



Task-based language teaching: From theory to classroom practice

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Overview

- *Policy*
- *Theory*
- *Research*
- *A task framework*
- *Exemplifying TBLT*



Policy

The task-based approach aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Learners are encouraged to activate and use whatever language they already have in the process of completing a task. The use of tasks will also give a clear and purposeful context for the teaching and learning of grammar and other language features as well as skills. ... All in all, the role of task-based learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. (CDC 1999: 41)



Theory

- **Analytical versus synthetic approaches to syllabus design**
- **Experiential language learning**
- **Procedural approaches to curriculum design**



Synthetic approaches

Begin with an analysis of the language. The teacher, curriculum designer or materials writer breaks the language systems down into their component parts and teaches these separately.



Analytical approaches

Begin with the learners and specify their real-world communication needs. Learners work with naturalistic input data containing a range of language items.



Experiential Learning

Takes the learner's immediate personal experience as the point of departure for the learning experience. Learning occurs when learners engage in and reflect on sequences of tasks. The active involvement of the learner is therefore central to the approach, and a rubric that conveniently captures the active, experiential nature of the process is 'learning by doing'.



Procedural Approaches

See language as a resource for communicating rather than as a body of content to be memorized.

In procedural approaches, the route and the destination begin to merge.



Research

- ***The input hypothesis (Krashen)***
- ***The output hypothesis (Swain)***
- ***The interaction hypothesis (Long, Ellis, Nunan)***
- ***Task-types and language output (Skehan et al., Robinson, Martyn)***



The Input Hypothesis


We acquire languages when we understand messages (input) in the target language that are just a little beyond our current level of acquired competence. In order for learners to progress from one stage of acquisition to the next, they need to comprehend language that includes a structure at the stage beyond that of their current level.



Implications

Reception should come before production.

Extensive opportunities for listening and reading should precede speaking and writing, particularly in the early stages of the acquisition process



The Output Hypothesis

Input is necessary but not sufficient for acquisition. In addition to input, learners need opportunities to produce the target language. This is because production involves different psycholinguistic process from comprehension. In comprehending an utterance in a target language, one can largely bypass the syntax and 'go for meaning'. However, in order to produce a comprehensible utterance, one has to 'syntacticize' the utterance, that is, encode it grammatically.



The Interaction Hypothesis

The restructuring and interactional modifications that occur in the course of authentic interaction fuel the acquisition process.

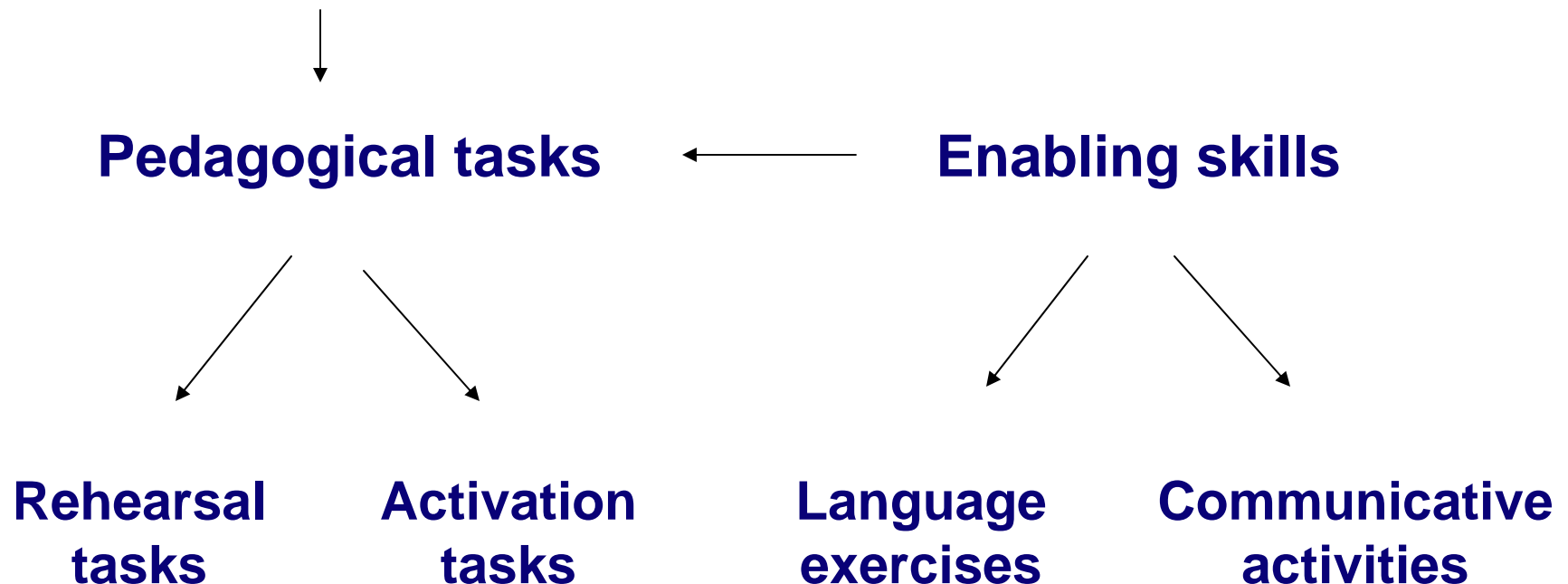


Task-types and output

Tasks with high cognitive demand and more complex communication, as marked by high-density negotiation of meaning sequences, generate the 'pushed output' that is a factor in second language acquisition.

A Framework for TBLT

Macrofunctions → Microfunctions → Real-world / target tasks



Nunan, D. 2004. *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Real-world task

Call the airline and reconfirm a reservation you have. Provide personal details such as name, flight number and date. Check other details, such as terminal, time of departure, and time you have to be at the airport and seating preference.



Rehearsal task

Pairwork Role Play.

A: You are a passenger calling to reconfirm a reservation. Use the eticket (provided separately) to check details of your flight.

B: You are an airline employee. Use the information sheet (provided separately) to answer your partner's questions.

Activation task

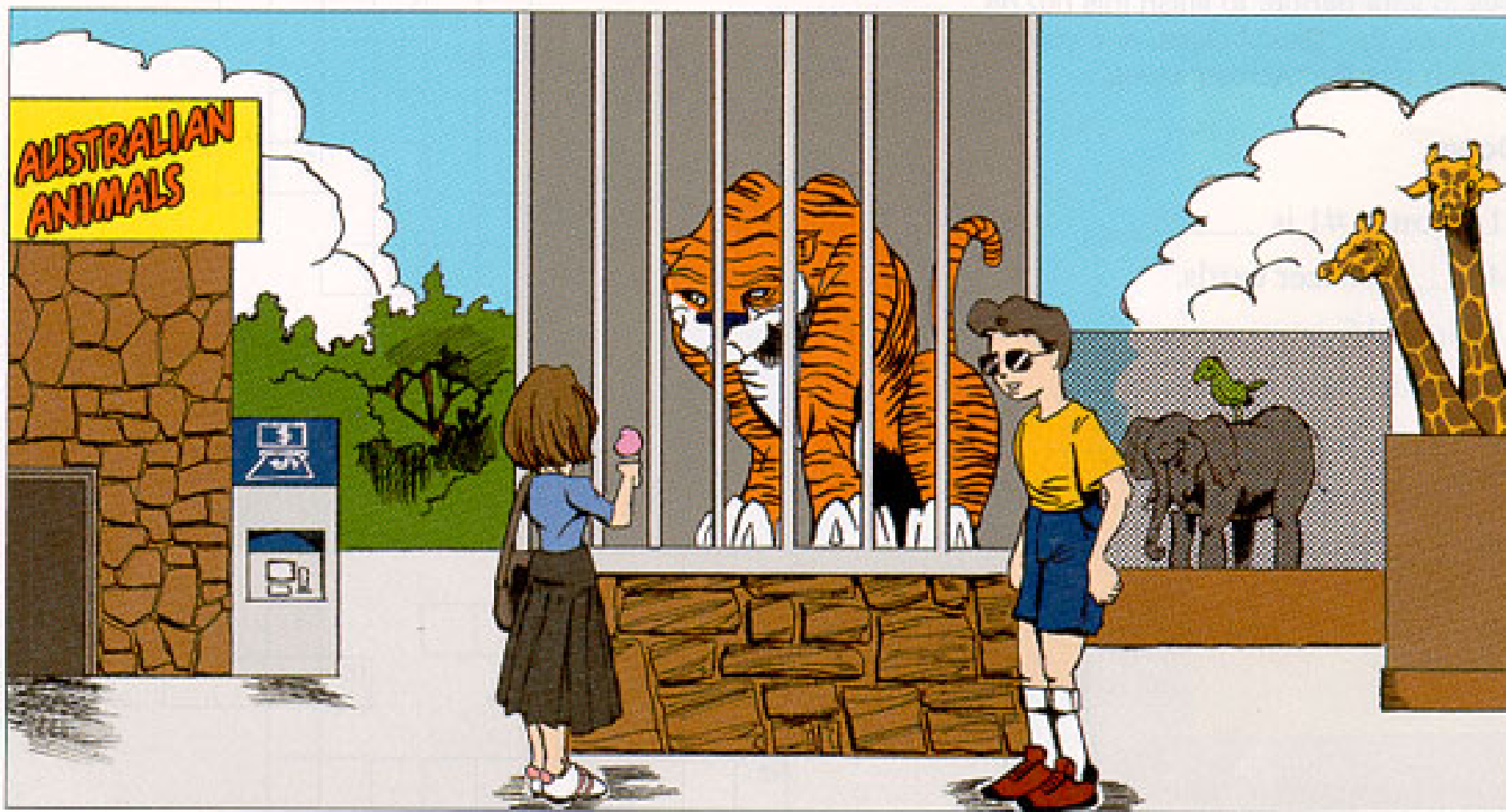
Different pictures

Talk to your partner. What's different in your partner's picture? **Circle** ten things.



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Steps in the instructional design process

1. *Schema activation/building*
2. *Modeling / controlled practice*
3. *Comprehensible input*
4. *Focus on form*
5. *Core task*
6. *Reflective learning*



Principles of TBLT

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 explicitly taught.**



Scaffolding: an example

A: Is there a gorilla in your picture?

B: No, there isn't. There's a tiger.

A: Is there an ATM machine?

B: Yes, there is. It's between the elephant and the giraffes.



Scaffolding: an example

A: Is there a XXXXX in your picture?

B: No, there isn't. There's a XXXXX.

A: Is there an XXXXX?

***B: Yes, there is. It's XXXXX the
XXXXX.***



Principles of TBLT

Task dependency

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

Recycling

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



Principles of TBLT

Active learning

- Learners acquire the language by actively using it.

Integration of form and function

- Learners are taught in ways that make clear the relationships between grammatical form, communicative function, and semantic meaning.



Principles of TBLT

Reproduction to creation

- In reproductive tasks, learners reproduce language models provided by the teacher, the textbook or the CD. These tasks are designed to give learners mastery of form, meaning and function, and provide a basis for creative tasks. In creative tasks, learners are recombining familiar elements in novel ways.



Principles of TBLT

Learning strategies

- *Learners focus on learning process as well as language content.*

Reflection

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



References

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