51) deals with the fluency/accuracy polarity in detail:

... the demand to produce work for display to the teacher in order that evaluation and feedback could be supplied conflicted directly with the demand to perform adequately in the kind of natural circumstances for which teaching was presumably a preparation. Language display for evaluation tended to lead to a concern for accuracy, monitoring, reference rules, possibly explicit knowledge, problem-solving and evidence of skill getting. In contrast, language use requires fluency, expression rules, a reliance on implicit knowledge and automatic performance. It will on occasion also require monitoring and problem-solving strategies, but these will not be the most prominent features as they tend to be in the conventional model where the student produces, the teacher corrects, and the student tries again.

Brumfit goes on to point out that accuracy and fluency are not opposites, but are complementary. However, materials and activities are often devised as if the two were in conflict, and teachers certainly adjust their behaviour depending on which one is important to them at any particular point.

Skehan (1998) also used accuracy and fluency as central constructs in his work on task-based language teaching, and added a third element – complexity. He found that different types of task generated different degrees of accuracy, fluency and complexity. I will summarize Skehan's work in the next chapter.

A final distinction that can help us to evaluate procedures has to do with the locus of control. In pattern drills and other skill-getting exercises, control usually rests with the teacher. In role plays, simulations and the like, the learner has much more control. We shall look in greater detail at teacher and learner roles later in the chapter (see also Nunan and Lamb 1996).