Aspects of current English language teaching practices with a special focus on task

Valerie Kollmann
Edith Cowan University

Edith Cowan University

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ASPECTS OF CURRENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PRACTICES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON TASK

Valerie KOLLMANN M.Ed.

Student Number 0978560

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ABSTRACT

This portfolio is written with the intention to explore current English language teaching practices in global as well as Australian contexts, with emphasis on task-based language teaching. As a result of the forces of globalisation, the number of learners involved in English language instruction has increased throughout the world and with it the necessity of language programs that would facilitate instruction in accordance with the needs of the market. Since the task-based language syllabus is founded on needs generated by the learners, there is potential for this language teaching methodology to become the recommended mode of instruction in the future. The central feature of the portfolio is the examination of the current discourse of task and subsequent disconnect as it applies in two situations, in the field of applied linguistic research and actual second language teaching contexts. Two small scale studies have revealed that in actual teaching practice task-based language teaching has either been applied in a limited sense, or not at all. The findings also indicate that such failure to implement task-based language learning principles is largely due to a lack of understanding of the concept of task and the use of global textbooks.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMEP	Adult Migrant Education Programme
AMES	Adult Migrant Education Services
ASLPR	Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings
CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CAVOCA	Computer Assisted Vocabulary Acquisition
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
CSWE	Certificates in Spoken and Written English
DCT	Discourse Completion Task/Test
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students
ESL	English as a Second Language
FCE	First Certificate in English
IEC	Intensive English Centre
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISLPR	International Second Language Proficiency Ratings
K-12	Kindergarten to year 12
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MOO	Multiple-user-domains Object Oriented
ND	Non-Designer
NEAS	National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NNS	Non-native Speaker
NS	Native Speaker
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PPP	Presentation Practice Production

SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TELL	Technology Enhanced Language Learning
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

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INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The demand for English language instruction has increased steadily world-wide in the past twenty years. The increasing demand has been the result of not only aggressive marketing strategies but also forces of globalisation. Global forces have progressively affected the way(s) people learn, choose and value languages. Consequently, English language teaching has evolved firstly in the direction indicated by global needs for international communication; and in particular satisfying the requirements offered through the preferred communicative approach by global employment opportunities (Cameron, 2002). Secondly, it has evolved in relation to what Wallace (2002: 105) refers to as 'literate English'. In other words, English language is now mostly taught with the intention to equip learners with communicative language skills which are assumed to be useful for future participants in the global workforce, or with the aim to smooth the progress of the increasingly mobile academic population who intend to study in an English language academic environment. The third factor, which has also influenced the direction of English language teaching and learning processes, is related to advances in the field of technology in general, and the opportunities generated by the Internet in particular. Therefore, in the content and method of instruction a departure from existing traditions has been felt.

Since the seventies there has been a movement away from what linguists invariably refer to as the product syllabus. According to the product syllabus language learning was based on the assumption that following a routine of explicit instruction (presentation), inductive rule learning through rule explanation, imitation and repetition (extensive oral practice), reinforcement, habit formation, and "automatisation" (Skehan, 2002; Prabhu, 1987), the learners, while simultaneously learning all four skills, would approximate in their language production native speaker norms. In such an environment learners, following a formal grammar based sequential order of distinct

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units, learnt or rather were exposed to distinct, ordered sequences of grammar and vocabulary items within a classroom where the traditional presentation, practice and production (PPP) method was followed. The ultimate aim was to synthesize these elements of the language in order to produce the learners' own language with special emphasis placed on the grammar and vocabulary learnt, that is, on accuracy and the extent of the vocabulary produced.

According to the process or task-based syllabus, on the other hand, language is more than only the sum of its distinct elements. Learners of the language should be exposed to authentic input, and they should be given opportunities to produce output that is focussed on the meaning of the discourse. It was identified that students need to play a more active role in decision making processes regarding what and how learning should take place, as they follow their own internal syllabuses; that is, they have their own learnability constraints (Long, 1997). In other words, it is acknowledged that learners need to internalise the language through analysis rather than synthesize specific elements of the language system (Robinson, 1998). With the process syllabus, therefore, there is a movement away from the prescribed or imposed set of objectives, and emphasis is placed on the process of learning and ultimately the outcomes. Consequently, teachers following a process syllabus would have their set of objectives (if those could still be called objectives) at the end of a course. Thus, research moved from specific optimal content selection to the investigation of the processes involved in language learning, that is from the *what* to the *how*. A task cycle was therefore instituted (by Prabhu, 1987), which meant that guiding learners through recommended phases would promote and foster language acquisition processes.

Prabhu (1987) refers to task-based language learning in three phases, the pre-task phase, the task phase, and the post-task phase. The pre-task phase is preparatory, and it takes very often a question and answer form with the intention to focus on the lexical elements that are demanded by the task . The task phase is the actual meaning-focused, interactive process with the aim not only of solving a problem, coming to an agreement, or developing an argument, but also being actively involved in communication. The post-task phase which follows allows for the teacher to involve learners in discussions

generated with the aim of monitoring language use and attending to the form as indicated by the needs that arose during the task.

Jane and Dave Willis (1996), on the other hand, identify six stages in the task cycle. The first stage deals with pre task activities, during which learners receive input with the intention to focus their attention on an aspect of meaning. During the second and third stages the learners first complete the task and then assess it. The serious work appears to start at the fourth stage, which is the planning stage. This time they revisit the task itself while focusing on the meanings generated during the task cycle. This phase is followed by a presentation of the task, which finally leads to the post-task language focus. It is in the final stage, when guided by the feedback received from the task, that learner attention is focused explicitly on the form and structural elements of the task. Therefore, the most significant aspect of this approach stems from the belief that learners' attention is thus channeled from meaning to form-focused language extension. If chosen appropriately, tasks can therefore contribute to individualised language development.

Task-based learning, in other words, means learning through engagement in tasks, focusing on a given (or learner generated) problem or topic instead of a linguistic aspect of the language, such as pronunciation or grammar However, at some stage in the process learners will focus on the special features of language which are needed to convey required meanings. Littlewood (2004) sees the tasks in the task-based approach serving a dual role. Firstly, they are the salient components of a methodology, and secondly, they are also units of course organisation. In addition, these units may also establish a connection between the pedagogic and real world aspect of the task.

The term task, thus, has entered the discourse relating to language acquisition research and teaching practice and from there it has moved on to influence both curriculum design and classroom practice. It appears, however, that there is a discrepancy in what researchers in the field of language acquisition mean by the term task and what language practitioners refer to when they use the term task (see Chapter IV for further discussion of this disconnect). Task has thus become a broad term in regular teaching contexts referring to drills, exercises, activities, tests and general

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assessment instruments that normally form the part of teaching and learning processes instead of as originally intended. Some contexts also refer to the syllabus they follow as task-based. The meaning of the word in the literature as referred to by applied linguists, however, is restricted. Tasks alone do not constitute the task-based methodology, they are the necessary parts or constituents of the learning processes.

Although method "is considered to have a particular set of theoretical principles and a particular set of classroom techniques" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003 b: 540), task-based learning allows for flexibility since it offers only a framework of principles and procedures (Littlewood, 2004). The question remains whether tasks are to be used in syllabus design as units of analysis, or if they are means for a sequence of units of learning (Robinson, 1998). Research has not found a consensus whether there should be a sequence of tasks in a task-based language syllabus other than the sequence based on teachers' perception of increasing complexity (Prabhu, 1987). This is mainly owing to the fact that primarily tasks are to be generated in response to the needs of learners, i.e. based on needs analyses (Skehan, 2002) in order to make learning individualized. Long (1997) also presents an argument that task selection should primarily be generated according to learners' needs. The criterion for task selection is based on the tasks' conduciveness to promoting negotiation of meaning in an interactive manner amongst a particular group of students.

From the pragmatic aspect, needs analyses pose a number of difficulties that research so far has failed to address. Firstly, it is generally the case that teachers find themselves in heterogeneous classrooms where the needs of the learners may be disparate. Selection of suitable resources and learning units may add to the challenges that classroom teachers may face. The second issue that task-based language learning raises is the one relating to accountability. In the traditional PPP context, the teachers and administrators are guided by a curriculum, a set of pre-selected objectives, and a battery of assessment instruments. If, however, task-based instruction means that the selection and ordering of units according to the learners' needs and wishes is at the teachers' discretion, it also denotes that the teachers accept the transference of accountability for all aspects of the course. Furthermore, another implication of this authority and autonomy given to the teachers is what Kumaravadivelu (1994: 30) calls

"principled pragmatism". This implies that what is required is not only the teachers' appraisal and understanding of the teaching and learning processes through reflection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation of the learners' needs, but also their ability to modify the teaching and learning processes and assessment accordingly

Ellis (1994:687) summarized the relationship between second language acquisition (SLA) research and second/foreign language teaching, and identified the following positions:

> The results of SLA research cannot be safely applied to language pedagogy because they are too uncertain.
> SLA research provides a basis for teacher 'education' but not for teacher 'training'. That is, it can help teachers develop reasonable expectations about what they can achieve in their teaching, but cannot be used to tell them how to teach.
> SLA research provides information and actual data that can be used in the construction of tasks designed to raise teachers' awareness of the likely relationship between teaching/learning behaviours and L2 acquisition.
> The results of SLA research (and in particular of classroom-oriented research) provide 'hard evidence' which should be used to advise teachers about what techniques and procedures work best.

This relationship takes into consideration the teaching processes and classroom research; however, it fails to address the needs of the learners. It is not surprising therefore, that the entire concept of the process syllabus, although based on a liberal foundation, has not been widely implemented. In fact, it seems most likely that process or task-based language learning has rarely been used or applied in educational settings in its entirety. The main reason for lack of willingness in implementation does not appear to lie in the teachers' and administrators' failure to understand the need for such programs that have the potential of showing higher than expected results. Despite this, they do understand the need to meet curriculum guidelines and to provide evidence of a prescriptive program with specific ordering of units of study and assessment instruments. Moreover, teaching staff also needs guidelines, which normally emerge from programs of study. The reason for the lack of implementation is possibly associated with student expectations. Students, in general, and more especially adult students, expect to learn grammar, they rarely associate activities which fall outside the

traditional teacher centred instruction with real learning, and they generally have a need for order and organizational sequence. They also want to know what their investment in the course would result in and how the results compare with the ones obtained from different institutions. In other words, they place a specific value on the outcomes of their learning and the specific (measurable) standard of these outcomes.

The need for English language instruction has increased in the past twenty years. An increasing number of learners of all ages have become the recipients of English language instruction world wide. With the political changes (especially in Eastern Europe) new, previously uncharted contexts are feeding the need created through the demand generated by existing and new markets. Numbers have reached such proportions that it has become the duty of applied linguists (both those involved in research and those in classroom teaching) not only to ascertain that the needs are met, but also to provide novel products to the market. It is possible that task-based language learning fulfills the role of one such product.

The following chapters in this portfolio have been written with a view to investigate current teaching practices in light of the task-based syllabus and the status of tasks in language programs. In the second chapter the investigation focuses on the global English language teaching context. Since English language has been increasingly recognized as the language associated with everything modern and part of the technological and digital revolution, it is not surprising that an increasing number of learners has the ambition and desire to learn and master the language. On the basis that task-based language learning has been identified in second language acquisition research as the methodology addressing the needs of the learners in the twenty-first century, a worldwide survey was undertaken to report on the status of current language teaching methodologies. Reports from the study are included in part two of the chapter.

The third chapter moves from the global to the local Australian context and looks into the curriculum guidelines that govern English language courses for overseas students offered at various secondary and pre-tertiary government and non-government funded educational institutions. The investigation centers on the methodological

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options incorporated in the curriculum guidelines as related to task-based language learning.

The fourth chapter examines research concerning second language teaching practices, especially focussing on issues emerging from task-based language learning. In addition, the chapter reports the results of a study investigating the role of tasks in the teaching practices of a college in Australia, together with the results of a student survey on preferences, expectations and current classroom teaching and learning practices.

The fifth chapter attempts to inspect the possibility of integrating computer technology into task-based language learning processes.

CHAPTER II

TASKS IN THE GLOBALISED CONTEXT

CHAPTER II

TASKS IN THE GLOBALISED CONTEXT

Part I

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the market forces at play in connection with English language instruction, the status of English language in the global environment, language policies that guide instruction of English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Australian context, and the status of the task-based syllabus in the world. The chapter concludes with a study reporting on a world-wide survey conducted with the aim of uncovering the position of task-based language teaching and learning.

Globalisation, marketisation and the spread of English

One of the characteristics of globalisation, as related to education, is the emergence of the technology revolution and, with it, the knowledge explosion. Ikenberry (2001) refers to Greenspan's 1988 speech to higher education leaders in Washington, in which he named today's economy a 'conceptual economy'. Conceptual economy defines the wealth of a nation in terms of its intellectual capacity, literacy, creativity, and the ingenuity of its people, rather than its productive capacity or natural resources. It is not surprising, therefore, that large numbers of students make the decision to invest in continuing their education in contexts which offer prestige and personal development, and which almost guarantee not only higher future earning potential but also enhanced employability in the modern economy (Stilwell, 2003). International educational

mobility is, however, not a recent phenomenon. The novelty is only in the volume of students and the dominance of English ns a medium of communication.

Knowledge and power have economic value in the globalised context, and consequently education is becoming a commodity of the service industry (Ikenberry, 2001). A solution to the financial problems that some educational institutions face may be found in commercial solutions such as offered by export revenues generated from the international fee-paying student population. Aggressive marketing strategies with the aim of attracting students and obtaining a shsre of the market have resulted in education becoming one of Australia's leading export industries. Compared with tourism, in 2001 for example, educational exports contributed $4.12 billion to the Australian economy, while tour.sm added $9.57 billion (Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from 2001, in Ramsay, 2002). From the Australian Education Network figures, in the period between January aod April 2004, there was an 8% increase in the number of students enrolled in comparison with the figures from the previous year. Student numbers in both secondary schools and colleges offering English language intensive courses for overseas students (ELICOS) grew by 4%, while student numbers in foundation or non-award courses grew by 2%. These figures are not surprising, however, since the status of English in the global economy has guaranteed Australia a competitive education export position in the Asia-Pacific region (Singh and Doherty, 2004), and has made Australia the third largest destination of international students, behind only the United States nf America and the United Kingdom (Tangas and Calderon, 2004).

Globalisation, nramally, means the often referred to spread of international global corporations, the influence of the financial markets and world wide market driven economy (Hanis, Leung and Ramptra 2002), a commodity orented general public and consumerism in general. It also refers to the disappearance of community spirit (Littlejohn, 2000) and with it security in employment or the ambivalent outcomes in the job market generated by the global workforce (Fairclough, 2001; Beck, 2001). Consequently, globalisation denotes the emergence of new employment opportunities through the advance of new technologies, and the inevitable standardisation of various aspects of people's lives. The effects of globalisation can be felt by many sections of the population in the increased individualism (Kubota, 2002), and at the same time the

threat or the limited relevance of the nation states and their identity through language, culture, and ideology It is even suggested that owing to globalisation, basic human rights (specifically, linguistic human rights) are also threatened (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Inevitably globalisation also results in the growth of transnational communities, the financially, academically and employment-wise mobile population which enjoys "minority" status within the new communities where they find themselves, without the disadvantage usually associated with such status (Harris, Leung and Rampton 2002). Globalisation seems to be the catchphrase of today Every aspect of people's lives is affected by issues that the entire world faces, and people all over the world are involved in attempts at solving the issues arising from this.

Educational institutions should, however, make decisions based on whether they aim to generate and maintain a market that has a short-run focus or one which offers long-term benefits to the entire society (Stilwell, 2003). From the expanding market, decisions need to concentrate not only on the allocation of resources but also on resource creation and, even more importantly, the maintenance of professionalism. The emergence of technelogy allows educational services to expand and take different forms both in the traditional 'on campus' context, and across borders through e-learning (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin, 2002).

The status of English

English has become an international language in the global environment, and in light of the growing number of speakers speaking native and non-native varieties, it can be stated that English has lost its claim to any culture or country (McKay, 2002). Therefore, English has taken an unprecedented global characteristic, that not only needs to be taken into consideration by language teaching professionals, but by the entire English speaking world.

Tollefson (2000) refers to Kachru's paper in which he distinguishes between the inner, outer and expanding circles of not only English speakers, but also English speaking countries. In this assessment of the spread of English, the line between primary, dominant, official and desirable languages of particular countries is blurred;

the distinction between countries sharing former colonial ties with England and those whose official language and dominant language coincide becomes the focus of much of the discussion as relating to status. Understandably, not all English language speakers enjoy the same privileges. Both Tollefson (2000) and Lowenberg (2000) report on the status accorded to different varieties of English and on the ways the spread of English contributes to social, political and economic inequalities. While on the one hand people enjoy particular educational and economic privileges if they have competence in English in countries where English is not the official or the dominant language, they fail to enjoy the same benefits if they change the context and move into countries whose dominant language is English.

If English speakers can be categorized as belonging to different groups and consequently stratified, it is not surprising to find that not all bilinguals carry the same status. Harris, Leung and Rampton (2002) classify English bilinguals into three broad categories: the so-called "new arrivals", "low key bilinguals" and the "high-achieving multilinguals". People of various backgrounds wanting to study English, or being competent at speaking English are therefore not only compartmentalised according to their ability to approximate to standard English, but also according to the currency they hold with their original language background. This could consequently mean that there is limited or no opportunity for individuals to move across the categories above.

English language speakers are further judged, or even discriminated against according to the variety of English they employ, and according to the standard they abide by. Lowenberg (2001) reports on the discrepancy between the standard of a so-called non-native variety of English (of countries such as Singapore or Nigeria) and that of the American or British (native English) variety. The question is therefore whether there is only one (or possibly two, British and American) teaching models for learners to follow, or whether the standard of their native varieties should also be valid. The so-called non-native varieties of English in countries with former colonial ties to the language cannot be considered only approximations of native speaker norms. There is a need for the non-native varieties to become increasingly more acceptable. It is after all the communicative aspect of today's global community that could most readily be

observed as changing and developing and affecting a large segment of the world population.

English in the world

Currently, there are more non-native than native speakers of English in the world. According to Crystal's estimate (Crystal, 1997) only a fifth of all English users are native speakers of the language. In many contexts English is used primarily for international communication, that is as a foreign language, which in other contexts, non-native English is a medium of inter-ethnic communication. In countries where English is the official language, millions of learners of English (non-native speakers) use the language at educational institutions in which English is the language of instruction. These learners and speakers of English under certain circumstances carry the linguistic deficit label "limited English proficiency" (Wong, 2000).

It has been stated that "virtually every tradition in the contemporary world feels itself in some way to be threatened and relativized" (Robertson, 1997). It is further contended that globalisation is made up of two forces, one of uniting, "homogenising", creating the universal and converging to a common norm, and the other of making things locally distinctive and therefore different or particular. Kubota (2002) asserts that while *kokusaika* (internationalisation, as globalisation is referred to in the Japanese discourse) "blends Westernization with nationalism", it fails to "promote cosmopolitan pluralism". It is further observed that cultural and linguistic multiplicity is not encouraged, but instead focus is primarily placed on anything Western, especially English.

When it comes to global communication Cameron (2002) refers to discourse issues in connection with global communications, not in the fact that the discourse encourages the adoption of English as a single global language, but in the tendency to encourage modifications of different languages to conform to English norms. The example given refers to the recommendation given to Japanese students that they should "learn to write Japanese in accordance with Western norms of 'logic', or that Japanese businesspeople

should edopt more 'direct' or 'informal' ways of interacting among themselves". This effectively suggests that languages (English language in particular) have become the means through which worldviews, beliefs, or values they express are imposed on speakers of languages other than English, and through this imposition global norms are thus disseminated.

English permeates many languages it comes into contact with, and in extreme cases renders these languages at times comprehensible only to those who have prior knowledge of English. English code switches and loan translations fill the vocabularies of several languages. Moreover, the presence of English words in the language serves several purposes. Kollmann (1999) reports on code switches undergoing grammatical integration in Hungarian speech, on code switches involving interjections, intensifiers, and discourse markers, nn 'foreignising' and transliteration, and on communication strategies. All of these were introduced with the purpose of creating the basis of bilingual humour or dramatic effect, of marking edherence to a particular segment of society, and of being more explicit and economical. Cameron (2002) questions the validity of what is considered under 'effective communication' since communication in general is not based on cultural or linguistic universals. The example given in her paper also uses a Hungarian example with regard to forms of address. In Hungarian the formal and familiar forms of eddress are not used interchangeably, yet English speaking norms of interaction have been absorbed since the end of the communist era. In addition, translations of so-called English/American "service-speak" (for example: "Can I help you?") are observable throughout Western European speech communities. Therefore, English contributes to a changed, adapted or modified way speakers of a language express not only the intended communicative content, but also their adherence to accepted and acceptable cultural norms.

Languages are increasingly becoming economic commodities, and not symbols of ethnic or national identity (Heller, 2002). Phillipson (2001) compares the status of English in the past with that of the present and argues for both the dividing and unifying forces at play. He contends that in the past the knowledge of so-called foreign languages served the purposes of the formation of elite closures, in which only those in possession of the same "powers" (competence in a foreign or second language) had the

ability to claim membership in the group; however, at present the fact that English has become fundamental for the realization of global communication has altered this historical process. "Globalisation had given new legitimacy, and a new twist, to the long-lived idea that linguistic diversity is a problem, while linguistic uniformity is a desirable ideal" (Cameron, 2002: 67). Decisions on which language to consider investing in learning are no longer mainly based on ethnic identities, rather they are guided by global forces. While the spread of English has contributed to the disappearance of many indigenous languages, globalisation and various language policies have resulted in what Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) refers to as reductionism (the often customary practice among minority population of making a choice between the dominant and the home language "subtractively", i.e. at the expense of the home language, rather than "additively", i.e. in addition to the home language). Some languages enjoy the status of being of higher value; therefore, the need for teachers teaching those languages is greater, and people in command of those language enjoy certain privileges such as wider choice of employment or access to social positions and greater rewards in their communities (Fairclough, 2001). At the same time, those members of a society that enjoy these privileges also have access to the most highly valued varieties of English. Moreover, bilingualism is attractive in only those contexts where the languages correspond to the market competing for supremacy, and in those cases where the speakers' command of the languages is consistent with the monolingual varieties (Heller, 2002). It should be noted, however, that in spite of the guiding forces of globalisation, the wider public should be educated about the values of equitable distribution of the choice of language(s) to be learnt and on the importance of respect attributed to the "linguistic human rights of speakers of all languages" (Phillipson, 2001: 4).

Changes in educational provision - Market forces

International educational exchange is not a recent phenomenon. In the 1950s, the Commonwealth countries as a foreign policy initiative developed the so-called Colombo Plan, under which students from developing countries (mainly from the Asia-Pacific region and the Indian subcontinent) were offered scholarships to continue their studies

at Australian universities. This arrangement functioned as an aid program for twenty years. In the 1970s, however, it became politically unpopular, as the focus of foreign policy matters had changed. It was under the Hawke government in the mid 1980s, that two separate committees recommended that education as an export industry be established. Subsequently, an Overseas Student Policy was developed, and fullfee paying overseas students receiving education began to contibute to Australia's overall economic growth (Kendall, 2004). In addition, as a direct result of the market forces, there has been a growth of investment into technology in all educational sectors in order to remain at the forefront (Ikenberry, 2001)

Schools have been threatened by the principles of what Latham (2002) refers to as "competitive managerialism". There are more and more private providers (especially in the area of ELICOS), where course marketing, enrolment and staffing decisions are made by business managers whose job is to conduct market relevant operations and optimise income (Ikenberry, 2001).

In contrast, in the European context, Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin (2002: 27) refer to concerns raised by Iberian and Latin American associations and public universities (2002 Porto Alegre Declaration). Their signatories assert that:

> promoting international trade would lead to deregulation in the education sector with the removal of legal, political and fiscal quality controls, that national governments would abandon their social responsibilities, and that outcomes would include an increase in social inequalities, the weakening of ethical and cultural values, and a standardisation of education, thus negating the sovereignty of the people.

In order to maintain a democratic community it is of paramount importance that education be concerned with the enhancement of individuals. Therefore, decisions concerning education based on economic assumptions need to be reduced. Concerned citizens must only hope that the mission and purpose of educational institutions, their culture and reason for being will transcend the market (Ikerberry, 2001).

Language policies in Australia

The educational sector makes a number of decisions with regard to language teaching and learning in a variety of contexts. It also takes into consideration the needs of the mainstream student population along with those who may have a different linguistic and/or academic background. Policy may concentrate on mono- or multilingual objectives. Governments at the local and national levels, educational experts and business representatives play significant roles in the formulation of language policy (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997).

One of the effects of globalisation is the gradual disappearance of mono-cultural nation states and the increase of multicultural and multiethnic communities. The challenge policy makers face lies in the creation of such policies that take into consideration not only the maintenance of quality but also the various needs of these emerging communities in order to guarantee equity. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) identify six primary objectives in language in education planning. Firstly, the target population needs to be identified, that is, those who will receive and benefit from the instruction. Secondly, the teacher supply is to be assessed. This is especially important in the provision of languages other than English in the Australian context. Thirdly, curriculum guidelines need to be identified, and the syllabus needs to clarify constraints such as time and value systems. Fourthly, both the methodology and resources are to be selected, taking into consideration the length of the intended study period. Fifthly, financial resources need to be made available or generated so that the plan could be carried out. In addition, a relationship needs to be established between assessment and the objectives as well as between the methodology and assessment. Finally, an overall evaluation of the program needs to be carried out. This evaluation may be directed toward planning of both monolingual and multilingual objectives.

Moore (2002) offers a historical overview of English language policies in Australia since the 1950s. Before the 1970s assimilationist policies existed and people from non-English speaking backgrounds were urged to adopt English with extremely limited if non-existent resources or support. First language maintenance was discouraged and in

general, people were expected to find their niche in Australia in an undefined manner. By the mid 1970s and early 1980s several ESL policy documents which mainly related to pedagogical concerns relating to ESL needs surfaced. In addition, specialised ESL teaching and learning materials were produced by the Language Teaching Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Education. The National Policy on Languages was generated in 1987, in which ESL was first regarded as a language added to an already existing linguistic repertoire. At the height of multicultural policies in other non-educational areas, Australia's need to utilise the talent and resources of the multiculturol population was acknowledged. In turn, educational content was to he relevant to industry defined needs. By 1991 the National Policy of Languages was no longer viewed as politically effective; it was replaced by The Australian Language and Literacy Policy. Its goal was to "develop and maintain effective literacy in English ... to enable language learners to participate in Australian society" (Australian language and literacy policy, cited in Moore, 2002: 112).

In response to criticism generated by the dissatisfaction with literacy problems among the English (native) speaking Australian population and student need for assistance, the Literacy Policy set out guidelines dealing with the disparate issues within the same policy. This affected mainly the Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) sectors, since primary and secondary school ESL needs remained unchanged. Within the AMES, however, dissatisfaction about lack of consistency in curriculum design and teacher expertise was clearly felt and in turn resulted in short term contracting, regionalisation, and contracting out into the private sector. In the latter part of the 1990s, ESL school allocation remained unchanged, but was subsumed within the National Equity Programme. The focus had shifted to outcomes and benchmarks.

The benchmarks have been criticised by McKay (2001: 1) who differentiates between standards derived for pedagogic purposes and for administrative purposes, that is as teaching guidance and professional development, compared to accountability and curriculum direction, respectively. She states: "language standards provide a comprehensive description of what language learners know and are able to do in the target language at various levels of proficiency, at various grade levels, or both". She however considers the current benchmarks discriminatory in the K-12 context since

they do not reflect the reality of ESL development, "in spite of the students' ability to participate in curriculum tasks at a level which enables them to learn", and since the students' limited culture-specific knowledge may result in perceived non-achievement.

Unfortunately, compounding the issue of meeting ESL needs, the National Literacy Plan, introduced in 1996, may have the effect of returning learners to the pre-1970s marginalisation. Moore (2002: 112) refers to Coates' 1996 paper in which he supports the new system: "...because the Australian Language and Literacy Policy sets an agenda of English literacy for all Australians ... having separate frameworks for people from different backgrounds would have in fact been discriminatory". This in fact results in homogenisation and disregards the real needs of the community. In general, " policy initiatives are broad-reaching in scope and are designed eventually to bring about not only improved service delivery and equity for all clients but, more importantly, structural changes in Australian institutions" (Iredale, 1997: 656).

As a result of the changing nature of policy guidelines, Wren (1997) petitioned for the need of English language teaching professionals to take on educational leadership roles, to be interested and involved in issues relating to language policy, to influence institutional colleagues to be aware of wider socio-political agendas, to follow international developments in their field of language pedagogy, and to be informed of the influences of the forces of global economy. In addition, language teachers also need to make sure that their own courses are not only accessible but also non-discriminatory, and that inclusive and language-aware teaching becomes the practice by all mainstream educational professionals. There is a warning, however, addressed through the question in connection an argument Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) raises about the participants (both learners and educators), the method of learning, the optimal time, and frequency of involvement in the instruction of English (or a foreign language in general). This refers to not only the position of English but also the status of the participants involved in the teaching and learning processes and the recommendations commonly accepted with regard to language learning in general. In her view the existing belief and set of recommendations that instruction should be conducted by native speakers of the target language in a monolingual manner, and that instruction should begin at an early age and take advantage of a high frequency of exposure is not only a fallacy, but it also violates

the recommendations set out by the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) with regard to human rights and education. Such belief further contributes to linguistic homogenisation at the cost of the development of other languages.

Market forces, English language instruction and task

Language teaching professionals have a responsibility to create such curricula that meet the needs of the students and prepare them to function in the evolving society. Students, the future participants in the global society and the global workforce, need to be ready not only to contribute to the development of the future economy and culture, but also to be a factor in the way they shape their world view, attitudes, understanding, values, and life in general.

Communication, that is the effective use of a language, is essential in the global society. In order to enhance employability or to function effectively in the global society, people need to be 'equipped' with communication and literacy skills, and they also need to be competent at using the media, information and communication technologies. Courses in English for specific purposes prepare learners for the ability to satisfy specific tasks in the language. Wallace (2002), however, critiques such programmes and states that they generate language that is stripped of expressive and aesthetic characteristics and consequently make language a commodity Nevertheless, native and non-native speakers alike attend courses (such as courses in public speaking, in assertive speaking for native speakers, or courses of English for pilots, people for bank work or the service industry for non-native speakers) specifically designed for the performance of specific communicative purposes. The learners attending such courses intend to reach a particular standard to be able to fulfil the requirements of a workplace and thus to be more effective communicators in particular contexts. It could be stated that a task-based language syllabus also meets these criteria. The task-based syllabus is founded on the premise that learners following a task-based program focus on communicative tasks in order to resolve problems posed for them; consequently, it could be said that a communicative criterion is thus met.

There seems to be apparent contradiction in the currently held views that education in general and language education in particular is a marketable product. According to Robertson (1997: 5) "...the basic idea of *glocalization* (neologism, the amalgamation of the global and the local) is the simultaneous promotion of what is, in one sense, a standardized product, for particular markets, in particular flavours, and so on." Products in general need to specify marketable outcomes. Canagarajah (2002: 135) analyses the status of language teaching methods and questions whether some of the existing methods are marketed under different names in order to create a need for these "new products" and states that "methods are cultural and ideological constructs with politico-economic consequences", and they represent not only the forms of thinking, but also preferred learning styles of those that promote them.

English language instruction may become focussed on satisfying the needs of tasks such as those requiring consumer-oriented transactions (Littlejohn, 2000). The consumer driven curriculum may result in a random content, guided by market needs, which may not be compatible with educational goals. It may also imply that a social, cultural and ideological universal will be created by satisfying the rational, individualistic, Western outlook (Cameron, 2002), and for example, 'reticence' would be replaced by 'verbosity', and norms of Anglo-American interaction will be spread to all corners of the world.

A further question that needs to be explored is whether the curriculum should encourage learning about cultures different from the learners' own or whether the curriculum should foster those skills that facilitate or contribute to competence in expressing the learners' own culture. Kubota places doubt on the content on that language learning in general, and English language learning in particular leads to international understanding; rather, it "promotes a narrow view of world cultures" (Kubota, 2002:) He posits instead one of the benefits of learning a language is the fostering of national identity, especially owing to the learners' reluctance to conform to alternate world-views. In contrast, McKay (2002) sees the need for English language instruction to encompass culturally relevant materials in an environment that implements culturally consistent methods of teaching. For example, if the task-based

approach were the preferred method of instruction, teachers would have the liberty to alter or modify their teaching resources and methods according to locally acceptable forms.

Global market forces and the increasing role of English as a language of global communication have affected English language teaching and learning. They have resulted in "the dominance of the communicative approach within the field of English language teaching (at least in theory, if not in practice)" (Warschauer, 2000:1). Language schools relate in their curriculum goals to increasing skills of functional interaction, negotiation and collaboration. The teaching method reliant on these areas and associated with communication has, however, been criticised by many linguists. It has been labelled as a method that not only harms the intellectual development of students (Kubota, 2002), but also fosters informal, non-academic competence in the language (Wallace, 2002). Communication takes the form of nn informal speech act if it is in an unplanned form, and as such it is possible that it may lack sufficient structure, content and function to become fully effective In addition, since such communicative language classes do not offer learners skills that are necessary in further academic contexts, they are therefore restrictive and do not serve the purpose they are supposed to serve

Repercussions for students and teachers of English

The market forces that tend to govern education have implications for not only the wider population but also for the teachers' perceived performance and general working conditions as well as for students learning. The impact of teachers' in-class performance on student achievement is greater than any other variable, including family income, neighbourhood or class size (Ikenberry, 2001).

Mander and Hatton (1996) report on three private secondary schools in Australia that made the decision to employ aggressive marketing strategies in order to attract a student population from South-East Asia. They made this decision because changed economic circumstances had resulted in a drop in the number of enrolments. The

schools had had homogenous student population (mainly middle-class Australians of European descent). Through their marketing, they were able to secure the required number; however, neither the principals, nor the teachers were equipped to deal with the socially and culturally diverse clientele. ESL help was not provided, and students were expected to assimilate. Teachers were no longer teaching to "the top of the class" since the heterogeneous student population necessitated the teachers to adopt a different teaching strategy. The administrative sector of the schools grew to facilitate the advertising and marketing needs but there was no accompanying expansion of the teaching staff or facilities.

The quality of education needs to be maintained and it should not be allowed to be compromised by commercial pressures, as illustrated in the above instances. However, Latham (2002) sees another side to the forces of the market, that is, the "premium on the enhancement of quality in higher education, at the expense of equity". One of the potential outcomes of the processes of commercialisation is in the traditional sense the reduction (or restructuring) of the dominance of institutional policies as well as governance. The increasingly entrepreneurial nature of institutions dictates not only who will be involved in educational processes but also what will be taught and what kind of research has 'commercial relevance' or is worth doing (Stilwell, 2003). Currently all OECD countries follow stringent, but non-uniform accreditation systems in order to guarantee quality of educational services. Problems may arise from new educational markets, such as e-learning, which might challenge national quality assurance mechanisms and thereby call into question current accreditation systems (Larsen & VincentLancrin, 2002)

Indications for the future

At present, in many Australian English language teaching contexts, Latham (2001) refers to already existing problems with student enrolment numbers inasmuch as they have reached capacity despite the rise in both entry standards and fees. Some English language providers are at physical capacity, which means that further growth is questionable and that demand cannot be met. Therefore, Latham (2001) calls for

integrated effort by the government, communities and the private sector toward the creation of additional resources. Moreover, Ramsay (2002) contends that if Australia is to maintain its status, it needs to increase its resources, or its market share will be diminished by competition from non-English speaking countries, which are in the process of adopting English as the language of instruction. In addition, new delivery options of education should be explored (such as off-shore campuses and e-learning) in order to not only maintain the status quo but also continue growth, meet the demand, and broaden the horizons.

Time will tell whether or not English will maintain its current position as the preferred language of international communication and consequently the language that increasing numbers of students choose to study and whether the market will be sustained. Language teaching professionals must, in the meantime, continue to be involved in issues relating to language policy, to influence institutional colleagues to be aware of wider socio-political agendas, to take on educational leadership roles, to follow international developments in their field of language pedagogy, and to be informed of the influences of the forces of global economy

Task-based language learning

The use of a task-based language syllabus is a method conceptualised and constructed by a number of applied linguists. It belongs to what Kumaravadivelu (2003 a: 25) classifies under learning-centred methods. Accordingly, as opposed to the method in which emphasis is placed on linguistic form and form-focused exercises in an additive and linear manner (a didactic approach), this method focuses on language use and learner needs through meaning-focused activities or tasks. Such tasks are most often seen as open-ended (the outcome of the task is not predetermined but open to many possible solutions), and guide learners through an inductive process of learning.

Tasks have been defined and redefined by a number of scholars. Tasks may denote any communicative act that involves negotiation of meaning (Long and Crookes, 1992), including within this a strict adherence to a series of patterns involving the negotiation

of meaning with the ultimate aim of selecting, sorting through, and resolving a given situation or problem. Tasks may also be viewed as events rather than prearranged steps toward fixed outcomes (Courtney, 1995: 94), since they are "dynamic constructs, and outcomes may always be expected to differ from those intended". Prabhu (1987: 24) looks at tasks as activities in which learners "arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought". It is his view too that tasks are a means by which teachers' control over that process is maintained. He further states that tasks are meaning focused activities "in which learners are occupied with understanding, extending, or conveying meaning, and cope with language forms as demanded by that process" (Prabhu, 1987: 27). Within the task learners do not focus their attention on form intentionally but incidentally through their own perception, expression and organisation of meaning. Nunan (1989: 10) considers a task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form". He further states that "a task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right". Skehan (1996: 38) defines a task as "an activity in which meaning is primary, there is some sort of relationship to the real world, task completion has some priority, and the assessment of task performance as in terms of task outcome". Kumaravadivelu (1994: 29) includes in his short definition the issue of language competence by stating that the task-based language learning is a learner-centred method that provides "opportunities for learners to participate in open-ended meaningful interaction through learning tasks, assuming that a preoccupation with meaning will ultimately lead to L2 mastery". What makes defining task more challenging is the fact that there seems to be a lack of agreement whether one can regard the task-based syllabus as a syllabus in the conventional sense of the word, or whether it should be considered a teaching method. It is also debatable whether tasks should be considered from the view of being able to relate to real-world needs. If one considers task selection being guided by the teacher's understanding of the pedagogic needs of the learners, tasks will be chosen and allocated as classwork as indicated by those needs rather than necessarily fitting a criterion of real task.

Task-based language learning has been much acclaimed but also criticised for a number of reasons. Firstly from the positive point of view, it offers a pedagogical shift

from a cognitivist view of learning to a constructivist one which places emphasis on contextual, communicative, collaborative, interactive language development. Secondly, it has been acknowledged that communication helps develop communicative competence, or participation in a particular "shared" genre needed for mutual understanding in the global society (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). Pennycook (2000) distinguishes between social relationships of the language classrooms (democracy, autonomy vs. power) and the outside world. Wallace (2002), on the other hand, criticises the task-based language syllabus by questioning the limited relevance of informal spoken interaction. Since human communication is arbitrary, she emphasises the need for the development of literate English, which the task-based programme does not cater for, and results only in the "conversationalisation of institutional discourse". Furthermore, she asserts that there is a need to teach "the kind of language which is not for immediate use, not to be taken out into the streets and the clubs, but which can serve longer-term needs". Block (2002) appears to agree with this point by further adding that tasks offered as models are mostly referential in nature and therefore limit the language acquisition process. He also sees the task-based language syllabus as a potential new global language teaching method, which according to Canagarajah (2002) is not the preferred method of learning in some communities and consequently "the classroom becomes a site of cultural struggle over preferred modes of learning and teaching" (Pennycook, 2000). Should these arguments imply that the communicative and/or task-based view of language teaching has been erroneously presented as meeting the needs of the market?

Two disparate issues emerge in connection with negotiation processes as related to task-based language learning. Firstly, the question that surfaces with such a dilemma is why the task-based syllabus is usually referred to as using spoken interaction as its focus. Although a task can be loosely defined as a problem that needs to be solved, the process involved in the solution can be through any means of the language, spoken or written, or both. Secondly, another issue in connection with the task-based syllabus is the opportunity given to learners to participate in the negotiation through not only the learning strategies they employ, but also the context of their learning experiences. Thereby the learners become more reflective and "critically conscious" (Canagarajah, 2002) and the classrooms more democratic. These result in student autonomy by

validating "their own knowledge and jointly constructing and understanding of the social conditions that shape individual experiences" (Wong, 2000), and also in a changed role of the teacher. The teacher's role, then, is to adapt the curriculum to the needs of the students, and to draw on the students' knowledge and experience.

Resources

Language teaching has also become increasingly standardised as an effect of globalisation. Students of unlike cultures rely on the use of the same course-books such as the *Headway* and *Cutting Edge* series. Hui (2002:37) refers to the potential problems associated with loss of cultural identity, and states: "culture specific values and beliefs may clash with values and beliefs espoused by the language learner's native culture and, when assimilated unconsciously, may threaten cultural identity and integrity and produce consequences of which the native culture does not approve". Feng and Byram (2002:64), however, identify three factors that govern the representation of cultures, including the learners' and the target culture: "the (text) writers' awareness and understanding of cultural studies teaching in foreign language education, their educational philosophy, and the political needs for education". Approaching language from the intercultural perspective, they propose that authentic materials be created not only by native speakers of the language, but also by those speakers who are representatives of the learners' culture and by those who use the language as *lingua franca*, since it is their belief that through such texts students learn to understand the "shared linguistic and rhetorical conventions (linguistic and pragmatic) of the target language". This is, however, unlikely to occur in light of the fact that most contexts rely on what Gray (2002) calls "the phenomenon of the global coursebook". Coursebooks are economic commodities and are marketed at times aggressively, with or without the pedagogic or ethical implications they transmit or carry. In addition, coursebooks are written mainly for the global English as a Foreign Language (EFL) market, yet they are used, for example in the Australian ESL context as well.

In the ESL context students normally have access to both authentic texts and texts developed specifically for the ESL classrooms. When authentic texts are used, careful

selection, grading and alteration is necessary to meet pedagogic needs. Furthermore, texts need to be in a culturally appropriate context. When texts are specifically developed for the EFL/ESL classrooms, such as textbooks or specific coursebooks, they come packaged so that they comprise teaching objectives, instructional techniques, teaching steps, even time allocation, together with methods for training the four language skills. However, most of the currently used textbooks, despite chapter headings to the contrary, organise lessons on the basis of linguistic structures and not around topics that would form the source of meaningful interaction. The fundamental argument for communicative, task-based syllabi stems from the idea that language is acquired through the negotiation of meaning in meaningful contexts, which in turn leads not only to fluency but also to grammatical learning. Therefore, the textbooks offer a different methodological framework, which means that they should be followed only in a modified form. Such partial, or modified use of texts may be confusing to the students. These same textbooks, however, function for the maintenance of predictability, accountability and control of the classroom context (Littlejohn, 2000), which corresponds to the guiding forces generated by globalisation (i.e. especially in the attempt at standardising), but is in direct opposition with the idea of curriculum generated by internal syllabuses of the learners.

Hu (2002: 32) reports on the high premium that is placed on the development of communicative competence in China, and states: "English proficiency has accrued superior national, social and economic prestige in China over the last two decades" He, however, calls for textbook writers to incorporate not only culturally appropriate texts but also learner-centred specific materials that are theme based and are conducive to and productive of genuine task-based learning.

Conclusion

Policy makers in education and educators do not have the power to stop or even to limit the scope of the forces that globalisation brings with it to all facets of their professional lives. However, in the future, these forces of globalisation should help to inform positions educational authorities take in relation to various aspects of

educational matters without being dominated by them. Moreover, globalisation should not determine educational policies.

Issues outlined in this paper focussed on the forces of globalisation as related to education (in particular to English as a second or foreign language education), especially the teaching of English as a language of the emerging global communities. The characteristics of English language education, of the task-based language syllabus, and of communicative interactions in the micro-contexts of the classroom give rise to the need for research in this area, a need which has prompted the following study.

Part II

Task in the global English teaching context

The study aims to report on global language teaching methodologies. It is assumed that task-based language learning is the focus of interest of researchers in the field of applied linguistics; however, it is hypothesized that it is not as widely used in actual day-to-day teaching in language teaching centres at least in its intended sense of activating students to immerse themselves in the language and learn the language through usage. Furthermore, it is suggested that in the course of instruction, only a small number of textbooks are used, most of which are not task-based, but rather focus on the development of grammatical accuracy of the learners.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the world wide status of the task-based syllabus?

2. Do language teaching centres use similar / different teaching methodologies in their day-to-day instruction of the language?

3. Do language teaching centres use similar / different resources in their instruction of the language?

Method

Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire. One hundred and twenty-five English language centres, which were randomly selected by the researcher from Internet sites, were sent questionnaires via e-mail with the request for completion. Based on the information available through Internet websites, the researcher understood that these language centres were private educational centres which provide among other courses English language programs for school aged and adult populations. A careful selection of regions and countries was made so as to ensure that a wide range of teaching practices would be considered. Sixteen questionnaires were sent to North American ESL colleges (ten to the United States of America and six to Canada), four to South America (one questionnaire each to Mexico, Argentina, Peru and Brazil), seven to Africa (one to Egypt, and six to the Republic of South Africa), eight to Australia (all states except the Northern Territory), four to Oceania (all to New Zealand), forty to Europe (nine to the United Kingdom, five to Ireland and Germany, three to France, two each to Italy, Russia, the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic, and one each to Greece, Spain, Austria, Belgium, Slovakia, Hungary, Sweden and Estonia), six to the Middle East (three to Oman, and one each to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates), and forty to Asia (nine to China, five each to Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and Thailand, three to Turkey, two each to Malaysia and Vietnam, and one each to Indonesia, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan and Armenia). Forty-eight of these questionnaires were, therefore, sent to countries in which English instruction is considered ESL, while seventy-seven to countries in which English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). This represents 38.5% (ESL) and 61.6% (EFL) as recipients of the questionnaire. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the regions:

Table 1.1: Regions

	Number of questionnaires	Per cent of questionnaires	ESL	EFL
North America	16	13%	16	0
South America	4	3%	0	4
Africa	7	5.5%	6	1
Australia/New Zealand	12	9.5%	12	0
Europe	40	32%	14	26
Middle East	6	5%	0	6
Asia	40	32%	0	40
TOTAL	125	100	48	77

The questionnaire requested that it be completed by either a teacher, an academic coordinator, or a director of studies. The participants were required to respond to fifteen questions (see Appendix I), which relate to the syllabus, teaching methodologies and resources. Ten of the fifteen questions involved only a selection from given choices, whereas five (relating to teachers' beliefs, experiences, and difficulties) asked for an explanation. One question required selection of agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale.

Analysis

Participants

During the months of July and August one hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were e-mailed to English language course providers worldwide. It should be noted that the researcher relied on the information and addresses available through commercial web-sites; consequently, she had limited opportunities to verify the accuracy of the information available through this channel. Of the one hundred and twenty-five questionnaires, eighteen replies were received. This represents 14.4% of the total number of questionnaires sent. The replies came from all the major regions, namely from North and South America (one reply each from the United States of America and Brazil), Africa (three replies, two from the Republic of South Africa, and one from Egypt), Australia (three replies), Oceania (two replies from New Zealand), Europe (two replies from Italy, and one each from Ireland, Germany and Russia), the Middle East (one reply from Oman), and Asia (one reply each from China and Korea). Nine of the participants represent ESL contexts (50%) and nine EFL contexts (50%), making possible a reasonable balance in point of view. Table 1.2 summarises the replies according to countries:

Table 1.2: Countries

	Number of questionnaires received	ESL	EFL
United States of America	1	1	0
Brazil	1	0	1
Republic of South Africa	2	2	0
Egypt	1	0	1
Australia	3	3	0
New Zealand	2	2	0
Italy	2	0	2
Ireland	1	1	0
Germany	1	0	1
Russia	1	0	1
Oman	1	0	1
China	1	0	1
Korea	1	0	1
TOTAL	18	9	9

Age of students

The students receiving instruction in these contexts are between the ages of 5 and above 60. In the ESL contexts, the reported age of the students ranges between 16-30. The students are both younger, starting from the age of 5, and older, above 30 in EFL contexts.

Teaching methods and syllabi

Syllabus types

The responses were analysed and described in relation to the regional differences, the emerging dominant language teaching methodology, the resources used, and the problems identified by the participants. All except three centres indicated that their teaching was based on a set (institutional) syllabus. Those that did not follow a set syllabus stated that their syllabus was guided by specific objectives, and they were free to design their own syllabi as long as the objectives stated in the course documents were met. Furthermore, seven out of eighteen (38.8%) participants indicated that their syllabi were guided by specific teaching and learning objectives, nine of the eighteen (50%) that decisions on what to include in their syllabi were based on both objectives and learners' needs, and only two of the participants (11%) that their syllabi decisions were based on learners' needs. This was further clarified by the comment that decisions on syllabus content were guided by learners' needs only on such occasions when courses were organised for specific companies or institutions, in which case the courses were "tailor made" to meet such needs.

To the question about the type of syllabus followed, the replies were diverse. The following two tables (Table 1.3 and Table 1.4) provide a summary.

Table 1.3: Syllabus types

	Number of responses	Per cent of responses	Per cent of respondents*
Task based	6	17.6	33
Grammar based	5	14.7	28
Communicative	14	41.1	78
Eclectic	9	26.4	50
TOTAL	34	100	189

* N = 18 (Learning Centres)

Table 1.4: Task-based syllabus

	Number of responses	Per cent of responses
Task-based	0	0
Task-based, communicative and eclectic	2	5.8
Task and grammar-based	1	2.9
Task-based and communicative	2	5.8
Task and grammar-based, communicative and eclectic	1	2.9
TOTAL	6	17.4

Of the four categories given in the questionnaire, that is task based, grammar based, communicative and eclectic syllabi, four of the participants identified the communicative (one from Italy, two from South Africa, and one from New Zealand) and two the eclectic syllabus types (from the United States, and Italy). The rest of the participants elected to indicate that their syllabi did not belong to one single category and instead indicated all or two or three categories as their syllabus type. Among the answers given, three participants indicated that the syllabus they followed was both communicative and eclectic (from Ireland, China, and Egypt); one indicated that it was grammar-based, communicative and eclectic (from Germany); two specified that it was task-based, communicative and eclectic (from Australia and Brazil); one indicated that it was task and grammar-based (from Russia); two referred to their syllabus as task-based and communicative (from Oman and New Zealand); one indicated that it was grammar based and communicative (from Australia); one specified that the syllabus was task and grammar-based, communicative and eclectic (from Australia); and one referred to their syllabus as grammar-based and functional notional (from Korea).

The following chart gives an overview of the combined results in which only the four categories are taken into consideration.

Figure 1.1
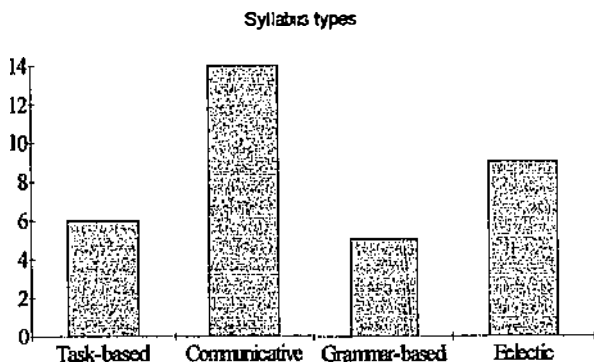
Syllabus types

If a response indicates one syllabus type or a combination of a number of syllabi, and each of the four syllabi is recorded a total of thirty-four responses is accounted for. Out of these responses only six referred directly to the task-based syllabus, representing 17.6% of all the replies. A further fourteen (41.1%) responded that their syllabus was communicative. Five indicated that they followed a grammar-based syllabus, amounting to 14.7%. Finally, nine of the participants referred to their syllabus as eclectic, representing 26.4% of all the replies.

Teaching Methods

Statements about the teaching methods ranged from the direct method, the PPP method, and communicative method. A majority, represented by 61.1% replied that their teaching method covered presentation, practice, production. Additionally the PPP method received support from eight of the participants who indicated that their method was a mixture of PPP and task-based methods. One participant from Asia clarified this with the comment that in class most of the teaching was activity driven and involved the completion of tasks. One of the participants from the Asian context indicated that since most of the teachers are CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults)

or Trinity Certificate holders, they use the communicative method which derives from their training. However, only two of the participants (from the United States and Italy) indicated that their teaching method was communicative. The participant from Germany was the only one to designate the use of the grammar-translation method; however, it should be noted that the grammar-translation method was indicated in conjunction with the communicative and PPP methods by this participant.

Furthermore, twelve of the seventeen (70.5%) respondents mentioned that they used the same methods at all levels, while the other five (29.4%) explained that they relied on competencies rather than methods, that they used a mixture of methods which were all mainly communicative, that they drew on the same methods but different teaching techniques and styles, and that they mainly used PPP. One participant from China provided a more detailed description of the teaching practice and stated that in the language school a grammar-based and communicative method was found appropriate for students at the beginners' stage, and a communicative method was used as students moved toward the advanced stage of instruction.

Methodological Options

With regard to the methodological options which were available to teachers to deal with individual differences of the learners the comments were diverse. The informant from Korea indicated that methodological options depended on the knowledge and experience of the teachers and therefore no institutional guidelines were available. One respondent from Italy stated that since the language school was obliged to follow standards set for each language level in terms of competencies (in line with the Council of Europe framework), all learners in the groups regardless of their particular learning styles had to effectively be able to fulfil those requirements at the end of their courses. He added that the basic premise underpinning all learning and teaching activities at the school was that learning took place in a conducive, motivating and encouraging environment. Other informants (from Italy, South Africa, Oman and New Zealand) referred to the availability of options such as greater emphasis on listening comprehension (lecture type presentation, audio or video tapes), on role plays, grammar

drills, games, external activities such as excursions, the use of authentic materials, the library, self study resource centres, internet access, and elective options.

A New Zealand educationalist stated that his/her language school found cultural training for the teachers very useful. Such cultural training results in teachers adopting a methodological option that corresponds to the expectations of the majority of the learners at the beginning of their courses. Thus new students to the centre are increasingly able to adapt to the mainstream teaching method in use throughout the course (PPP and communicative).

A more pragmatic approach to issues relating to the methodologies, which however still falls short of task-based principles, was offered by the following language schools. One participant from China, for example, saw the solution to problems associated with individual differences of the learners in grouping learners according to their levels. Respondents from both Brazil and Australia stated that teachers and speakers of languages other than English used such first languages as Portuguese and Chinese respectively with weaker students in the classrooms for the purposes of explanations. A rather different approach was referred to by a participant from New Zealand who indicated that setting different activities within the classroom, pairing students with complementary strengths and weaknesses assisted in meeting the needs of individual learners. Despite the positive nature of many of these comments, they fail to reflect an adequate awareness of what is implied by task-based teaching.

Learning Objectives

A high premium was shown to be placed on communicative competence in all the regions since 88.2% of the participants indicated that developing communicative competence was very important and another 11.7% that it was important. One Italian educationalist commented on the need of the learners for communicative competence as an antidote to the formal styles generated by the Italian public schools' insistence on focussing on grammar and written skills. In this person's view learners therefore lack confidence and practice in speaking the language. One respondent from the Middle East felt that generalising the relevance of specific learning objectives was

inappropriate, since the various courses stress the importance of different objectives. Another participant (from Asia) stated that the majority of their students take General English courses with the intention of sitting for a First Certificate in English (FCE) exam, and thus their learning objectives include all macro skills and grammatical competence. Ten of the participants (58.8%) indicated that developing students' grammatical competence was very important, four (23.5%) that it was important, while only two (11.7%) that it was neither important nor unimportant, and one (5.8%) that it was unimportant.

It should be noted that developing oral fluency and writing skills was not rated as important by European centres as by centres in other contexts. For example, the participant from Ireland indicated strong disagreement (on a Likert scale) with the statement that developing writing skills was one of the learning objectives of the students as stated in the course documentation.

With regard to language production, grammatical instruction and holistic learning the following replies were received: it was indicated that on average during the day-to-day lessons, between 35 and 50% of the lessons was devoted to spoken or written language production. Instruction of grammar was even more emphasized, however, with all reporting that their individual lessons were based on specific grammatical concepts. In addition, half of the participants believed in holistic language learning (50%), five did not (27.7%), and four (22.2%) were not sure about the question.

Assessment

Assessment is part of every educational process, and it is also present in all centres participating in this study. The respondents all indicated that their centres used written and oral tests, reading and listening comprehension tests and grammar tests as part of their normal assessment instruments. In addition to these, some centres added oral presentations and written compositions. The instruments singled out as not being used were oral tests (in the Chinese and Egyptian contexts), listening comprehension tests (in both the South African contexts and in one Australian context) written and reading

comprehension tests (in the Irish context), and reading comprehension at lower levels of learners (in the Korean context).

Problems

To the question whether teachers experienced any problems relating to the teaching methodology used the following replies were given. Teachers experience problems with adult learners at lower levels who demand instruction and explanation in their own language (in the Korean context), while an Italian participant referred to the problem relating to North American teachers and their reluctance to use European course books. This reluctance was explained as stemming from these teachers' communicative approach to teaching the language and the failure of the given materials to organise teaching units in a communicative manner. In addition, an Australian stated that it was uniformly the case that teachers taught what they (the teachers) were good at (for example skills), at the expense of what they were not as good at (for example teaching new vocabulary items).

The remaining participants, accounting for 83.3% of all replies, indicated that they had no problems associated with the teaching methodology used.

Resources

According to this survey, the English language teaching centres use the following textbooks: Headway series (reported by eight language schools), Cutting Edge series (by eight language schools), Matters (by two schools), Inside Out (by one school), Murphy's Grammar series (by one school), and exam preparation texts (by one school). Six of the participants reported that they did not use any set textbooks, while one reported that the language school was unable to disclose the information as to which texts their syllabus relied on.

Discussion

It was hypothesised that communicative or eclectic teaching as methodologies, and grammatical competence and oral and written fluency as learning objectives would be identified. Among the methodologies the communicative language learning method was identified by most of the participants. Although the term task has entered the discourse of language learning and teaching, in none of the contexts is the task-based syllabus actually followed. It appears that the term is invariably used to refer to different types of communicative activities that are organised in the language classrooms. It does not, however, refer to the task-based teaching methodology. To illustrate the existing confusion, one participant stated that learners were frequently involved in completing tasks; however, he further commented that he was unsure whether he was referring to the term task correctly, or whether the researcher meant 'something else' by the term. Kumaravadivelu (2003 a:28) expressed his dissatisfaction with methods by stating that "the disjunction between method as conceptualised by theorists and method as conducted by teachers is the direct consequence of the inherent limitations of the concept of method itself". Such dissatisfaction is at the heart of the increasing popularity of eclecticism. Therefore, it is not surprising that the second most frequently referred to type of syllabus was eclectic. By calling a teaching method or syllabus type eclectic, teachers avoid commitment to any current methodology. Rather than relying on a teaching methodology, it is important to focus on the learners' needs and the provision of opportunities to meet those needs. Kumaravadivelu (2003a:10, 14) considers teaching a "context-sensitive action, grounded in intellectual thought", and he calls for teachers to be reflective practitioners who emphasise creativity. He further states that it is the role of the teachers not only to maximise learning opportunities but also to transform life in and outside the classroom.

As indicated by the survey, some teachers are compelled to teach within the constraints of their institutional guidelines. It is therefore not surprising to find that specific frameworks (such as those arranged by the Council of Europe, for example) limit the availability of teaching methods and consequently learning options available. Teachers with their classes, however, can and do determine their classroom procedures

such as the pace of the work, the selection of activities and the time of evaluation of on-going learning.

The amount of time students spend in producing the language rather than listening to the teacher is an indication of whether or not processes such as those involved in task-based learning are being followed. In other words, the use of a task-based approach would infer that students would spend more time producing the language than listening to it from the teachers. This issue was canvassed in the questionnaire, and the study found that close to half of class time was devoted to spoken or written language production. This finding, however, is contradictory, especially in light of the fact that the most widely used teaching methodology is either eclectic or following the PPP model. With regard to the time devoted to actual communicative activities (be they referred to as tasks or activities), Willis (1996:18) considers the constraint of time in teacher-led classrooms, in which student - teacher interaction normally follows a teacher-led question-answer-feedback pattern. She refers to the limited opportunities learners find in such contexts to "manage their own conversations, exercise discourse skills, or experiment with, and put to meaningful use whatever target language they can recall". In a task-based learning environment, on the other hand, the teacher domination is reduced, and thus learners are able to explore the language with lessened time constraints.

The use of the most commonly mentioned method of PPP would appear to cast doubt on the assertion that it is normal practice to devote half of class time to language production. The PPP model in itself involves learners in listening to the usage, meaning, and form of a specific grammatical concept, followed by form-focussed exercises, question and answer sessions or dialogues and eventually language production in a more liberal, open-ended manner. Even in ideal situations, this would result in no more than one third of the lesson time devoted to actual language production.

Walsh (2002) also addressed the issue of the amount of teachers' talking time in the classroom, and its effect on the learners; more specifically, the question of whether through their talk teachers create or reduce opportunities for learning. The researcher

stated that since the approach to this study was strictly empirical, he did not attempt to classify or categorize his data. However, he tried to provide explanations for the kinds of interactions he found in the data, and explain them in terms of their effect on often reduced learning opportunities. Teacher questions were analysed by Cundale (2001) where both open and referential questions were studied in terms of the opportunities to use the target language in meaningful context. Therefore, it was concluded that open and referential questions need to be used more frequently in communicative language classrooms.

The teaching of vocabulary is another important issue in relation to task-based approaches. In communicative classrooms, teachers provide learners with a lexically rich environment, where it is expected that learners acquire vocabulary through the context in which meaning of the words can be inferred. In addition, teachers also simplify their own language to match their students' language / lexical abilities. Meara, Lightbown and Halter (1997) relied on word counts of (10 samples of 30 minutes of class time) transcripts of communicative language classrooms in their study in order to find out how many new words learners are exposed to during a normal class period, if these words are repeated over time, and if the "richness" of the lexical items are affected by the level of students, their background, or their type of class. Through a process of lemmatisation, words were placed into categories and new words were allocated a separate category. Proportions of the total word numbers and the mean number of the different categories were analysed. The latter study failed to find conclusive evidence that classrooms were rich lexical environments. It is possible to hypothesize that the study failed to find conclusive evidence since the classrooms relied heavily on teacher input even in a communicative situation.

As part of the present study, information was sought about the types of textbooks being used because often texts replace syllabus guidelines. It was found that the resources language schools rely on are mostly coursebooks generated and produced for the global market. These books are fiercely marketed as they have high commercial value It is understandable that since the *Headway, Cutting Edge* and *Matters* series are published by the largest publishing companies, these coursebooks were the most widely used. These books are modern in their presentation of content, they rely on up to date

and popular topics. It is often the case that they endorse and promote methodology, in particular the PPP method. In spite of the fact that for example the *Cutting Edge* series attempts to incorporate task-based elements, it is still a book that encourages a communicative rather than task-based teaching. Bax (2003: 280) sees an apparent agreement between applied linguistic research discourse and the common view in the profession that communicative language teaching is the preferred model of teaching. He further states that such a view is mainly owing to the coursebooks that most language teaching contexts rely on.

Limitations

Difficulties have arisen about the issue of generalising from the study because too few questionnaires were received in reply to the request. As it was originally envisaged that responses may not exceed twenty language centres, efforts were made to ensure the scope of the study was adequate. Initially, it was feared that if the replies would either be from the same region, or would offer similar approaches to English language instruction, the study could suffer from one-sidedness. This, however, was not the case. Although the participants in this study represent various regions, in both ESL and EFL contexts, they offer similar answers. Similarity in the answers has come not from the fact that the same regions are represented but from the global nature of English language methodology and coursebook marketing.

Another limitation of the study stems from the difficulty of generalising. Owing to the small number of participants, generalizations are not appropriate.

The research is also limited by the perceived lack of motivation on the part of some participants who in certain cases did not provide answers to all questions.

Such limitations are normal in most surveys and it is nonetheless suggested that the survey has produced valuable insights concerning the status of task-based learning in the globalised context.

Conclusion

In relation to the research questions it could be concluded from the survey results that the task-based syllabus is not as widely implemented in language teaching contexts as the pure volume related to task-based language learning in applied linguistic research would suggest. Teachers and administrators occasionally use the term 'task', however, they acknowledge that they do not refer to the term in the same way as applied linguists. They refer to communicative activities which normally follow teacher-fronted instruction on grammatical concepts. They use similar teaching methodologies which in general could be characterised as eclectic, although within the framework of generating communication. No reference was, however, made to an examination conducted in order to understand the student needs, an essential component of a task-based syllabus design.

In the centres surveyed, the guiding principle behind the choice of methodology and assessment was the coursebook. It could be concluded that unless greater emphasis is placed on the production and marketing of teaching resources in the form of a book that is organised according to the task-based approach to language learning, there is not going to be any variation of the existing teaching practices in favour of task-based learning. Unless an educational institution requires the teacher to bring into the classroom a specific textbook, the selection of resources should also be carefully considered. Such a selection should include texts that not only assist in meeting the desired objectives but ones that are culturally appropriate to both the learners and the teachers.

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CHAPTER III

ESL ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES, CURRICULUM AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA

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ESL ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES, CURRICULUM AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN SELECT AUSTRALIAN CONTEXTS

Introduction

This chapter is written with the aim to investigate curriculum guidelines that govern English language courses offered to non-English speakers (especially students intending to continue their studies at primary, secondary, undergraduate and post graduate level) at Australian schools and colleges of English.

Firstly, the investigation focuses on a comparison of curriculum guidelines and other regulatory measures governing English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for primary and secondary preparatory purposes, and the Adult Migrant Education Programs (AMEP).

Secondly, an examination of colleges and universities offering English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) is undertaken revealing the limited extent of regulation, or rather the absence of curriculum guidelines. While ELICOS colleges go through processes of accreditation, the principles governing accreditation requirements rely on the need of n program (an outline of teaching units, assessment tasks, examinations, reporting structures as well as adequate resources) from the institution under scrutiny. There is no prescribed methodological framework of teaching strategies, content or sequence of instruction. In other words, limited guidelines exist on "what", but no indication is given as to "how".

Secondary and post-secondary ESL Programs

In referring to English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in Western Australia, several contexts should be considered. Firstly, the intensive context, where the focus of the instruction is the language, its structure, form and vocabulary, in oral and written form. ESL is also taught in an extended intensive form, that is, in various subject specific contexts. Students are taught the language required for the subject areas of for example Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. This type of teaching might be considered a variety of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where spoken and written English is approached through various genres, which the students may use in the course of their further academic studies.

In the government sector, Intensive English Centres (IEC) are a special part of the secondary school which cater for the needs of new arrivals in Australia whose English is not advanced enough to successfully participate in mainstream classes. The students are placed into classes depending on the length of schooling and/or English language study in their countries of origin and study English for either one academic year or two (Education Department of Western Australia, 2003). The students, who have had limited schooling in their respective countries, normally stay in the IEC for up to two years and participate in the Limited Schooling Program, as they develop basic literacy skills and conceptual knowledge in addition to learning the language. The majority of students, however, enter a one-year program, which is an adapted version of the primary or secondary school curriculum, divided into two six-month semesters - a beginners' six months and an advanced six months. In the beginner's stage, the program concentrates on speaking, understanding, reading and writing English during the English and other subject-based lessons. In the advanced stage, in their English lessons for example, the students have a more literary approach to their studies, that is, the students read short stories and abridged novels, and this forms the basis of their language activities. Thus, their oral discussions, written activities, comprehension and vocabulary development come from reading literature as well as the core subject areas. Through this they also develop the language for forming opinions, summarising, essay writing and developing research

and study skills. In addition to English, both groups of students are taught the language required for the subject areas of Mathematics, Science and Society and Environment. During their time in the IEC, the students study the language used in the courses of these subjects. The students also learn two practical subjects (Home Economics, Manual Arts, Computing or Art) and have Physical Education lessons every week (Education Department of Western Australia, 2003).

Secondly, ESL can be considered in the context of mainstream teaching. On completion of their intensive language courses, students are placed into mainstream primary or secondary school classes according to their age and educational progress. They normally receive targeted ESL support, which according to curriculum guidelines in Victoria (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2004), may take the form of parallel or withdrawal classes, ESL electives, and/or team or support teaching by specialist ESL teachers who work collaboratively with mainstream teachers. Students follow a special ESL curriculum which focuses on developing the students' a) oral and written communicative skills, b) socio-cultural skills, c) cultural awareness, and d) study skills. Here, the instruction takes a dual function; it is primarily considered in its role to assist both the (mainstream) teacher and the student at the task at hand, and secondly, the (ESL) teacher's role is in disseminating strategies that are applicable for English across the curriculum. In the latter case, ESL instruction is offered in a wide range of contexts. The primary aim of the K - 12 courses is to develop necessary skills and understanding of the language in order to increase the students' successful participation in various school settings. In this context there are guidelines as to recommended strategies applicable to ESL classroom teaching, but they fail to grapple with the central issues of curriculum design and development such as linguistic and cognitive demands of the subject areas and meeting the needs of their student clientele from a wide ranging backgrounds.

Although in general the state governments are responsible for school education, special funds are allocated by the federal government to provide ESL programs for newly arrived immigrants. In addition, these funds also cover special support needs to schools that have students of Non-English-Speaking-Background (NESB) (Iredale, 1997).

The non-government education sector, the Catholic as well as the Independent school systems, also enrols NESB students. The students in these contexts, however, are either Australian residents or overseas fee-paying students who are in Australia on student visas for high school education. The provision of ESL assistance varies between institutions. For example, the Catholic system offers programs for NESB students that are similar to the IECs, while the Independent sector, which mainly operates with a more homogenous student population, if the need arises, may provide ESL assistance but in a context where the students are normally fully integrated into mainstream classes.

Both the government and non-government sectors now have the opportunity to enrol overseas fee-paying students. The enrolment of fee-paying students offers an income generating potential for both contexts, but this is a recent modification in the government sector (only applicable in Western Australian contexts since 2001). Both sectors need to rely on existing funding resources for ESL in order to fulfil their responsibilities of creating an environment where the heterogeneity of the population is conducive to language learning. It should be kept in mind, however, that no additional funds are allocated by the state or federal government for the educational services provided to fee-paying overseas secondary school students because the schools often benefit from the fees. It is, however, the responsibility of the schools to determine how the income generated this way should be spent. In the long run, this may become detrimental to the status of ESL in schools owing to possible government cutbacks in second language funding.

English language instruction is also offered to adults in the government and non-government sectors. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) under the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) caters for the adult migrant population especially those whose language is other than English. These programs provide 510 hours of free instruction in English to new arrivals. Learners learn the language required both to function in general in a society whose medium of communication is English, and specifically, in the workplace.

In the private sector, students may choose from short courses offered by private specialist colleges or government supported institutional programs. Although such institutions set no entry requirements, eligibility is restricted over the age of 35 (Kendall, 2004). The ELICOS language centres, private educational providers for fee-paying overseas students, offer a number of different courses to students. Based on performance in an entry test, students are placed in one of the intensive courses: General English courses (beginners to advanced), English courses for Academic Purposes (EAP), Secondary Preparation courses (elementary to advanced), English as preparation for specific testing or examination purposes such as offered by the First Certificate in English (FCE) courses, and university preparatory courses for students intending to continue their studies at undergraduate or post-graduate levels. These are intensive courses in which students receive on average 25 hours of instruction a week (NEAS Australia, 2002: 39). The General English courses usually attract students intending either to combine their holiday or overseas experience with a constructive period of time in the language classroom, or to continue their studies at secondary school level or at university once their English proficiency reaches a required level. While students attend the EAP courses with the intention of continuing their studies at an English medium higher educational institution, many also have the aim of first passing a formal test such as the First Certificate in English (FCE) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Success on these tests leads to jobs or promotional opportunities in many countries.

English language courses are offered by departments within a larger institution such as the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector or University. Normally, in

these cases, there are departmental guidelines as to the level of English required. Bridging and foundation courses offered at a number of universities provide instruction that prepares students for the requirements normally associated with university courses. These include instruction in the norms and standards of Western scholarly conduct (Singh and Doherty, 2004) and in study skills.

Accreditation of Private Language Providers

In order to guarantee quality and to function as an educational institution, prior to operation, private language schools as well as those schools attached to tertiary institutions need to be registered to obtain formal accreditation. The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students requires educational providers to be registered on The Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). According to the Code, registered providers can accept students for enrolment only if they have given to the students adequate information about the course According to the guidelines of the code (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) the information should contain: a) description of the content, b) the qualification or accreditation gained on completion, c) the length of the course(s), d) teaching methods used, e) type of assessment used, and f) the minimum level of English proficiency to meet the requirements of the course(s)

The National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) is the national accreditation body regulating English language course providers for overseas students in Australia. Its guidelines specify organizational and administrative matters, standards, quality assurance regarding the premises, resources (the specialist staff, materials and equipment), curriculum, student assessment, student recruitment and the marketing and promotion of the institution. A reader would obtain the impression from the NEAS documentation, however, that there is a greater emphasis on teacher's qualification requirements, on the nature of the teaching premises, on how and in what context an institution should be promoted and marketed, than on the actual content and delivery of instruction. Furthermore, it has become apparent that as long as courses are run

according to an effective program (which may be based on a textbook) and a sequence outlining teaching units, assessment tasks and/or examinations and a reporting structure, the accreditation requirements are met. Although the word 'curriculum' is mentioned in the guidelines, according to the 2002 handbook, only the following statement is given: "The institution's curriculum is purposeful, coherent and documented and facilitates the design of teaching programs to meet the needs and requirements of students" (NEAS Australia, 2002: 39). The interpretation by NEAS of the CRICOS guidelines would suggest that some lesser emphasis on specificity (especially as related to teaching methodology) about teaching and learning practices has been incorporated. This has the potential to lead to the growth of dissatisfaction with the ELICOS programs for both the teaching professionals and the students.

ESL Curriculum

ESL curriculum documents in general and as normally found in Australia a) define the area of learning, b) offer a mission statement and rationale, c) present a framework that is informed by the field of applied linguistics, d) recommend a syllabus outlining the appropriate content of instruction, language activities, practical strategies, desirable language outcomes such as relating to communication, language and cultural understanding, structure and features of the language, and e) outline the need for assessment procedures, a reporting system, and finally evaluation (Australian Capital Territory ESL Curriculum Statement, 1997).

In the Australian Capital Territory ESL Curriculum Statement document, ESL as an area of learning is defined in terms of the language demands of all learning areas, competencies, and across curriculum perspectives. Activities develop language in the social context, as related to learning, and as needed for personal expression. The document is informed by an assumption about second language learning and teaching that ESL teaching is definable, integrated and holistic, that learning involves learning a new language in the context of a new culture, that students learn how to interact meaningfully and appropriately in that language and culture, drawing on cognitive and

linguistic resources in a new learning environment, and that students use their knowledge of other cultures to develop an understanding that encompasses the new culture (Australian Capital Territory ESL Curriculum Statement, 1997: 3-5). The statement also recognises ESL teaching as a specialist undertaking, which is informed by the field of applied linguistics, and it offers a range of practical teaching strategies that should be considered applicable across the curriculum. However, the document omits indication of a specifically agreed upon methodology. A more detailed approach to recommended teaching methodologies is, however, available to teachers through the outline given in McKay and Scarino (1991: 28). An eclectic approach to language learning is recommended through the implication of eight distinct principles. The principles outline the importance of communication through a range of language forms, the value of comprehensible input, the significance of culturally relevant information, the importance of feedback and the positive consequence of learners being able to manage their own learning in an environment that caters for the development of their intellectual, social, emotional and physical well being.

Outcomes in the areas of both productive and receptive skills (speaking, writing, listening and reading, respectively) are organised in the areas of communication, language and cultural understanding, language structures and features, and learning and communication strategies. Assessment, which is a continued and integrated part of curriculum planning, is based on comprehensible criteria. Reporting communicates the achieved outcomes.

Western Australian students taking the subject ESL English in the final two years of secondary schooling (in years 11 and 12) also have the benefit of a syllabus presented to schools by the Curriculum Council (Western Australian Government, Curriculum Council: English for ESL Students – D026). While in this subject developing skills in communication, language and cultural understanding, language structures and features, and learning and communication strategies is desired, there is an added emphasis on the use and application of these skills in an academic context. This is because the "subject aims to develop functional literacy within an academic context and specifically, to develop the language skills necessary for tertiary entrance" (Western Australian Government, Curriculum Council: English for ESL Students – D026). Again through

this document, teachers are informed of the required content of instruction, but are given no indication as to the recommended delivery of the content.

Texts that students have access to in this subject range from transactional to literary and media texts. It is expected that the students make valid interpretations of these texts based on and including the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or culture presented in them. Similarly, students are required to compose a wide variety of text types, in a range of styles. Their oral and written texts need to demonstrate mastery of all domains of language: morphology and syntax, spelling, pronunciation, organisational features (such as paragraphing, unity, or coherence), style and register. The syllabus also offers details of examinations.

In contrast, to suit the needs of a very different clientele, the AMEP context relies on the widely used adult ESL curriculum framework: the *Certificates in Spoken and Written English* (CSWE). These broad guidelines cover four levels of language learning (Certificates I, II, III, and IV, according to students' level of English proficiency on the Australian (International) Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ALSPR, or ISLPR) scale (see explanation of the scale below) along three distinct modules (reading and writing, speaking and listening, and orientation to learning). The CSWE competencies indicate general language features such as general language learning strategies, generalised text types, and the macroskills of language use, and they also identify language outcomes relating to each competency.

The framework generally defines what Feez (1998: 11) refers to as "language learning in terms of whole texts" or genres. The genres learners work though suit increasingly specialised contexts in order to meet the needs of the individual learners. The outcomes are organised in all four language learning areas: speaking, writing, listening and reading. The implementation of the curriculum framework, that is, the syllabus planning, is left to the teachers' discretion. This indicates that depending on the learner needs, teachers may refer to text types that would match learners' interests, or future pathways. For example, learners following a pathway leading to employment or to further academic study may be exposed to different text types and these would still meet the general requirements outlined in the curriculum framework (Feez, 2001).

The choice of methodology is also included in the syllabus design and follows a five step cycle in which learners are given support toward reaching specific outcomes. The steps include context building, modelling texts, joint construction of texts followed by individual construetinn of texts and linking texts. Teachers are at liberty tn make decisions based on the needs of learners as to whether some or all steps would be followed.

Such a curriculum document offers a number of benefits. It firstly allows for uniformity across educational institutions offering the same courses. Secondly, teachers are given sufficient guidance as to the content and method they should take into their classrooms. Finally, despite the uniformity, the teaching remains guided by learner needs as it allows teachers to be flexible in their selection of content. In addition, in this context there is also a commitment not only to curriculum development (especially through the National Centre of English language Teaching and Research at Macquarie University) through research generated by the teaching staff, but also to the professional development of teachers (Martin, 1988).

Unfortunately, not all adult ESL institutions adopt the view that such a curriculum document is needed, and some base their courses on textbooks on which they build their syllabus. In the ELICOS context there is no centralised curriculum statement Therefore, curriculum organisation and content, methodology, the choice of strategies, ontcomes and assessment procedures in such institutions become the responsibility of the Director of Studies in consultation with the teaching staff. Alternatively, such institutions present specific outcomes through in-house generated curriculum fianteworks, which is subsequently submitted to NEAS. However, in many cases in the researcher's experience, it is left to the teachers (individually or collectively) to not only organise the course, but also to make decisions nn the content and methodology Possibly in defense of this it is argued that teachers have the opportunity to base their programs on the specific needs of students; that they can collaborate with students on the conception and realisation of educational purposes. Wraga (2002: 18), addressing general educational theory, refers to this type of collaboration that meets the NEAS guidelines as curriculum enactment, and sees it as the most promising prospect for

improving educational experiences. He further states that democratic ideals are consistent with curriculum enactment as an approach to curriculum implementation. Such collaborative curriculum implementation is thought to be strongly associated with the improvement of student learning; therefore, iu Wraga's view curriculum developers should strive toward its realisation in educational settings. However, the problem remains that in the ELICOS context insufficient attention is paid to effective leadership in curriculum development and this problem could be obviated by more detailed direction from the NEAS authority.

Standards

One of the most serious problems ESL students faced in the past was the belief that their performance iu the mainstream classroom (or more specifically their underperformance) was a reflection of their overall ability rather than a consequence of inadequate language instruction (Moore, 2002). It had been erroneously assumed that immigrants and NESB students generally were socially and, more importantly, academically disadvantaged, and their literacy skills (among other educationally relevant skills) in the first language were considered irrelevant. In such contexts survival skills were necessary; consequently, (as reported by Iredale, 1997) many concentrated on and excelled in subjects that are not language based. However, in more recent years, owing to their many successes, this perception has changed and now NESB students are viewed as "academically and economically beneficial" to Australia's development (Iredale, ibid). Such greater realisation of multicultural ideals, however has, to this point, failed to influence the assessment debate, particularly at school level.

Since ESL learners are not a homogenous group iu terms of age, length of schooling, length and level of Euglish studies, or future English language needs, it is imperative that their English proficiency is properly assessed and their needs in the English language context are met. Also, standards and descriptors - especially in the K-12 study areas— need to he aligued to the current curricula.

McKay (2001) differentiates standards derived for pedagogic and administrative purposes, that is as teaching guidance and professional development, versus accountability and curriculum direction, respectively. From one point of view language standards provide descriptions of what learners of the language know, understand and are able to do in the target language at different levels of proficiency. However, she considers the current benchmarks discriminatory in the K-12 context since they do not reflect the reality of ESL development, "in spite of the students' ability to participate in curriculum tasks at a level which enables them to learn". This is because the students' limited cultural knowledge may result in perceived non-achievement. Further to this, Rojas (2001), based on an investigation conducted at North American, British, and Australian international schools, outlined the need for an ESL content-based curriculum in an attempt to align grade level descriptors for ESL and mainstream content standards.

In this regard Short (1997) proposes a curriculum model known as ASCRIBER, which has the eight stages of alignment, standard setting, curriculum development, retooling, implementation, benchmarking, evaluation, and revision. Alignment refers to the setting of the competencies and proficiencies to serve the ESL student population. Standard setting provides a list of descriptors, while curriculum development the objectives. Retooling indicates the process of professional development, which allows the collection of adequate resources and sets the scene for pilot programs and program implementation. Benchmarking indicates levels of student achievement. Finally, data collection and analysis forms the base of the evaluation process, which in turn is followed by modification and revision. The implementation of such a curriculum model would hopefully allay fears associated with benchmarking and alignment. Furthermore, Short (1998: 46) maintains that standards should never be considered as an endpoint for learners. Using the ASCRIBER model, therefore, can be viewed as a process in which the learners' needs are continuously addressed and modifications are made accordingly

The issue of setting standards is just as important in the ELICOS context. Students need to meet proficiency standards, as required for example by their intended areas of further study However, prior to undertaking further academic studies, assessment of students' practical language skills and their overall proficiency is needed for student placement into various classes It has been recommended that ELICOS colleges use

the ISLPR rating scale (Wylie & Ingram, 1999). This is a 12 level scale ranging from zero proficiency to native-like proficiency, recorded as 0, 0+, 1-, 1, 1+, 2, 2+, 3, 3+, 4, 4+, and 5), with a separate set of subscales for the four macro-skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing. It offers the teacher - assessor general descriptions of the language behaviour and examples of the ability displayed at each level. In order to determine a learner's language ability the learner's language behaviour in the relevant macro-skill is matched through a holistic process against the descriptors that constitute the sub-scale. Although proficiency ratings provide statements about general language ability, they are not, however, designed to indicate success in particular language or future academic courses (Wylie & Ingram, 1999). However, the ISLPR scale appears to correspond with the levels of General English courses and may be a useful guide to placement and assessment there. For exemple, the scale of 0+ to 1- may indicate that a learner could successfully follow an elementary course, while the scale of 1+ to 2 may mean that an Intermediate course is appropriate.

Teaching Methods

Over the past fifty years language teaching has been influenced by various, quite distinct approaches to language learning (Pica, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 1991). Teaching and learning has in turn seen the prominence of grammar - translation, audio-lingual, structuralist, functional-notional, natural, and task-based methods. Although there is considerable overlap in the theoretical and practical approaches of these methods, there are some distinctive features especially in the sequencing of content, the role and relationship of people involved in the classroom communicative processes, the teaching of grammar, the design of materials, and the use of language for specific purposes. However, in some contexts (for example, the AMES context), as per accruitation requirements, one method is documented as the collective approach to language teaching and learning.

This however is not the situation in the Australian secondary ESL, and ELICOS contexts. Accordingly, in the view of this researcher, teacher approaches to teaching have been eclectic, and teachers have relied on a number of different approaches as

indicated by the needs of the learners or personal preferences of individual teachers in order to ensure positive learning outcomes. If eclecticism is to be considered the only valid approach in the current classroom teaching, the question that remains to be answered is: what is commonly understood by the term? Is it to be recognized as a legitimate method or system of thought, when it could be regarded as an arbitrary selection of various sources, systems, or methods? Or is it merely an added responsibility of the teachers in addition to the analysis of the students' needs, learning processes, content, and assessment.

On the one hand, Feez (1998: 13) identifies in such eclectic approaches an apparent lack of "framework within which the sum of present knowledge about language and learning can be organised to allow teachers to survey and analyse the available syllabus elements and to select, sequence and integrate elements into a coherent, cohesive and comprehensive course design". Agreeing with this, Nunan (1987: 58) sees the learner-centred philosophy as the "major cause of curriculum discontinuity". His research, based on teacher interviews, indicate that there was a lack of clarity in the aims and objectives of the AMES program, especially in contexts where the classes are organised according to the needs of the students. He further states that "some classes are determined solely by what students ask for and the needs revealed within their work" (Nunan, 1987: 14). An additional problem arises when students fail to accept the learner-centred approach to teaching, as they are not familiar with possible alternatives to their previous learning experience.

The question is whether teachers in the absence of guidelines are equipped to handle such a demanding multifaceted task and whether they can successfully function within that environment. Kumaravadivelu (2003 b) foresees the end of any limited or limiting methodology. To replace it, he proposes a framework that can enable the teachers to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant personal theory of practice and pedagogic knowledge. Furthermore, Kumaravadivelu (2003 a: 20) invites practicing teachers to see teaching as a process, or as intellectual activity needed to theorize, and suggests that the teachers' primary concern "should be the depth of critical thinking rather than the breadth of content knowledge".

Teachers and researchers are interested in finding out if one teaching methodology is more accessible to a certain student body, whether there can be ways of making the language acquisition process easier For example, Hadley (2002: 99) reports on the imbalence between fluency and accuracy as a result of communicative language teaching. He does not consider such an outcome surprising since he regards the communicative language teaching approach as "based on unprincipled eclecticism, varying from teacher to teacher", which can lead to "early fossilization of the learners' language skills". Therefore, he proposes innovative, pedagogic grammars, such as data-driven learning, in the form of a series of 'tasks', based on, for example, collocations obtained with the keyword-in-context format or the concordancer program. Learners analyse samples of citations showing collocations of a word prior to the completion of a writing and speaking task. Once they start using questions that are not applicable to the given task (or the set of collocations), a new research process starts with a new group of citations. This results in a novel way of bringing grammatical, structural analysis back into the classroom in a creative way, which he claims is learner driven and motivating. Although any such process as this would appeal to a very select group within the ELICOS industry, teachers who are able to choose their teaching methodologies should be made more aware of the sort of experimental methods which are steadily becoming available and ultimately be able to judge the work of the researcher's claims after integration into their classroom contexts.

It would appear that a new, adequate, integrated, global approach to language teaching is needed, which would take into consideration theoretical, empirical and experimental knowledge of language learning and teaching in addition to being flexible enough to cater for differing needs. Ignoring the competitive element, the question is why educational institutions such as ELICOS colleges do not take pride in following a unified approach to teaching, or a specifically agreed upon methodology If nothing more the creation of such a statement would assure unity within an organisation. The eclectic approach is based on trial and error or a "mixed bag of tricks" that may be successful at times; however, it can also lead to frustration for both students and teachers. Is it the volume of the research, the empirical, experimental knowledge, and a number of theories that creates a reluctance to make a decision on one acceptable

approach; or is it the lack of a central paradigm that would guide such a decision making process? It is apparent that the lack of firm curriculum guidelines points to a need of direction.

Conclusion

English as a second language is taught in various contexts with the aim of developing learners' necessary skills and understanding of the language in order to function successfully in a range of settings, academic or social in or outside an English speaking country. English language instruction is offered to people of all ages, educational backgrounds, proficiency levels, previous English language studies, or future English language needs in various contexts.

ESL learners usually attend institutions that are registered and accredited, and in most cases they are guided by or have reference to carefully structured and executed curriculum guidelines. They are mostly taught by specialist teachers whose efforts are informed by the field of applied linguistics. Their English language competence, both prior and post instruction, is assessed according to required standards in the different courses that are offered to students of non-English speaking backgrounds. It is suggested that NEAS initiate scheduled periodic revision of curriculum guidelines which would consequently need to be carried out to meet the changing needs of the academically mobile student population. In addition, curriculum guidelines should be available in all contexts, specifically in ELICOS settings. If such standards were available, it is possible that national ELICOS framework could be used to map teaching programs and learner achievement. Such an Australian standard would allow for the possibility of courses offered in the ELICOS context to be linked into learner pathways.

When it comes to teaching methods, however, in many English teaching contexts, there is an apparent lack of agreement as to which methodological framework would

both meet the needs of learners and be accessible to teachers. The teacher's approach to teaching becomes eclectic, which in turn becomes highly demanding since it requires familiarity with a wide-ranging repertoire of teaching strategies. Since the eclectic approach also adapts a syllabus that is based on individual student need, it has the potential of causing discontinuity and lack of clarity in the program aims and objectives. It may also lead to learners failing to appreciate and accept such learning experiences. Therefore, there is an obvious need for an integrated approach based on theoretical, empirical and experimental knowledge of language teaching and learning that would inform teacher's decision-making processes.

It is further recommended that select ELICOS colleges devise and follow a unified but flexible approach to teaching and a specifically agreed upon methodology (corresponding in principle to the AMES CSWE framework). Furthermore, it is possible that task-based language learning methodology would be a suitable model since it satisfies the learner needs and process oriented and contributes to individualised language development. If, in addition, a periodic revision and evaluation of such task-based methodological framework were implemented, the benefits would be felt in the contribution to experimental and empirical knowledge and in learner satisfaction.

In the longer term several issues need to be addressed by the industry responsible for English language education worldwide and/or in Australia. These issues relate to the requirements new fully comprehensible curriculum guidelines would incorporate for the ELICOS context. In addition, in the ELICOS context, in view of the limited guidelines, the issues also involve consideration in the event a move to centralised curriculum direction emerged, especially as related to the manner in which governing principles be established. Finally, the people responsible for the planning and execution of a new program need to be selected with care

CHAPTER IV

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section I is written with a view to examining some of the recent research dealing with problems and practices in second language teaching and learning, especially as related to the methodology of task-based language learning. Section II reports the results of an investigation on the role of tasks in current teaching practices in a language school, and students' expectations of classroom practices. The aim of this research is to explore the concept of task and its relationship with actual classroom teaching, especially since there is a discernible disconnect in the task based approach to language learning as understood by classroom teachers and applied linguists.

Section I

Task-based language learning

Traditional approaches to second language learning were concerned with mainly linguistic issues, that is, the content of instruction was the lexical and grammatical form of the language. In such learning environments teachers presented information on a topic, vocabulary items, or discrete points of grammar, which were subsequently practiced through learning activities and exercises. Learners synthesised the information in their future language production or language use. Their performance

was measured and assessed according to mastery of structures, correct usage of form, or the extent of vocabulary produced.

A task-based approach, however, emphasises the exposure of students to unanalysed, though carefully selected experiences of language through input consisting of a variety of discourse types. Long (1997) maintains that learners, rather than attending to form, focus on meaning and communication as much as their learnability constraints allow, and learn grammar incidentally through negotiation of meaning in an active, communicative, interactive process. The context and content in such an approach is predetermined by the learners' own internal syllabuses and not based on specifications of linguistic skills or objectives imposed upon them by teachers. Furthermore, assessment in a task-based syllabus does not depend on the mastery of discrete points of grammar (product), but on the learners' ability to sustain involvement in the completion of a task (process). In other words, as Ellis (2000:197) defines, the expected outcome of tasks is a process in which "negotiation is directed at the achievement of a communicative goal, not at conformity to the code for its own sake".

Moreover, Ellis (2000) considers tasks in language classrooms from both psycholinguistic and socio-cultural perspectives. From the former perspective, engagement in tasks can induce or predispose learners to engage in mental processing that is beneficial to language acquisition. As learners are involved in the process of task completion, they negotiate meaning and communicate through modified output, whereby their attention is drawn to form in context; consequently, they can test their hypotheses about the second language (L2). From the perspective of socio-cultural theory, learning results *from* interaction and not *through* interaction, since learners, as they participate in activities, "co-construct the activity they engage in according to their own socio-history and locally determined goals" (Ellis, 2000:209). From this perspective, the processes involved in completion of task requirements are analysed in terms of their contribution to language acquisition.

One of the most difficult issues in connection with task-based language learning is the treatment of grammar. In the traditional approach to language learning grammar formed the "building blocks" of instruction. Presentation of a particular grammatical

structure, the context of its use, the lexical items associated with its application was followed by repetition and manipulation based on given models or patterns. Within task-based instruction issues related to grammar are addressed in the final phase of the task cycle. The question is whether learners find such treatment of grammar issues sufficient. In answer Fotos (1994) proposes the possibility of solving grammatical problems through engagement in meaning-focussed language use, i.e. tasks. In the course of undertaking such tasks by raising the consciousness of targeted grammatical features of the language, the tasks would contribute to learners noticing of subsequent features in future language production.

Another issue in connection to task-based methodology relates to the learners' preparedness and the strategies they employ in the course of the task completion. In authentic communication tasks, instead of focussing on structures, learners are required to use language in situations in which "the meanings are unpredictable" (Littlewood, 2004:322), such as in creative role plays. If the learners need to role play, for example in a situation they have never encountered before, generating language awareness may be insufficient without the provision of model situations in order to first provide conceptual awareness. Fotos and Ellis (1991) recommend that learners plan the task and prepare the course of the interaction in order to allow not only for the noticing of grammatical properties associated with the task, but also for the extended use of negotiation. Foster and Skehan (1999: 223) also point to the importance of planning. In their view, during the planning stage of the task, learners should focus on both the language and the content required by the task. In addition, learners should benefit from solitary, teacher-led, and group-based experiences of planning. They refer to their 1999 study in which it was found that solitary planning contributes to greater fluency, and complexity; teacher-led planning emphasises focus on form and results in increased accuracy; and group-based planning highlights contextual awareness.

Furthermore, the strategies learners choose to complete the task may not match the strategies the teacher intended. Based on the learners' assessment of the relevance of the task, they may resort to different strategies in order to "survive" or they may complete the task requirements with minimal effort (Murphy, 2003: 353). Furthermore, a measure of the learners' communicative ability and communicative strategies could be

examined. As Faerch and Kasper (1983) suggest, L2 speakers communicate by means of a reduced system, focussing on stable rules and items which have become automatized, in order to avoid making errors or to increase their fluency. Corder (1983) maintains that all language users resort to using communicative strategies to get meaning across and that these become especially apparent when the person involved is not a native speaker. Furthermore, Corder contends that if learners are involved in unrehearsed verbal interaction, they could utilise self correction strategies, have false starts, paraphrase, generalise, abandon ideas and reformulate them if they face difficulties, resort to paralinguistic devices and appeal for help, or in extreme cases revert to their first language, that is, use both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies (Richards, 1999).

The above views may identify an as yet unanalysed problem which has been signalled by Skehan (1996: 42). He refers to the possibility that through a task-based approach the learners' interlanguage may not be sufficiently challenged. Skehan states further that the outcome of involvement in tasks will not contribute to language acquisition processes; instead, the task-based approach will only be one factor in learners' ability to "proceduralise strategic solutions to problems and to engage in lexicalised communication"

Review of research

Following Chandron's (2000) research in second language classrooms, research can be classified into four main categories: (1) psychometric, (2) interaction analysis, (3) discourse analysis, and (4) ethnographic. These four approaches involve both quantitative and qualitative (explanatory and descriptive) methods of analysis. The psychometric tradition, as an experimental method, uses pre- and post-intervention tests administered to experimental and control groups. In addition, language is analysed in numerical terms according to specific criteria, and statistical procedures are implemented. Interaction analysis involves coding of actual interaction as observed in the classroom linguistic behaviour. Discourse analysis focuses on the analysis of specific areas of discourse as encountered in these classrooms. Finally, the

ethnographic tradition analyses the classroom as a cultural system, and based on observation, provides a descriptive insight into classroom practices. It makes use of interviews, observation, questionnaires in which subjects rate their personal opinion or preference, or reflective journal entries of practising teachers or students involved in the learning process.

In order to ensure validity, most research studies rely on a combination of these research methods but still fundamentally belong to one or other category.

(1) Psychometric tradition

Newton's case study (Newton, 1995) looked at task based interaction and its benefit in vocabulary learning. Based on the premise that completing communication tasks helps in text-based vocabulary learning, Newton monitored one Taiwanese male student's progress and tested the student's pre- and post-task vocabulary. There were four communication tasks in the study, two involving two-way information exchanges, and two others in reaching a consensus on given problems. It was found that the vocabulary the student gained was embedded in the context of the task. The question such a study raises is whether other factors contributed to the acquisition of the vocabulary, or if such acquisition could be solely attributed to the nature of the task itself. Learning and information retention being so complex, and oversimplification does not contribute to getting greater insight into those issues.

Németh and Kormos (2001) addressed a number of different factors. Firstly, their study explored the effects of task repetition on the quantity and linguistic expression of arguments. Secondly, it considered the benefits of direct focused instruction in argumentation. Finally, it investigated the differences in the quality of argumentation in the learners' performance in both L1 and L2. Citing a study conducted by Skehan and Foster (1997), they maintained that argumentation tasks are cognitively demanding tasks; they increase learners' output, but decrease fluency and accuracy in the L2. Speech samples of 24 Hungarian high school students were recorded over a period of two years and analysed. These students were divided into three groups, each of which was instructed with different teaching methods (grammar-translation, communicative, and bilingual communicative). A C-test was administered before the experiment, and it

was found that the students following a grammar-translation method of teaching recorded the highest proficiency score, while those following a communicative method the lowest. The participants were relatively inexperienced in the field of argumentation since opinion gap and argumentation activities were infrequently used in typical language classes. A total of five tasks was performed by the learners, four of which were conducted prior to receiving instruction about argumentation, three in English, and one in Hungarian. The fifth task was also performed in English. Before the fifth task two groups (group one, which had been instructed with the grammar-translation method and group three, which had been instructed in a bilingual communicative context) had received intervention offering instruction in vocabulary, communication strategies and language function of argumentation. This group also had opportunities to practice problem - opinion - concrete support - refutation sequences. Another group received 'placebo' training involving no direct instruction, but only opportunities for discussion of a number of issues. The third group received none of the instruction mentioned above.

In the analysis, firstly the total number of claims, counter claims and supports was calculated and recorded, and then the frequency of lexical expression of argument-related speech (markers expressing opinion, agreement and disagreement) was calculated. Quantitative analysis of variance revealed the task repetition to be beneficial and to contribute to more extensive performance in the task. The students' familiarity with the task (i.e. task repetition) contributed to better performance in terms of content, but it did not induce more extensive use of lexical markers of argumentation. The intervention did not improve the students' performance, except for a slight difference in the variety of the pragmalinguistic markers used. It could be concluded that development in pragmalinguistic competence does not automatically mean improved linguistic competence or performance. The students' performance on argumentative tasks in their mother tongue revealed (as expected) greater competence in and variety of linguistic features, however, there were few observable differences in the use of pragmalinguistic markers, which the researchers attributed to their less frequent use in Hungarian.

In this study, the quantity of pragmatic markers is considered a sufficient measure of task performance. The question that could arise from this study is to what extent it would be possible to analyse the quality of the linguistic and pragmatic competence.

The study is therefore limited by its focus on the quantity, where constant repetition of the pragmatic markers is still considered and recorded as valid, at the expense of quality. Further investigation of the effect of instruction in rhetoric and pragmalinguistic markers should also shed light on not only whether differences in performance are merely attributable to the differences in the two languages, but also whether other psycholinguistic factors contribute to such development in oral language performance. This in turn might point to a novel way of approaching the instruction of such features.

Success in task performance is not only determined by linguistic or cognitive factors. A number of affective and socio-dynamic parameters also plays an important role in language output. Dörnyci and Kormos (2000) examined the interrelationship of a number of variables that determine task engagement and success. Variables such as learner motivation, group dynamics, the influence of interlocutors, the relationship between interlocutors, or group 'leadership influence, the quantity of the interaction, as well as the quality.

The study followed a research design in which correlations were computed between a number of independent and dependent variables. Argument-based interaction of forty-six dyads in a problem-solving activity (involving rank-ordering of a list of items in a given imaginary situation) in both L1 and L2 was recorded. The two tasks were identical except for the content. In addition, a test of the subjects' English language proficiency was administered, together with two self-report questionnaires, one dealing with motivational issues, the other a measure of the subjects' level of group cohesiveness, the interrelationship between learners, and their willingness to communicate. The data was coded and the variation in the output between group and between task correlated. Firstly, the number of words and turns used in the completion of the task was compared between the two tasks (L1 and L2). Secondly, these measures were correlated with motivational and social variables.

It was found that learners who had positive attitudes toward the task were also more willing to communicate, had positive attitudes towards academic achievement in general and were popular class members. At the same time, learners who had negative attitudes to the task were not willing to communicate yet enjoyed high social status in the class. This study sheds light on some salient factors of the interaction processes,

namely on motivation, the relationship between the interlocutors, and academic and linguistic achievement. Further investigation may reveal whether or not task variables, such as difficulty or familiarity with task content, influence the learners' group behaviour and performance.

Spada (1987) observed that classroom-based research had previously been divided into product research (a focus on student learning outcomes) and process research (a focus on instructional practices and procedures). She integrated both research approaches in order to answer two questions: a) whether there are differences in how communicative language teaching (CLT) is implemented by teachers, and b) if these differences cause differences in learning.

Three classes (A, B, and C) of adult intermediate students (forty-eight in total), studying in Canada for twenty-five hours per week for six weeks, were observed for sixty hours. The observation and analysis contained both qualitative and quantitative elements. The observation scheme used took into account grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse functions and assessed both classroom activities and verbal interaction. In addition, seven tests were administered, including tests of listening, writing, speaking, grammar, discourse, cohesion, and sociolinguistic ability An ANOVA test was used to find out if there were significant differences between the three classes (A, B and C). Qualitative analysis searched for differences in the activity types between classes.

It was found that Class A was different from the other two classes: the instruction was more "traditional" and less "communicative". The analysis further focused on whether these differences caused differences in learning with students in Classes B and C performing significantly better in the speaking and listening tests than those in Class A. However, for the speaking assessment, different assessors were used for the pre- and post-tests; therefore, it is questionable whether the results are as significant as they appear. Similarly, there were differences in the tests for discourse between Classes B and C, which indicate a relationship between the amount and style of grammar instruction given or received. It can be concluded from this study that some differences in learner outcomes could be related to variation in teaching.

(2) Interaction analysis

Interaction / communication offers learners opportunities to contextualize newly acquired vocabulary and structures by using them in conversations. Thereby learners are able to expand their interlanguage capacity, by obtaining input and feedback. Consequently, they can modify their output through negotiation with an attempt at greater comprehensibility. Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos and Linnel (1996) studied and analysed English learner and and native speakers' communication tasks. Thirty learners (NNS) and ten native speakers (NS) of English were assigned to 10 dyads involving NNSs and NSs and 10 dyads of non-native speakers. They participated in a series of communication tasks, in which, in order to carry out the set task, the subjects needed to exchange information based on given information. The negotiation that was used to complete the task was recorded and the data coded and categorised according to lexical and syntactic modifications. The percentages of such lexical and syntactic modifications during NNS - NS and NNS - NNS negotiations were compared. Quantitative analyses of the percentages of the lexically and structurally modified utterances were compared in the two groups based on the two communication tasks. The results suggest that there were no significant differences between learner-learner and learner-native speaker negotiation modifications. However, there were differences in the type of feedback offered. Although this study did not focus on normal classroom interaction, it could nevertheless be concluded that classroom interactions could provide opportunities for both lexical and syntactic negotiations. However it remains to be shown that the interaction leads to actual acquisition of new language and/or new forms

Lynch and Maclean (2000) explored the effects of task repetition at different levels of English proficiency. They recorded fourteen participants' oral interactions. Performance on the task was not the only interest of the researchers as they also wanted to explore the participants' own perceptions of the benefits of the repetitious nature of the task (carousel). The task involved a paired construction of a poster on a given topic, followed by question and answer sequences conducted one by one by the rest of the class members.

The transcripts were analysed according to the correct subject-verb agreement, lexical and grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and level of explanation of complex

concepts in the participants' oral language. It was found that familiarity with the task explained the change in the speaking rate, the number of errors, the improvement of information density and expression of precise meaning. In addition, the participants used their interlocutors both pro- and re-actively. The participants found the task beneficial, and commented that they made syntactic, lexical (most frequently) and phonological changes, although participants at the lower proficiency level were not aware of conscious changes in the ways they expressed themselves.

As there were no interventions by the teacher, it can be concluded that provided there is no loss in interest level, learners could gain linguistic benefits from task repetition or (in other words) extended practice in learner-to-learner talk. The study also indicates that tasks could be used at different levels of proficiency. In addition, there is a potential to use the content of the task in posttask activities, so that learners can consolidate their linguistic abilities toward greater accuracy.

(3) Discourse analysis

Swain and Lapkin (2000) focussed on the idea that first language (LI) usage contributes to the development of the second language (L2). It supports the use of LI in the completion of a task in L2, especially when the task is both linguistically and cognitively complex. Twenty-two pairs of year 8 English students (LI) studying French (L2) were the subjects of the study. They participated in dictogloss (12 pairs) and jigsaw (10 pairs) tasks, both with a focus on form and meaning, since the tasks included a writing component. The paired conversations were tape-recorded and the turns in English identified and categorized. It was found that the first language was used for three main purposes: a) to move the task along, b) to focus attention, and c) for interpersonal interaction.

Quantitative analyses were conducted with the intention to explore differences between and within tasks; these, however, did not reveal statistically significant differences. It was found that the English "turns" were used mainly for "on task", that is, for cognitive and social purposes (that is to understand the content and requirements of the task, to focus on vocabulary or form, to organise the writing activity, or to establish the nature of the collaboration). It is possible to hypothesize that without the first language use the tasks may not have been completed as effectively as they were.

If, however, the design of the study had allowed for a comparison with tasks completed without the use of L1 and the outcomes of such a task were assessed in terms of vocabulary, form or structure, the conclusion that "judicious use of the L1 can indeed support L2 learning and use" would have sounded more convincing.

A longitudinal study of fourteen-month duration, tracing the pragmatic development of thirty-five Japanese learners, was the focus of Code and Anderson's study (Code and Anderson, 2001). A discourse completion test/task (DCT) presenting ten situations of requests was used as a measurement instrument, which was administered at the beginning and the end of the study. Three months after the first DCT, for ten months, the students stayed with native speaker families in New Zealand and Canada and attended schools. The second DCT was completed in both Japanese and English. The responses were subsequently coded.

It was expected that, as students developed greater linguistic resources, their requests would move from direct toward a socially more acceptable indirect form. Both before and after the ten-month period spent in a second language environment, however, students still used direct request forms in situations native speakers would find inappropriate. It could be argued that as pragmatic competence is difficult to acquire, activities raising learners' awareness of the pragmatic systems of the L1 and L2 should be further considered and revised.

(4) Ethnographic tradition

The classroom setting should provide opportunities for learners not only to hear but also to produce language and receive feedback on their performance. Furthermore, learners need to be instructed in specific vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. The question is how to achieve these things, and how to time instructional and correction activities. In other words, when should teachers teach certain structural points, and if and when they should address problems with output. Ulichny's study (Ulichny, 1996) is descriptive and interpretive insofar as it relies on observations, recordings, and field notes. It was based on one ESL classroom of eighteen students of heterogeneous English ability and communication skills. Student and teacher discourse was analysed

and the dominant categories established as teacher dominated, whole group instructional activities, and correction activities, performed either individually in casual chats between teacher and student, or in casual chats between students with teacher correction and whole class monitoring. The findings revealed that this kind of discourse offered limited opportunities for practising conversation skills. It also indicated a shift of focus from content to form. Finally, the priority teachers give to correction subverts the communication task. The question that arises from the study is whether or not teachers should resort to post-task correction only, or post-task correction preceded by post-task instruction, or if they should simply allow for the possibility of fossilization. Other issues that stem from this study is whether these kinds of practices meet students' expectations, and if they see the role of a teacher only as a facilitator

Educator's perspectives and not actual classroom learning were the focus of the study conducted by Jacobs and Ratmanida (1996) on the appropriateness of group activities, the acceptance of which is crucial to effective integration of task into classroom contexts. Twenty-five educators from six countries in the Southeast Asian region responded to questionnaires about collaborative learning i.e. group activities. These were followed by twelve semi-structured interviews in order to clarify issues emerging from the questionnaires. Open-ended responses from the questionnaires were analysed to derive categories, which were checked by participants to ensure their validity. The problems cited included a lack of motivation to learn the target language, which could be due to low proficiency. Other key problems were the large number of students in classes and the physical setting of the instruction. Respondents, especially those educators who had prior experience with group work, considered group interaction beneficial in terms of fluency, and they disregarded the hypothetical negative effect of errors in speech or the lack of accuracy.

The process of designing tasks for class use was observed in Johnson's paper (Johnson, 2000). Specialist designers (SD) and so-called non-designer-teachers (ND) were observed in the process of designing a specific task after they were interviewed on their beliefs about language teaching and tasks. The data were recorded on audio and videotapes and subsequently transcribed and coded. Three main categories were found: control procedures, designer schemata, and heuristics. Control procedures refer to the

ways in which resources and strategies are selected and implemented. In other words, whether the designer explores a number of different possibilities prior to considering one in depth (breadth first BF) or he/she commits to one strategy and explores it from all possible angles (depth first DF) without considering other strategies. Designer schemata describe the ways the designers' knowledge and belief system influence decisions made during the design process. Heuristics deals with techniques and strategies of tackling specific problems.

It was found that specialist designers differed from non-specialist designers in that the former used BF while the latter DF strategies. Both were, however, driven by a concrete repertoire although they relied on different constructs within their repertoire. Furthermore, designers also differed in the ways they approached language teaching and language learning; thus they were either language or task-oriented designers. They either consider the linguistic content (i.e. structural practice), or the production of meaningful tasks (issues such as task value and whether they are motivating or interesting).

Garrett and Shortall (1997) focused on the learners and their perceptions of different types of learning activities. One hundred and three Brazilian students were involved in both teacher-fronted and student-centred grammar and fluency activities. Following each of these activities the students were required to evaluate the perceived value of these lessons by filling in a five-point questionnaire. The students also needed to justify their preferences in writing. The data were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Although statistically there were no significant differences between the types of activities, there was generally a preference for the teacher-fronted grammar and student-centred fluency activities. The data, however, provides a suggestion that different learner needs at varying stages of their learning call for different types of activities.

The fundamental argument for task-based syllabi stems from the idea that language is acquired through the negotiation of meaning in meaningful contexts, which in turn leads not only to fluency but also to grammatical learning. Therefore, when students are involved in pair work tasks the lessons are individualized, and they are free to speak

without inhibition since they are away from the "public arena". Burden's paper (Burden, 1999) examined university students' perceptions of class opportunities to work in pairs. Two groups of Japanese students (twelve and fifty-two in total) attending English conversation classes were asked to negotiate the meaning of some given symbols, explain their interpretations of them, and agree or disagree The overall aim of the task was to generate discussion. The researcher recorded his observations of students' behaviour which included on and off task behaviour and conversation in Japanese. The off task behaviour was attributed to the students' waiting for the start of the "proper" lesson. Furthermore, students were observed to interpret the accomplishment of the task in the successful completion, rather than in sustained discussion.

The informal observations were then coupled with data collection based on a 36-point questionnaire in which questions related to both students' attitudes to learning English and pair work tasks. The results indicate that contrary to the findings based on on-task observations, students prefer teacher-fronted activities in the classroom. However in the absence of such activities, they rate pair work second on their list of preferences. Moreover, since 90% of the students indicated that they resorted to using their mother tongue, they "cannot adjust their speaking to make the speech production comprehensible to the listener and are thus reducing chances of language acquisition" (Burden, 1999: 7). These students' perceptions of communicative pair work task contradict earlier findings of the Japanese students' perception or expectation of what and how they should learn. This raises a number of questions. Firstly, whether the findings are true reflections of the students' perceptions and their overall perceptions of the aim of the study. Secondly, whether in their replies to the questions they indicate their respect to the teachers, which could be interpreted as non-report on issues requiring critical thinking, and thirdly, whether Japanese students can get rid of their cultural constraints when facing a questionnaire.

Ferris and Tagg (1996) analysed the requirements and expectations of university lecturers with regard to NESB student oral and aural skills. Lecturers involved in instruction in four academic areas (business, engineering, music and science) at four US tertiary institutions were surveyed and their responses analysed. Through quantitative analysis of the data, it was found that across different academic disciplines there were

significant differences in requirements. However, only a few of the lecturers indicated any lecture, seminar, or lab work requiring interaction or collaboration. Rather, they stressed the importance of note-taking skills. Correlational analyses revealed that students' oral requirements were called for in smaller classes, that is, in smaller classes there were more opportunities for student-led discussions and collaborations. Surprisingly, prepared oral reports or presentations were fairly uncommon in the educational setting investigated. It could be concluded that tasks requiring oral interaction are generally not used in university contexts.

Ahmed (1996) reported on the success of a task-based approach to syllabus design, which focused on teaching oral communication skills in academic settings. It discussed a core course in the Intensive English Program (preparatory program), namely an oral communication skills course scheduled to run for nine weeks. The goals of the course were to develop oral presentation, group discussion and debating skills, and cross-cultural awareness. The paper highlighted the importance of structuring a series of connected tasks with well-defined objectives, goals, and valid assessment criteria. Tasks included discussions and debates, oral presentations, problem solving discussions, listening to guest speakers, and cross-cultural group presentations. It was further suggested that task design be perceived and structured as a series of activities conducted with well-defined goals and assessment criteria. Such a case study can provide useful empirical data in this instructional context. Based on student evaluations, the course had been successful in achieving its goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the studies outlined highlight a number of issues and concerns associated with task-based learning. The above research studies deal with the problems of language tasks involving communication, specifically identifying the issues of effectiveness of conversations (Dörnyei and Konnos, 2000), the cognitive demands of tasks (Swain and Lapkin, 2000), the benefits of planning, errors in the communicative process, vocabulary learning (Newton, 1995), the benefits of task repetition (Lynch and Maclean, 2000; Németh and Kormos, 2001), first language use in the second language learning process (Swain and Lapkin, 2000), teacher talk in the classroom, teacher

questioning style in the communicative classroom (Ulichny, 1996), and student and teacher perceptions of interaction in the classroom(Jacobs and Ratmanida, 1996).

The questions that these studies raise relate to issues of wide epistemological concern which encompass the issue of real outcomes. What kinds of data could be considered to reflect the researchers' goals in their attempt to provide authentic samples? Firstly, elicited data, in which participants are asked a number of questions is often found artificial, and does not produce a real sample of the participant's ability to use the language as one would in a natural environment. Secondly, most of the data offer only a limited sample of language that a participant would be able to produce; therefore generalizability of the findings is limited. Thirdly, introspective data, which is used in ethnographic research, is indirect, impressionistic, subjective, and often not a reflection of real language use.

There is also limited evidence of the relevance of different types / methods of instruction, since most of the studies focus on specific class events (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos and Linnel (1996) for example, refer to conversations which cannot be considered part of a normal EFL classroom as they involve native speakers as well as learners) . In these studies, the focus is limited to the type of linguistic information that can be retrieved from the learners. Therefore, our understanding of how communication or interaction in the classroom affects acquisition is not extended by these studies. Also, learners' use of the language depends on internal or external factors, such as their linguistic repertoire, psycholinguistic context, or situational and language processing factors. It is not surprising, therefore that the replicability of studies in this context can be highly challenging (therefore their reliability is limited). In addition, a research design may be constraining, and thus not afford greater insight into the way language is actually used. For example, research relying on psychometric analysis of data, which takes into consideration the number of instances a certain form emerges during the course of the interaction, or relies on the number of turns (quantity), discounts the importance of the quality of the language produced (as evidenced in the study conducted by Németh and Kormos, 2001). Moreover, owing to the small number of participants in the research (which usually does not extend beyond a normal class size), the generalizability of the findings is further reduced. For example Newton (1995)

relies on one student's progress. The majority of the studies have been not only small-scale, but also short-term (Swain and Lapkin, 2000; Lynch and Mclean, 2000). They have, therefore, not contributed to our understanding of the long-term effects of interaction or specific applications of task.

Studies relied on multiple data sources; therefore, in order to assure the validity of the findings, exploration was conducted through triangulation of data, using various viewpoints to examine interlanguage development. In addition, descriptive data that have become available have made a contribution to a greater insight into the relationship between interaction and language learning.

Section II

Role of tasks in a language school

As distinct from the approach taken in many of the studies already described, the term 'task' has most frequently been used in language classes as being synonymous with terms such as exercise, activity and test. With the intention of making a language centre appeal to students, it has been observed that both verbal and written marketing and publicity information as related to the school relies on the use of the term 'task' that one would expect to approximate the term used by researchers in the field of applied linguistics. For example, a college of English in Perth, Western Australia, describes its syllabus in the following manner: the English covered is topic/task based with a strong emphasis on communicative English language for real life; the procedures of individual lessons include setting up group work, deciding on size and composition of groups, giving instructions on group tasks, ensuring that all groups are working appropriately. Consequently, in order to find out what teachers mean when they refer to task and to establish the current role of tasks in the language syllabus an investigation was carried out at a language school. This study focuses on both teachers' current teaching practices with regard to tasks in the language syllabus and the students' perceptions of their learning needs.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:
1. What do teachers mean when they refer to 'tasks'?
2. What is the role of tasks in the syllabus in current English language teaching practice?
3. To what extent do tasks meet the expectations of both teachers and students?

Method

Two research instruments were used in this study. First, teacher descriptions of actual classroom events in relationship to tasks were elicited. In the other, a self-report questionnaire, in which learners were asked to rate their perceived learning needs in the overall language program, was also used.

Eight teachers, who had had a number of years of teaching experience at one or more ELICOS colleges or secondary schools, were interviewed using a questionnaire (Appendix 2). As the researcher was also a member of the teaching staff, she had observed that teachers generally taught according to the PPP model, which involves a focus on grammatical features and accuracy. While following this model, tasks, although playing an important part in the process, become the product of instruction. The teacher interviews were conducted in pairs in order to allow for reflection on teaching practices as a collaborative process so that the teachers not only responded to questions but also elicited information from each other in connection with the questions. The interview questions related to the general concept of task, the usual pre- and post-task activities, the objectives generated from task, beliefs on student perceptions of tasks, and the perceived need for syllabus modification. The interviews lasted between ten and fifteen minutes each. The interviews were tape recorded and subsequently transcribed (see transcription of two interviews in Appendix 4).

Furthermore, twelve South-East Asian students, ranging in ages between eighteen and thirty, end all following an English for academic purposes course, were asked to

complete the questionnaire (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire required the students to think about their English language needs, and rate the importance of five classroom activities: studying grammar, reading, discussions with other students, writing for a specific purpose, and listening to the teacher's lectures. In addition to rating the importance of these activities, students were asked to write down the reasons for their answers. Although the questionnaire made no direct reference to task, it was intended that answers to the 'discussion' item would reveal student attitude to a basic aspect of successful task performance.

Findings

Teacher views

Almost all the responses to question one, "What is a task?", were uniform; namely, that tasks are assessment activities. Invariably, the teachers responded with answers such as:

a task is a user friendly test of what we have learnt,

it is a test of the grammar points that were learnt during the week,

an end point of some accumulation of study and knowledge.

Kinds of pre-task activities mentioned by the teachers were wider-ranging. One teacher related his pre-task activities to the objectives of the set criteria listed on the task. Since io his view most tasks concentrated on grammar, the teacher should teach that grammar, making sure that it was taught, presented, revised, practised, and corrected in the basic pre-task activity. Several teachers, on the other hand, identified a number of communicative activities as pre-task activities, although these were still used for the purpose of reinforcement of grammar points. All were of the opinion, in contrast to thinking related to task implementation theory, that without a solid foundation in grammar, students would be unable to complete their set tasks.

The main objectives in connection with the tasks were classified by the teachers as immediate and broad. The immediate objective, as referred to by teachers, was the way

in which the focus of instruction, i.e. grammar, was to be used in a meaningful context in writing (although in some cases, in speaking). The objective was further identified as developing "those tools that students have to find, have to create for themselves, that makes them competent at doing the task". A broad objective was the idea that tasks give the students a weekly pattern of enabling them to get into the habit of preparing for an assessment.

Teachers saw a dual role for the textbook, the subject of question four. Firstly it provided them with the content and methodologies inasmuch as the textbook gave guidelines to the sequencing of teaching points. Secondly, they viewed the importance of the textbook from the perspective that it provided a basic resource in the form of pictures, stories, or grammar activities that could be used to present particular points. Some teachers expressed the view that the *Headway* text was inadequate since the sequence of units was based on discrete grammar points rather than tasks to be performed by the students. In addition teachers articulated their belief that there was a lack of connection between the tasks, assessment structure and the *Headway* text, saying: "*Headway* is designed to bring out a lot of tenses" and "Teachers need to build the vocabulary into it so that the students can complete their tasks". One teacher objected to the use of the *Headway* course book, since it is based on British rather than Australian culture.

The teachers stated that although they would welcome some changes in the structure of the tasks, since the language school sets the tasks, they did not modify them in any way. The only modifications they considered appropriate were modifications of the ways to get to the task or the time involved. They reported taking advantage of the flexibility that was given to the timing of the tasks.

Evaluation or assessment criteria for the tasks was generally based on the specific grammar point that the instruction was based on that week. One of the teachers gave the following example: "If we study the past tense during the week, and on Friday the students are asked to write about an experience in their past, and they use the present simple, then obviously they have not grasped the task".

Post-task activities teachers organized for the students focused on either their immediate activities or the explanation of the grading and weighting of the tasks. In four of the eight responses teachers indicated that they wanted to give the learners a "break", give them something cognitively undemanding ("light") to do, and that this usually involved a discussion, talking about fun subjects, or communicative games. Two teachers stressed the importance of keeping the students aware of their progress, and to them the post-task activities focused on the explanation of the mark allocation, or the distribution of their cumulative scores. Only two teachers saw the opportunity to use the tasks in error correction exercises. They stated that they wrote up common errors and involved students in "find the mistakes" activities. Teachers believed that students understood that the purpose of the task was to test what had been taught. Some teachers conceded that for the majority of the students tasks are about getting marks and not about learning opportunities.

Most teachers expressed satisfaction with the existing syllabus, and that they saw the benefits in its comprehensive nature and the fact that it is a spiral syllabus, based on revision and recycling. They would, however, welcome some flexibility in topics given for writing, mainly so that this would eliminate the students' knowing prior to the task the kind of writing the task would ask for. Other teachers expressed their wish to incorporate a study skills program into the existing syllabus. In their view the existing syllabus did not offer adequate opportunities for the teaching of culturally relevant issues, or approaches to thinking and studying. They also voiced their concern about the limited time given to the introduction, practice and consolidation of grammatical skills.

Student views

Students views expressed in the same orders as the questionnaire are discussed prior to being displayed in Table 3.1. Ten out of twelve students who rated studying grammar "very important" and two "important" expected instruction of grammatical form for three main reasons. Firstly, they wanted to study English with the intention of passing a formal test that was usually grammar based. Success on such tests leads to job or promotional opportunities in many countries Secondly, they intended to

continue their studies at an English medium higher educational institution, and they recognized the value of accuracy of written expression. Thirdly, their expectations of what language classes should provide were met through instruction in grammar. They viewed communication tasks, pair or group-work as a way to practice certain structural points that have already been acquired through direct instruction, rather than the other way around.

Similarly, reading activities were rated "very important" or "important" by nine and three students, respectively. This stems from the relationship of reading to students' needs for vocabulary development, their wish to improve their TOEFL test scores, their understanding that English gives them the opportunity to learn about the world, and their perception that they could reinforce their knowledge of grammar by finding or noticing specific structures in written texts.

Students were either unsure of the importance of discussions with other students (as indicated by seven of the participants), or they considered them unimportant (by five participants). Their replies indicated that discussions "are just a waste of *your* class time" (as indicated by some students), since they could use out of class time for conversations with "reliable" sources, that is with native speakers of English. Furthermore, since students fail to be exposed to "correct" English in such situations, and communication is difficult owing to some problems with pronunciation, students often revert to communication in their native language which defeats the purpose of English language use. Some also added that they were not accustomed to accepting other people's points of view.

The writing activities in the classroom were rated "very important" or "important" by six participants each. They valued the opportunity to organize their thoughts and express their ideas on various topics, use grammar in context, and they even mentioned the positive relationship between writing practice and their potential fluency in speaking.

Students were unequivocal in their views about listening. Listening to teacher's lectures was uniformly rated "very important". Students perceived the relevance of

lectures in terms of dissemination of information and the improvement of their listening skills, pronunciation or oral expression.

Table 3.1summarizes the above findings:

Table 3.1: Student preference for activities

	Very important	Important	Unsure	Not Important
	N	N	N	N
Grammar	10	2	0	0
Reading	9	3	0	0
Discussion	0	0	7	5
Writing	6	6	0	0
Listening	12	0	0	0

N = 12 (Respondents)

Discussion

One of the main issues emerging from this study is related to the concept of task. In terms of application, teachers in this study lack adequate understanding of task. Therefore, the results are commensurate with previous informal observations that the term 'task' is used by teachers in a different way from the one outlined by applied linguists. Ellis (2003) makes the distinction between tasks and exercises based on whether they conform either to meaning or form focused language use. The term task, therefore, as used by the teachers in this study, suggests form-focused exercise. The

basic contention of task-based learning, however, stems from the belief that second language learners need to be involved in interaction, in which focus is placed primarily on the meaning as opposed to grammatical content of the intended message. Learners, by experiencing language as a medium of communication, attend to the communication task at hand without explicit focus on a specific discrete point of grammar (Long & Robinson, 1998). It is expected, however, that learners, through communication, would address the needs surfacing during the completion of tasks as related to the grammatical form. For this reason linguists promote task-based language learning through distinct stages (Willis & Willis, 1996). It is recommended that form is attended to during the post task phase, once the need for instruction or clarification arises. In this study, however, the pre-task stage activities, according to the teachers, included elements of the communicative model; the focus in such activities, however, was not on providing learners with opportunities for negotiation of meaning, but rather, on pre-taught form and structure practice.

Another area of interest stemming from the findings focuses on task being identified as an assessment instrument. Ellis (2003: 279) defines assessment tasks as "devices for eliciting and evaluating communicative performances from learners in the concept of language use that is meaning-focused and directed toward some specific goal". This reinforces the already identified disconnect between the term as referred to by teaching professionals and applied linguists. The findings indicate that teachers refer to tasks as assessment activities in which the primary focus is on the mastery of grammatical form. While they adopt the term with their syllabus description, they use it in a very reduced sense.

The teacher's role is brought into question with the analysis of task-based language learning. It is no longer perceived appropriate that teachers are involved in direct instruction; instead, they should adopt non-interventionist practices, wherein their role is to provide introduction and guidance through certain tasks, through which language learners are exposed to, notice and modify their own language. This indicates a corresponding shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learners and learning. In addition, this theory represents the introduction of a focus on the socio-cultural aspects of language, with emphasis on the way in which social and cultural interaction shapes

the realisation of meaning. The students' perception, however of what constitutes their learning and what they should encounter in the language classroom is different. Meara, Lightbown and Halter (1997) failed to find the classroom as a lexically rich environment. This is in contrast with the students' reported perceptions of the benefits of teacher talk as a listening exercise. Furthermore, there is an apparent reluctance by the students to be involved in in-class discussions. The students' views on the limited benefit of discussion (see table 3.1 above) compounds this issue even further. They consider listening to the teacher as vital, yet their views conflict with task-based theory.

Current linguistic theories and teaching approaches in second language acquisition emphasize the importance of communicative tasks. The problems many teachers face involve the selection and modification of communicative materials that could be adapted to fit the criteria of task-based syllabi. The desired outcomes of an instructional program not only depend on the instruction but also on the resources and materials that are implemented in the course of instruction. The study found that teachers relied on a limited set of resources, particularly the *Headway* coursebook. This resource is organised so as to direct learners' attention to discrete grammatical points. Therefore, in order to follow meaning focused instruction, there is a need for this text to be used in an adapted form. Rooney (2000) reports on textbook adaptation processes that involve moving focus from the analysis of accuracy and form (structure) to meaning and fluency. In his view, such a move requires a change in the methodological focus. If, however, one adapts a more liberal view of task, it is possible to perceive that every text may be developed into task. Candlin, Nelson and Johnson (2001) offer a social-semiotic point of view of written and oral texts, taking into consideration factors that affect not only meaning, but also different responses to a text. A learner negotiates through a text thereby seeing the text as dynamic, subjective, investigative, creative, as well as communicative in that it is open to interpretations. Through all these, every text may become a task for learners, since it carries the intrinsic quality of bringing about action. Looking at texts from this point of view should allow teachers to expose students to all kinds of text types.

The study also raised a number of questions. Both students and teachers raised their concern about the use of L1 in pair and group-work activities. The interesting

idea, which is the focus of the Swain and Lapkin (2000) study, that the use of L1 is beneficial in cognitively and linguistically complex tasks in L2, should be recognized or at least brought to the attention of teachers. Since most teachers have no control over the use of the students' first language, they hypothesize over the content of such oral interactions, and conclude that in most cases the focus of the interaction is a departure from the purpose of the task at hand. The students' lack of awareness of the benefits of L1 discussions could also be used in further investigations.

Another area of concern is related to feedback. The importance of providing learners with timely, task-specific feedback is recognized. However, it mainly focuses on accuracy, and in most cases becomes almost self-explanatory in the corrected papers. The question that remains unanswered, however, is whether error correction is inappropriate in communicative activities (Ulichny, 1996) since it hinders conversation, and if it is underutilised in students' written language production, whether teachers contribute to fossilization with their current practices.

The area that appears to have remained unexplored among classroom teachers relates to the benefits of task repetition. Lynch and Maclean (2000) saw the benefits of the repetitious nature of learner-to-learner talk in communicative tasks at different levels of proficiency. It is possible to hypothesize that students should repeat not only oral tasks, but also tasks requiring writing.

The learners' pragmatic competence is another area which needs further investigation. Both Németh and Kormos(2001) and Code and Anderson (2001) address the importance of raising learners' awareness of pragmatic systems of the language since these contribute to not only the appropriate use of the language but also to the general perception of fluency by both speakers and listeners.

Conclusion

It is possible to conclude that applied linguistic research on task-based language learning involves a number of issues ranging from the cognitive demands of the tasks, the effectiveness of communication, along with the benefits of planning and task

repetition. Research has also produced insight into the value of tasks and the ways tasks should be conducted. However, investigation relating to task-based language learning has revealed a range of concerns. Facilitating the learners' grammatical understanding of the language is one of the areas that needs further development. Another area of concern relates to communication strategies the learners may resort to in response to the demands of the task. In short, research is comparatively fragmented, the details of which are relevent in specific classroom contexts and therefore not readily transferable to dissimilar contexts.

In comparison with the above research, the survey of ELICOS institutions has revealed much more basic concerns. Teachers surveyed in this study appear to be unaware of the depth of research associated with task-based language learning and implementation of task-based learning principles is not surfacing in their classrooms. They use the term task in reference to assessment instruments and use communicative activities in the classroom in order to reinforce certain grammatical forms. Assessment tasks, however, do not involve analytic processes; rather they are the products of synthetic processes.

In this study it was found that actual teaching practices seem to meet students' expectations. Teachers follow a grammar-based textbook, instruct the grammatical form and structure, conduct weekly assessments in the form of "tasks", and involve students in group communicative activities (tasks) for the reinforcement of grammatical points. This practice is approved by the students and it seems that it meets their needs.

The juxtaposition of these very different viewpoints is very revealing of the gap between theory and practice which exists in the profession within Australia, which would regard itself as providing leadership in the field.

CHAPTER V

COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE TASK-BASED LANGUAGE SYLLABUS

CHAPTER V

COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE TASK-BASED LANGUAGE SYLLABUS

Introduction

This chapter reviews the recent literature in connection with language learning in general, and more specifically, language learning within the context of computer aided learning in order to find answers to two basic questions. Firstly, it seeks to find out whether within a task-based language syllabus, which places such great emphasis on communication, an appropriate way to integrate the use of computers has been developed. Secondly, it examines the implications of the use of computers on the language learning processes. Finally as an illustration the study reviews a language learning web-page that is freely available to language learners in order to illustrate what is available.

Traditional versus task-based approaches to second language acquisition

Some traditional approaches to teaching involve behaviouristic principles of learning, while others are based on objectivism. The behaviouristic principles, which involved teacher centred instruction, saw the goal of the instructional programme in behaviour modification of the kind that would become evident in the exhibition of desired responses to stimuli in certain situations. The technology that was utilized in such learning was based on repetitive language drills on "drill and practice" (Warschauer, 1996 b). When computers were developed, the computer was perceived as an ideal vehicle for repeated exposure to the same material, especially as it could

provide not only immediate feedback, but it also allowed individualized lessons. These typically contained sequences of content broken into sections, with end of section questions to determine whether the learner required remedial content or was ready to go on to the next section.

Objectivism, on the other hand, assumed that "the essential elements of instruction were communication and deduction" (Collentine, 2000: 45). According to this view, it was the teacher's role to transfer knowledge of a particular grammar point such as the second conditional, for example, through a description and explanation of a phenomenon. The idea that there is a single 'correct' representation of knowledge is labelled by constructivists as objectivist. In other words, the mode of instruction remains teacher-centred. Learners, in turn, utilized the explanation and, alternatively, applied a rule or construct of that knowledge in communicative tasks or exercises. The use of behaviourist drill and practice software still provided opportunities to focus on form, and made material available on individualized basis.

The task-based approach to language learning is based on constructivist learning theories according to which acquisition of knowledge is a dynamic, inductive process, achieved through active, and generative interaction between learners, teachers, and the culturally relevant real life task at hand. In general, the constructivist theory signals a move away from the traditional idea of the context of learning in which the transmission of knowledge occurs through the domination of the teacher, and instead focuses on the needs, desires, and interests of the learner. Corresponding with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, learners are guided through collaborative (interactive) language activities, the content of which becomes progressively more and more meaningful at different levels (semantic, syntactic, morphosyntactic, or grammatical) since learners will identify the constraints that hinder comprehension. This is achieved when input becomes intake, that is when learners notice certain constraints, and either through negotiation or through the teacher's scaffolding discover and solve the problem at hand.

Task-based interaction could be characterised by learners managing the interaction without the help of their teachers in a context where the focus is on the accomplishment of the task rather than the language used. It is assumed that learners' linguistic

competence is extended, developed, and challenged through this process of negotiation of both turns and meaning. Seedhouse (1999) quotes both Willis and Breen in his attempt to understand the concept of task-based interaction in language classrooms. Tasks involve the use of language with the intention of focusing on "the outcome of the activity rather than the language used to achieve that outcome" (Willis, 1990: 127), and a task-based syllabus "approaches communicative knowledge as a unified system wherein any use of the new language requires the learner to continually match choices from his or her linguistic repertoire to the social requirements and expectations governing communicative behaviour and to meanings and ideas he wishes to share" (Breen, 1987: 161). However, transcripts of actual classroom interaction reveal the interaction often to be minimalistic, cryptic, impoverished and even indexical, possibly relying heavily on pragmatic paralinguistic strategies to convey the meaning (Seedhouse, 1999). From his findings Seedhouse concluded that except for clarification, confirmation requests, comprehension checks, and self repetitions which may or may not be conducive to language acquisition through modified output, there are broader and less restricted varieties of communication which may contribute to the same or similar outcomes as those performed during focused task performances. This is perhaps achievable through interaction using the interactive media that has now become available with information technology.

The development of such an educational pedagogy has interesting parallels with the development of personal computer technology. The pedagogical goal of computer-assisted activities is in enhancing the opportunities of meaningful learner-computer, learner-learner interaction with the ultimate aim of improving learners' ability to function within the language. It is through the Internet that learners can be involved in computer-mediated communication (CMC), and the entire world can become the classroom. Learners can interact within their own sphere of interest, they can communicate one-to-one through electronic mail (e-mail) or one-to many using multiple-user-domains object oriented (MOO) software, they can integrate limitless authentic materials in different forms (visual, textual, graphic, or auditory), and they can create, develop, or author pages of their own or collaborate with others during the same creative process. There are, however, concerns with regard to the use of computer technology, particularly the resources available through the Internet. In their open-

forum discussion paper Doughty and Long (2002) among other issues address the issue of computer-mediated communication. They suggest exercising caution about the popular generalization that increased interaction and the alleviation of inhibition in connection with second language production automatically suggest advancement in language acquisition. They further argue for the need of rich input, elaborated texts in wide variety, and texts that are genuine and relevant. To them the view that the Internet provides rich input should be taken with caution, especially if considered without the guidance of pedagogical principles, since Internet input could be overwhelming. Their concern about the availability of traditional teaching resources on the Internet was also raised.

Computers and Language Learning

The fundamental argument for communicative task-based syllabi stems from the idea that language is acquired through the negotiation of meaning in meaningful contexts, which in turn leads not only to fluency but also to grammatical learning. Therefore, when students are involved in pair work / small group tasks they are free to speak without inhibition since they are away from the 'public arena'. If another component is added to this, that is computer technology, the lessons are more individualized and the participants are further removed from the threats of being 'in the eyes of the wider public'. Learners, then, work at their own pace and are responsible for their own learning. The role of computers in such 'interaction' can be perceived in terms of preliminary activities for the completion of tasks, such as are described in the following sections of this paper. For example, the special software may provide additional reading or listening resources, aid vocabulary development and may help in consolidating grammatical knowledge

Interactive reading, listening comprehension, vocabulary grammar and acquisition

Language acquisition (foreign, or second) involves development in the four so-called macro-skill areas, receptive and productive: reading and listening, writing and speaking. As until now the availability of speech recognition programs has been

limited, the studies have not addressed issues relating to speech and computer assisted language learning.

Providing opportunities to interact is not only the focus of ESL professionals. Interactivity with the aid of new technology is the focus of the Draper, Cargill and Catts' (2002) study. They report on the problems associated with lecturing to large groups in general degree programs, especially where the lack of opportunities for interaction is concerned from both pragmatic and social viewpoints, and propose the use of 'equipment' (as they call it) that modern technology affords. In other words, they propose a programmed software to enable students to better access the course materials and obtain feedback on their grasp of the materials. With such computerised instruction, through more convenient and affordable assessment and feedback, lecturers could monitor their students' comprehension of the content of their learning and attune the subject matter to meet with the students level of understanding, initiate, organise, and monitor peer discussions thereby contributing to building of learning communities. Such a 'tool' is potentially extremely important for ESL learners. With the help of this technology, learners could signal their understanding and provide lecturers with an insight as to where modifications in their delivery of the lecture content are called for

Interactive reading

Hegelheimer and Chapelle (2000) investigated the methodological issues that are related to second language acquisition research, their relationship with Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) reading materials, and the noticing hypothesis. This theory suggests that all input that learners are exposed to will only become intake for SLA, that is input comprehended both syntactically and semantically, provided it is consciously noticed. The context in which noticing is most likely to take place is during interaction since in this context learners negotiate the meaning and thus modify their own linguistic output, which offers learners opportunities to contextualize newly acquired vocabulary and structures by using them in conversations (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, and Linnel, 1996). Thereby learners are able to expand their interlanguage capacity, and to obtain input and feedback. Consequently, they can modify their output through negotiation with an attempt at greater comprehensibility.

Noticing, however, also takes place during reading when learners' attention focuses on individual vocabulary items that hinder comprehension.

This is where CALL reading materials have the potential of being extremely useful, as they allow learners to use specially created glosses that provide modified input of challenging words. Furthermore, the program also has the function to monitor and record the glosses that are called upon during the reading exercise. In addition to the reading the learners complete vocabulary and reading comprehension questions, which again are recorded and consequently evaluated. Through conelational analyses it is then possible to establish the relationship between the correct replies to the questions and the learners dependence on the glosses. CALL materials could further shed light on which stimuli (the type of input modifications) are the most effective in fostering long-term language acquisition.

An attempt at remediation, or positive habit formation was the focus of Watanabe's (2002) study, which looked at the benefits of reading practice conducted ou computers, which allowed for the ease of modifying texts. Fifty-five students of EFL were placed into control and experimental groups. The two groups answered comprehension questions following their reading. The control group read unaltered reading materials on the computer, while the experiimental group had the same texts, which were chunked. The idea of chunking originates from the 'phrase reading' technique, which may help remedy students' so-called 'had reading' habits. These reading habits are the consequence of a grammar-translation method of teaching a foreign language, and they include (among other habits) the habit of translating and processing sentences word-by-word, which not only slows down the readers, but also hinders their comprehension. Although the findings do not indicate any significant favourable difference in the performance of the experimental group, extended exposure to reading materials and reading practice in general was found to be beneficial in both groups. It could further bo suggested, however, that any benefit gained is attributable to the novelty effect of such interaction with computers.

Interactive listening / 'viewing'

A similar situation to that of reading exists in regard to listening / 'viewing' comprehension. For students working with listening resources available through computers, available programs can assist in providing valuable preliminary exposure to language prior to task work. Hoven (1999: 90) offers an insight in the form of an overview into listening and viewing comprehension. In this case listening/viewing was aided by computers, in order to have greater access to interaction in the form that allows the integration of both auditory and visual stimuli, that is information received through both the auditory and the visual channels. According to Hoven's research into listening comprehension, the focus of classroom listening '...is turning away from *mental phenomenon* towards *social phenomenon* models', that is, the context of "texts" is expanding, and now includes non-verbal channels of communication. Thereby listening and viewing, that is being exposed to audio-visual material, at the same time is essential for the analysis and consequent control of the meaning. Cross-cultural analysis, or at least awareness raising activities of paralinguistic features of communications, therefore becomes essential in second or foreign language classrooms.

The question that needs to be asked is related to the merit of the computer-based environment. Why is it, in other words, necessary to move away from learner-to-learner interaction in favour of learner-to-computer interaction? Other than individualizing a lesson on listening / viewing comprehension (not mentioned in the study), if the focus of the interaction is not only the negotiation of meaning through verbal or auditory means, but also through the negotiation of paralinguistic features, involving learners in creative interaction is an alternative that is more conducive to language acquisition processes.

Interactive vocabulary development

It is of paramount importance that learners learn a wide range of vocabulary in meaningful contexts prior to completing tasks. However, computer technology offers a range of information on a variety of topics that is not necessarily readily accessible to ESL learners. Groot (2000) focused on the need of the language learners to acquire a

relatively large number of words in a short period of time in order to be able to function as competent and effective communicators and described a computer assisted vocabulary acquisition programme (CAVOCA), that uses authentic language materials. The unknown words are embedded in such semantic contexts and are attributed such semantic properties that it is difficult for the learners to contextually deduce their meaning. The programme helps learners by systematically exposing them to the vocabulary in various syntactic, semantic, and collocational contexts as well as the equivalent in the first language. It is hypothesised that such a method mirrors first language vocabulary acquisition in its requirement of mental operations and thus contributes to the operationalization of the vocabulary, in turn resulting in long term retention.

In order to establish whether the CAVOCA programme contributed to long-term vocabulary acquisition, the study also had a control group of students who relied on bilingual vocabulary lists Immediate post-session, and delayed tests were administered to measure the learners' differences in receptive knowledge of the specific vocabulary and to establish which method yielded better long-term results. The findings indicate that the immediate post-test retention rates were higher among the learners in the control group. In contrast, learners in the experimental group who had to exercise a different depth of language processing showed long-term retention rates.

Since the participants in this study were learners at high levels of competence, it could be presumed that these learners had already established their own learning strategies, and therefore the control group could outperform the experimental group The long term vocabulary retention of the experimental group, however, provides an insight into possible ways of incorporating a novel and highly successful tool in the form of a computer programme such as CAVOCA into practice and thereby contributing to learners' long-term lexical extension and development.

Nikolova (2002) also investigated the possibility of using computer technology (multimedia materials) in the language-learning programme, especially as the materials could be implemented in vocabulary acquisition. Sixty-two native speakers of English, learners of French as a second language, were assigned to a control and an experimental

group. Their task was to study twenty French words from a text that had been downloaded from the Internet. The learners in the control group were given annotations in the form of either text, sound, or pictures of the target words. The experimental group needed to create their own annotations for the same twenty words with the help of dictionaries. Two diagnostic tests were administered, immediately following the experiment and a month after, measuring both the short and long term acquisition rates. It was revealed that authoring a multimedia module, i.e. creating their own definitions, contributed to higher rates of acquisition and long term retention of words than merely attempting to learn the meaning of given target words. Interestingly, the study also addressed the issues in connection with textual versus visual stimuli given to the control group. Words with pictures and text ("dual-coding") were found to be remembered better than annotations using text only.

An additional finding is related to context. It was shown by the study that authentic texts downloaded from the Internet could be used in their unaltered state thereby contributing not only to the teacher' resources, but also to the students' perception of being in receipt of meaningful, up to date, current texts. This study however fails to address issues concerning the quality of the annotations and the problem whether the subjects would show comparable competence in the usage of the same vocabulary items in their own creations of texts. Furthermore, the study also fails to mention the very limited use of the computer resources, in particular the Internet.

Grammar

A valuable post-task grammar consolidation opportunity is afforded through specially designed computer programs. Collentine (2000) sees an opportunity to expand the context of second language acquisition research and thereby using the computers as research venues, which afford insight into not only the product of language learning but also the process. The user-behaviour tracking technology the study refers to documents processes related to the construction of grammatical knowledge. Forty university students of Spanish as a foreign language, whose consolidation of the grammatical rules relating to indirect speech was tracked as they navigated through visual and auditory

stimuli (a slide show) and generated indirect speech, participated in the study. Through the computer mediated (slide show) scaffolding mechanism involving a video component, sample exemplars using colorization (in which parts of the sentences were highlighted), additional consciousness-raising question and comprehension check, the user-behaviour tracking technology recorded the types and kinds of application that were utilized during the navigation of the programme. The premise of the research was that exposure to materials saturated with linguistic code features promotes grammatical competence through consciousness-raising, which in turn leads the learners to infer the underlying rules of a grammatical structure. Doughty and Long (2002: 15) contend that "focus on meaning ... can be improved upon, in terms of both rate and ultimate attainment, by periodic attention to language as object". The results indicate that some processes could be associated with instructional gains, although not all. Improvement in grammatical performance could be attributed to enhancement, both aural and visual, to cooperation (albeit with the computer), and to the constructing nature of the activity. In addition, as with any instructional activity, those learners who participated actively in the creative processes in generating sentences using indirect speech rather than answering questions in as few words as possible appeared to benefit the most from the instruction.

From the description of the programme, it would appear, in addition, that the learners have to be fully conversant with the linguistic description of the language (main clause, subordinate clause, pronoun, conjunction, to name only a few) if they were to follow the instructions of the task. Only with prior instruction of grammar would learners be equipped to complete such an exercise and be effective participants.

Applications and implications of CALL for task

It would appear that the language learning resources available through computer technology and the Internet are applicable for either pre-task preparatory activities, such as pre-task reading, listening or vocabulary extension activities or post-task grammar consolidation activities. However, it is with the idea of authoring and with synchronous and asynchronous communication than the technology allows for the approximation of task-like application.

Authoring

Dlaska (2002) sees the main advantages of the multimedia learning environment in the promotion of not only learner autonomy and collaborative learning, but also in the ability to involve learners in their learning processes through their authorship of learning materials. These could be utilized in a number of different areas, such as linguistic analysis of texts, the formulation of rules for the consolidation of grammar, vocabulary and structures, creation of subject specific learning databases, and cultural awareness training.

Synchronous and asynchronous communication

Warschauer (1996, a) saw the benefits of electronic discussion in its 'equalising effect', that is, in the balanced, and equal participation of all speakers. Sixteen students attending a composition class participated in this study Warschauer examined the students' discussion (four groups of four students) conducted face-to-face and electronically and compared the differences in participation with several factors such as age, gender, and language proficiency. It was found that the lack of oral fluency, which constrained face-to-face participation, nevertheless made participants uninhibited in electronic discussions. It could almost be stated that electronic 'conversations' reduce affective factors in interaction. Moreover, the language that was used in electronic discussions was lexically and syntactically more complex, more formal; however, it lacked features typical of oral interaction, such as reformulation, comprehension or confirmation checks, questioning and paraphrasing, which are considered salient features of language acquisition through the negotiation of meaning.

Curtin (2002) investigated the strengths and weaknesses of bulletin boards in tutorials in response to the need emphasized by higher educationists for greater flexibility in the mode of delivery of educational content, and interest in encouraging students to take a more active interest in the readings. Fourteen students participated in eleven forums relating to each week's reading in the form of critical summary, which was subsequently assessed. Students were also asked to evaluate the program through a questionnaire focusing on the students' perceptions of technical, social, motivational

and learning possibilities. The findings revealed positive attitudes on motivational, temporal grounds, however, there was preference for traditional tutorials as they felt the need for confirmation or reiteration by the lecturer (the authority figure). While they felt comfortable about presenting their views in this form, they still did not like the 'faceless' nature of the environment. Nevertheless, the researcher and the students saw the opportunity that this online environment affords in interactivity and community building among the students.

Negretti (1999) looked at Internet technology in its potential tool in the language acquisition process. Specifically, she investigated Webchat, the synchronous interaction tool, from the viewpoint of conversation analysis. Conversation analysis concentrates on the process of individuals' engagement in interaction and their making sense of the world through the use of language, in addition to identifying communicative strategies used in effective communications, especially as they could be related to context, actions, and relevance. Her main attempt was, however, to evaluate the effect of the communication context on possible language acquisition.

Eight undergraduate intermediate to advanced level ESL students, whose first language was Italian, joined a Web-chat site and were involved in conversation with both native and non-native students for a period of four days The total number of participants was thirty-six. The students' primary goal was language learning. The analysis concentrated on the structure of the interaction, turn taking, specific written devices as alternatives to paralinguistic features (the use of capital letters, punctuation, emoticons, onomatopoeia, little icons, or embedded pictures), and sequencing.

The results indicate students' difficulty in following normal turntaking rules and the relevance of contributions. However, the interesting aspect of the findings is the approach taken up by the students in order to deal with these difficulties. In addition, the students also relied on various communication strategies to convey paralinguistic meanings (through punctuation), and made use of their somewhat limited lexical resources to communicate in a colloquial style.

In an EFL environment the Internet connection can offer learners the opportunity to interact with both native and non-native speakers in English. Thereby, learners can be involved in meaningful, relevant interactions. The question is whether such interaction is readily transferable to listening or speaking skill development, and also whether this type of interaction contributes to improvement in writing skills. Further investigation is needed in these areas.

Sotillo (2000) looked at computer assisted language learning (CALL) and computer mediated communication (CMC) in both synchronous and asynchronous interaction. In particular, the study investigated the discourse functions and the syntactic complexity of the output produced by the twenty-five ESL learners attending academic writing classes. The discussions were based on a set of reading materials.

Asynchronous discussions were found to be more beneficial for learners since they had the chance to reflect, and think critically prior to taking turns in the discussion. In addition, it was found that learners produced qualitatively different, syntactically more complex contributions to the discussions than in their synchronous responses, as they were able to pay attention to spelling, grammar, form, and punctuation.

Synchronous discussions, on the other hand yielded modifications that were similar to those found in face-to-face interactions. The modifications generated during the synchronous discussion sessions were used for requests for clarification, explanation, elaboration, comprehension checks, corrective moves, and apologies, and even humour The teachers also had a chance to monitor not only the students' progress, but also to post their own comments on the discussion. The fact that the participants were more interested in exchanging information among themselves than in responding to teachers' questions also supports the idea that learners learn best not when they are guided, but left to their own devices in the selection of their own internal syllabuses. This type of communication motivated student involvement (a judgement based on the sheer volume of the transcription), and encouraged communication. Although there was evidence of error in their output, students even corrected each other However, fewer errors occurred in the asynchronous discussions, time afforded by reflection obviously being a factor.

The technology that affords such communications challenges the relations and means of delivering information in the classroom since it not only contributes to students' autonomy but also to motivation.

Fedderholt (2001) looked at information technology from the perspective of the opportunities it offers to explore a different mode of communication, and to enhance students' cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Nineteen Japanese and Danish students each participated in weekly e-mail exchanges for the duration of ten weeks. At the end of the ten-week period students completed a questionnaire on their perceptions of the course, in particular their e-mail experience component of the course. They all maintained that they were interested in the project, and welcomed interaction with another non-native speaker. They all learnt about each others' culture in regard to matters above the stereotypical level and found to their surprise that there were many similarities in their daily lives. They also acknowledged the discovery of differences between the two cultures and their amusement as well as curiosity and eagerness to find out about various issues. They commented on their pen pals' use of language, and although they found that they were at ease writing to another non-native speaker, they nevertheless were motivated to perform to the best of their abilities.

Such activities should prove to be not only conducive to linguistic development of the students, but also become mutually enriching, culturally relevant and meaningful learning experiences in the age of the computer technology. It is the new computer technology that affords culturally relevant interaction in the second language, since as Warschauer (2000: 514) points out:

> ...in the 21st century there will be a growing basis for learners around the
> world to view English as their own language of additional communication,
> rather than as a foreign language controlled by the "Other". Teachers would
> do well to exploit this situation by creating opportunities for communication
> based on the values, cultural norms, and needs of learners, rather than on the
> syllabi and texts developed in England and the United States.

Feedback

Timely, meaningful, and specific feedback, which could originate from both the teacher and a peer, feeds into task and ultimately language acquisition. Bowers (1995) reports on a successful application of Internet technology in order to access both scientific articles and scientific dialogue, and to create a special learning log that helps with common errors and their correction. He edited the scientific writing of a group of Mexican researchers and graduate students, thereby helping the writing to be of publishable standard. Traditional editing, error correction, notation of appropriate language or grammatical features, as he observed, failed to produce any improvement in the writing. With the intention of facilitating the researchers' overall and, hopefully, long-term language development, he designed a computer learning log program with notations signalling reasons for the common errors produced in the writing. Bowers found that this learning log helped reduce the number of errors in the researchers' writing considerably, especially in comparison to the writing they produced prior to the introduction of this special computerised feature in the editing process. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesise that perhaps a novel approach to error correction with the implementation of computer technology could be beneficial for the learners' long-term language development.

DiGiovanni and Nagaswami (2001) investigated on-line and face-to-face peer reviews, a study which provides one of the examinations of true task work. In particular, they concentrated on the types of negotiation employed by students in both modes of interaction as well as their perceptions of these tasks. Thirty-two advanced level ESL students attending writing classes participated in the study. Their paired interaction in peer review tasks was recorded, printed out from their on-line work, and assessed through a questionnaire about their perceptions of the usefulness and preference for on-line or face-to-face reviews. The findings indicate that the online interaction was more beneficial for a number of reasons. Firstly, students were focused on task, and were generally more critical and effective negotiators. Secondly, teachers found monitoring students' interaction easier since they could have both access to the interaction, and opportunity to redirect or assist the participants. Finally, students had comments at their disposal in the form of a reliable hard copy of the interaction for

fiurther revision of their drafts. The negative aspect of the online reviews was that the limited exposure of the participants to the process of reviewing constrained their effectiveness. Provided additional training is offered to the students, particularly in the appropriateness, relevance and helpfulness of the comments, which could facilitate not only their understanding of the different types of negotiations, but also their overall language development, peer reviews conducted online could become a regular feature of a writing curriculum in any second language learning class.

Motivation

Success in task performance is not only determined by linguistic or cognitive factors. A number of affective and socio-dynamic parameters also play an important role in language output. Dörnyei and Kormos's (2000) study examined the interrelationship of a number of variables that determine task engagement and success. Variables such as learner motivation, group dynamics, the influence of interlocutors, the relationship between interlocutors, or group leadership influence the quantity of the interaction as well as the quality.

Chou (2001) based her study on the principles of constructivism, learner-centeredness and socio-cultural theories in her examination of synchronous computer mediated communication systems. She reported on a study designed to improve online communication skills using WebCT. Online discussions were observed, student-instructor interaction was recorded, student self evaluation surveys were completed, and communication effectiveness, social presence, and communication interface were rated. From the observations, the student interaction with the technology develops through four stages: the so-called "wow", "fun", "oh-oh", and "back-to-normal" stages (as these names are almost self-explanatory, further consideration of the stages will be given in comparison with Kannan and Macknish's study following). Overall, it was found that the discussions empowered learners to take control of their learning processes, increased opportunities for interpersonal connections, and facilitated collaborative learning and community building.

Interaction with technology does not always mean an environment that is free from concerns. Kaonan and Macknish (2000) addressed the challenges associated with on-line learning in the ESL context. They saw the main areas of concern in connection with motivation, feedback, self-directed learning, and computer technology. With the intention to raise issues and make recommendations to teachers attempting to rely on computer technology, they shared a description of their experiences of the on-line learning environment as well as the learners' evaluation results of the course. Corresponding with Chou's findings, they identified the following four stages of student motivation: apprehension, curiosity, peak, and fall stages. Learners indicated initial interest toward the novel learning environment, however, once they felt familiar with the equipment and the mechanics of the medium, and once they explored the avenues leading to the completion of task at hand, their motivation in completing further tasks using the same medium became lower. They also found that intrinsic motivation resulting from the ability to interact through the computers was not sufficient, extrinsic motivation was needed in the form of assessment of the task.

Learners' rated the feedback they received as appropriate; they thought that the feedback was easy to understand and was motivating since it encouraged them to learn. They, however, perceived themselves as receivers of information, rather than as active learners.

Issues in connection with learning styles relate to the idea that learners need to be instructed in the ways to adopt to new styles of learning in order to become more enquiring learners. Collentine (2000: 46) questioned certain learning conditions under which "...learners (certain types of learners) resist the exploratory, process oriented nature of constructivist learning environment". It remained in the hands of the teachers to promote active and inquiring learning processes through a number of different perspectives.

Stepp-Greany (2002), in her descriptive study, investigated student perceptions of the instructor's role in technology-enhanced language learning (TELL), the relevance of technological components in their learning, and the effects of technology on the learning experience. Learners of Spanish as a foreign language (in total 358) participated in activities involving real-life tasks using the Internet, discussions, and pen

pal communications, using online resources (dictionaries, grammar explanation pages). These activities were assessed components of their course.

Following the coursework, the learners completed a questionnaire on their perceptions. The results indicated that although students appreciated the autonomy offered by the computer interaction, and gained confidence as independent learners, they valued the teachers' input, and even in the computer mediated environment relied on the instructor facilitated instruction. They further reported on their perceived improvement in reading and listening skills, which in turn, they believed would be beneficial to their communication skills. The students, however, failed to develop sustained interest in the process, in spite of the expectations that the technology and resources available through the Internet would enhance cultural awareness. The students also attributed limited, if any, perceived significance of the writing exercises to their improvement of writing skills. Moreover, they welcomed the opportunity to use the computer lab since it made the course more interesting, but they indicated preference for a more personalized interaction (face-to-face) with both their peers and teacher. The researcher's informal observations also indicated limited student-to-student and teacher-to-student interaction in comparison with the regular classroom.

Teacher and student perceptions

Taking this area of student reactions further, Selwyn (1997) laid down the foundation for a scale to measure post secondary school aged students' attitudes toward computers, in the light of the fact that numerous educational institutions are in the process of developing computer-based curricula. He relied on four theoretical constructs in his proposed assessment of attitudes toward computers: affective, and cognitive attitudes, perceived usefulness, and behavioural control. He suggested that such measures are necessary for curriculum developers in order to make informed choices either prior to incorporating information technology into the curriculum, or alternatively, after a trial run of a course.

Jones (2001) presents an overview of literature on a number of different issues relating to computer assisted language learning (CALL). He looks at CALL as a resource, the benefits of computer conferencing, the levels of interest of teachers in

incorporating CALL into their curricula, and the willingness and readiness of students to use CALL-based materials. He found the problems associated with CALL attributable to the lack of teacher training in the field of educational technology, and consequently teachers' reluctance to develop appropriate pathways for the learners in their curricula. Also, he concludes that recognition should be made of student-teacher interaction if CALL is to be implemented into learning processes aimed at meeting the needs of language learners who are ready to learn through and with the interaction of technological innovations.

Language teaching materials on the world wide web

While there are many computer programs and websites dealing with English language learning, in essence, they tend to refer to mainly one aspect of the language, i.e. grammar. As Doughty and Long (2000) observed "under the guise of 'resources', technology contributes to the proliferation of traditional language teaching materials, either to accompany synthetic, language-as-object courses, newly packaged for online use, or simply marketed as stand-alone tools". There are hundreds of web-pages that are available for free for anyone with the Internet connection. One such example is the focus of this analysis. It can be found under the web-address 'Englishlearner com' (http://www.englishlearner.com/tests/test.html). It is titled *English Lessons and Tests*, and was created by Elek Máthé. This could be a resource for language learners who would like to have additional language activities, especially if they seek to consolidate their grammatical skills.

This website offers interactive language exercises for learners of English at beginner, lower intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced levels. The exercises involve learners' selection of an appropriate activity, be it a reading comprehension or a grammatical exercise, and supplying the correct answer to a given question through matching, recognition and production of grammatical patterns, multiple choice, or paired associate drills.

The materials could be useful for extended practice in grammar, in vocabulary development, or in reading comprehension. There is a function on completion of all the exercises to check the answers, and with some materials scores are kept in the form of percentages for the students. The possibility also exists for the learners to get help, through hints, with the provision of the first letter of the answers. Multimedia functions are not activated.

For a beginner, for example, the page looks like the following table:

Beginner

Crossword	Reading	Grammar	Vocabulary
Part 1 Animals 1	Guess the word	Present Simple/ Continuous	Jumbled words
Part 2 Animals 2		Adjectives Adverbs	
Part 3 Animals 3		Questions and answers	
		Simple Past	
		Was or were?	

(http://www.englishlearner.com/tests/test.html Retrieved November, 2002).

For an upper intermediate learner, the page is also a table such as the following:

Upper-Intermediate

Multiple-choice tests	Grammar	Reading
Complete a story 1 Tenses Test	Verb forms 2	Reading test 1
Complete a story 2 The causative	Accuracy test	The Evil Landlady ActionMaze
		Missing words 1

(http://www.englishlearner.com/tests/test.html) Retrieved November, 2002).

The learner is invited to choose one activity, and following the instruction on a given page either provide an answer to a question or guess the answer. The texts appear to be appropriate for the levels indicated.

On the positive side, navigation through this programme is easy, and it may offer remedial help in a less threatening context to learners in focusing on certain aspects of skills (linguistic form and meaning) which may be necessary for the learner to be able to follow normal classroom activities. Moreover, repeated use and practice of, for example, select grammatical features could be tailored to the learners' individual needs, and they could work at the pace that meets their level of comfort. Therefore, an exercise such as offered by this program may even be motivating for some learners.

On the negative side, however, drill practice such as this could become tedious for learners since it involves only mechanical practice, and does not include any creative processes. Although it is easy to navigate between exercises, completing the individual exercises can be difficult (they involve only typing - there is no clicking and dragging option) owing to the mechanics of the typing involved. The exercises offer limited help in vocabulary development, as individual vocabulary items are presented in isolation,

without context. Feedback is only given on completion of all the exercises on a given page.

Except for the action maze reading, none of the exercises offers any features that would activate the range of possibilities that are readily available through the technology. In other words, all of these exercises could be done as paper and pencil drills. In addition, unless learners use the programme in pairs, there is no possibility to interact with peers or even the teacher; therefore they are not conducive to collaborative learning or community building. Consequently, these activities do not resemble task work. Unfortunately, this web-page is representative of a large number of available sites offering language learning resources.

Conclusion

Research to date suggests that there is certainly a place for the integration of computer technology into current pedagogical practices, provided that the tasks are related to the needs of the learners, that they are contributing to the overall language development of the learners, and that they are effective. Computer programs, if used prior to specific task work, may aid learners' listening and reading comprehension (Hoven, 1999; Watanabe, 2002; Hegelheimer & Chapelle, 2000). In addition, in the pre-task phase of learning, valuable opportunities for vocabulary development are available through the use of CALL materials (Groot, 2000; Nikolova, 2002). In the post-task stage, guided by the feedback obtained through performing the task, learners may utilise computer programs to direct their attention from meaning to form (Collentine, 2000).

It has been found that authentic texts can be used in their unaltered state, with computer programmes offering help in input modifications through images or texts (Nikolova, 2002). Computer assisted (CALL) materials can be programmed to offer different types of input modifications that suits the needs of a wider sphere of learners, and contribute to their lexical development, comprehension (both listening and reading),

writing development (structurally, syntactically, semantically, or stylistically), and more importantly, to their cultural awareness.

Computers also provide the opportunities for learners to not only control the context of their learning, or guide their internal syllabuses, but also control their learning materials through authorship (Dlaska, 2002). Such engagement in creative processes can predispose learners to engage in mental processes, which in turn can become beneficial to language acquisition.

With the implementation of computer technology, novel approaches to error correction can also become beneficial to the learners' long-term language development. Feedback, both from teachers and peers, can also be more appropriate, meaningful and therefore more relevant.

Computers can also play an important part in the maintenance of learners' motivation, especially due to the potentially limitless resources offered through the Internet. The type of activities offered can also become more varied and relevant to the learners' needs. If computer assisted tasks or interactions are called for, it has been found that involvement in or successful completion of the tasks is not always sufficient to maintain learners' interest. It is necessary to make computer assisted tasks assessable components of learning programmes.

Finally, further investigation is needed in computer-assisted language learning, especially in connection with the following areas: the quality of both synchronous and asynchronous communication or interaction, the communication strategies that are implemented in lieu of paralinguistic features of the language, the learners' preferred instruction type and learners' perceptions of the role of computers in both their learning and future lives.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

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English has become the international language of global communication. Currently the number of non-native English language users outnumber the native users. English also influences the ways other languages of the world are changing. It has permeated many languages it has come in contact with and has affected not only their vocabulary but also their syntax through loan translations. Since ways of communication are not based on cultural or linguistic universals, English has affected the ways people adapt and modify their native languages and become a signal of speakers' adherence to accepted cultural norms.

The spread of English has also contributed to social and economic inequalities by the acceptance and status afforded to different varieties of English. The number of learners involved in English language instruction worldwide has increased despite the fact that not all competent ESL or EFL speakers carry the same status. Their status also depends on the currency they hold with their first language background and the variety of English they approximate in their language production. Therefore, language policy makers face the challenge to create policies that not only ensure the maintenance of quality but also result in a response to the needs of the emerging language communities in order to guarantee equity

It is the duty of English language teaching professionals to create appropriate language learning programs that address the needs of future participants in the evolving society. Programs need to take into consideration the communicative needs of the learners in order to enable them to satisfy specific needs in language use and become effective communicators in particular contexts. Furthermore, these programs need to take into account the emergence of a mobile academic population and cater for their needs by fostering formal, academic competence in the language. Such programs also

need to integrate computer technology into pedagogical practices, since computers offer wide-ranging resources, they motivate students and become relevant to student needs.

Global forces at play have generated the need for standardisation and the acceptance of modern commodities in general. Demand has thus been created for novel approaches to language teaching not only in the form of new delivery options as related to the e-learning context, but in the creation of teaching methodologies. It appears that the task-based language teaching methodology corresponds to the needs of the current learner population, and has the potential to become a standard mode of teaching

Task-based learning focuses on communication involving negotiation of meaning in a context that is authentic and relevant outside the classroom. Task-based learning where tasks are open-ended, culturally relevant and meaningful, match the needs generated by the global language learning population. Attempts at selecting optimal content of instruction have been replaced by the processes involved in language learning. In other words, the focus is on the means through which language learning may be fostered and facilitated. Learners need to be primarily involved in meaningful communication and their attention to form is channelled only after the completion of a communicative task; that is, focus on the grammatical form of the language becomes a remedial aspect of their learning. At the same time, there is a movement away from a focus based on outcomes, rather emphasis is placed on the means, manner and way instruction is approached and carried out.

Applied linguistic research concerning task has been extensive and has produced insights into the values of task and the ways of task implementation. The values highlighted include the cognitive challenges that learners are exposed to during task completion, the effectiveness of communication, the benefits of first language use, planning and task repetition. However, further research is needed in the implementation of task-based language learning since existing research is fairly fragmented and it becomes relevant only to specific classrooms, and not readily transferable to broader contexts. It is possible to conclude that in relation to task-based language learning a real theory is yet to emerge.

Moving from the above mentioned research to the classroom, this candidate's investigations described in this portfolio have found that task-based teaching

methodology has not been implemented in the actual classroom situation to the extent that may be anticipated from research (as reported in the literature review here). In addition, it was found that teacher awareness of the issues arising out of the research has not been manifested. In the candidate's investigation teachers' choice of methodology was more likely to be guided by the English language Coursebook which is not organised according to task-based teaching principles and consequently it was found that approaches to teaching have become eclectic.

There is an obvious need for an integrated approach based on theoretical and experimental knowledge of language teaching that can inform decision making processes. It should also be mandated that every teacher take part in professional development, as it is through continued development, interest and involvement that teachers may take a more active part in curriculum planning and development. If this were to happen it may result in improved teaching delivery which would give learners the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to participate more equitably in the new globalised context of English language learning which may eliminate the emerging inequalities.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Please complete the questionnaire. Please answer all questions. Circle the most appropriate /best response. Your honest comments are valued.

1. Which region do you currently live in?

    Asia   □
    Australia   □
    Africa   □
    North America   □
    South America   □
    Europe   □
    Oceania   □

2. Do you follow a set syllabus in the teaching of English language courses?

    Yes   □
    No   □

3. How would you describe your syllabus?

    Task based   □
    Grammar based   □
    Communicative   □
    Eclectic   □
    Other   □   please specify _____

    _____

    _____

4. Are the same/ different teaching methods used at all levels?

    please explain _____

    _____

5. What are the primary learning objectives (goals) of the students as stated in the course documentation?

(Please indicate the extent of your agreement by placing a number (1-5) next to the following statements which correspond to the following codes:

1 – strongly agree;
2 – agree;
3 – neither agree nor disagree;
4 – disagree;
5 – strongly disagree.)

Develop grammatical competence ☐
Develop communicative competence ☐
Develop oral fluency ☐
Develop writing skills ☐
All of the above ☐
Other ☐ please specify .

_____

_____

6. What age group does your language school cater for?

5 - 12 year olds ☐
13 - 15 year olds ☐
16 - 20 year olds ☐
21 - 30 year olds ☐
above 30 year olds ☐

comments (if any) _____

_____

7. How would you describe the teaching methodology used?

Presentation / practice / production model ☐
Communicative ☐
Taskbased ☐
Grammar - translation ☐
Other ☐ please specify ιy _____

_____

_____

8.   Do you use a set textbook?

Yes   ☐   which book(s) ? _____ _____
No   ☐

9.   What assessment instruments are used in your centre? (if any)

Oral tests   ☐
Written tests   ☐
Reading comprehension tests   ☐
Listening comprehension tests   ☐
Grmmmar tests   ☐
Other   ☐   please specify _____ _____ _____

_____ _____

10.   Are individual lessons based on specific grammatical concepts?

Yes   ☐
No   ☐

11.   During a day-to-day lesson, on average, what percentage of the lessons is
      devoted to language production (either spoken or written)?

20%   ☐
25%   ☐
35%   ☐
40%   ☐
50%   ☐
Other   ☐   please specify _____

12.   Is your syllabus guided by specific teaching / learning objectives or by the
      learners' needs?

Objectives   ☐
Learners' needs   ☐

please explain _____ _____ _____ `

_____ _____

13.   Do you (teachers) believe in "holistic" language learning? Why?

please explain ___ _____

_____

14. Do teachers experience any problems related to the teaching method used? What kind of problems?

please explain _____

_____

15. What methodological options are available to teachers to deal with individual differences of learners?

please explain _____

_____

Do you wish to add any further comments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix 2

Teacher interview questions

1. What is a task?

2. Think of a task (or several tasks) in your progmm. What do your pre-task activities focus on?

3. What are your main objectives in connection with the tasks?

4. In what ways does the recommended textbook help you / students in working toward meeting the objectives of the task(s)?

5. In what ways do you modify the set tasks?

6. On what do you base your evaluation / assessment of the completed task(s)?

7. What post-task activities do you organise?

8. What do you think of the students' perception or understanding of the purpose of the task(s)?

9. In your opinion what do students learn from the tasks?

10. What kind of changes would you welcome in the syllabus?

Thank you very much for answering these questions. I appreciate your contribution and time devoted to this recording.

Remember that you will not be identified in any way, and all the recorded data remains confidential.

Appendix 3

Student questionnaire

Think about your English language needs, and rate the importance of the following five classroom activities:
Please give reasons for your answers.

1. Studying grammar

      Very important   Important   Unsure   Not important

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Reading

      Very important   Important   Unsure   Not important

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Discussions with other students

      Very important   Important   Unsure   Not important

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Writing for a specific purpose

      Very important   Important   Unsure   Not important

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

5. Listening to the teacher's lectures

Very important	Important	Unsure	Not important

Why? _____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 4

Interview 1

1. What is a task?

A: A task is a ... an assessment activity ... with clear objectives that quite often can be interactive..

B: I think so too ... I tell the students that a task is a user friendly test of what we have learnt.

2. Think of a task (or several tasks) in your program. What do your pre-task activities focus on?

A: Well, clearly, the teacher must know what the objectives are and concentrate on the criteria listed in the task ... If it's a task that concentrates on grammar, then the teacher must teach that grammar, make sure that it's taught, presented, revised and practised ... and corrected. That's the basic pre-task activity.

B: Yes, I agree with that, also, some tasks require a little bit of research, so a pre-task activity could involve going on an excursion or learning how to use the library and finding their way around the library, learning the Dewey decimal system, for example.

3. What are your main objectives in connection with the tasks?

B: These are very clearly set out in the course outline, and it is usually grammar based but it is done in such a way that with extended writing the grammar is used in a meaningful context and can't be just learnt off by heart, ... it has to be understood.

A: Yes, I agree with that, and also there is a broad objective that is ... it gives the students a weekly pattern to enable them to get into the habit of preparing for an assessment.

4. In what ways does the recommended textbook help you / students in working toward meeting the objectives of the task(s)?

B: I don't use it as the first step in teaching, I like to take it as a needs ... the teaching objective as a needs based thing, so I can teach from where the students are ... and often use my own teaching methods, or illustrations, or some real objects or pictures. ... I find the visual is often a good way to introduce something or mime or an activity rather than ... OK, we are going to learn this bit of grammar and open up to page 42, ... I find that quite boring, but it's a good

backup and then once it's ... the recommended grammar has been taught, you can say, ... OK, let's now look at the rules.

A: Yes, as a reference the textbook is always useful even if the particular activities in it aren't appropriate to the age group or the level.

5. In what ways do you modify the set tasks?

B: The task as they are now are so well planned and set out that I haven't had to modify them, though when I was in XXX, I modified the mark allocation for the oral presentations – 60 marks were given for the preparation and the note taking and 40 for the oral. I thought that was back to front and I just changed that around. Apart from that, I don't modify them.

A: Yes, and the timing of the task, obviously, leaves some degree of flexibility, after all these are tasks and not examinations.

6. On what do you base your evaluation / assessment of the completed task(s)?

B: The criteria are set out quite clearly on the cover sheet, all the teachers have copies of the task pack and so you know exactly, ... and the course outline, ... you know exactly what your objectives are, had tho. so objectives been achieved, so that's how I evaluate ...

A: and indeed the students should also have copies of the ..

B: yes, every Monday morning I start with the course outline ... what are we going to learn, how we learn it, this is the test to see if we have learnt it ...

7. What post-task activities do you organise?

B: Not much in the way of activities, but I do like to keep the students very much focused and aware of their progress, so their task scores are known to each of them, their cumulative scores are known, and the way these marks are allocated, so 5% for this, 20%, 40%, so they are involved in taking responsibility for the continuing learning ...

A: Yeah, that's important, I mean, students must learn from their mistakes or else the activity is not worthless, ... but that is how the learning is best achieved.

8. What do you think of the students' perception or understanding of the purpose of the task(s)?

A: Do you feel that they appreciate having the task on Fridays, or if they don't appreciate it, should they appreciate it?

B: I don't know whether appreciate is the word, they ... they are very aware of the importance of the Friday task, ... so much so that if they don't really want to come, they do the task and then they go, they know they have to be there for the task, ... they understand that the purpose of the task is to test what has been taught, apart from that, I don't know, I haven't asked them if they like it or not ...

A: They probably don't, but they should appreciate it.

9. In your opinion what do students learn from the tasks?

A: Well, from the tasks themselves, possibly not too much, but from the work leading up to the tasks, that is the key, I think the tasks are a means to an end.

B: Yes, I quite agree there, and an evaluation tool for the teacher, and that's an easy way to find out, do the students understand, have I taught them ...

10. What kind of changes would you welcome in the syllabus?

B: I am quite happy with the syllabus as it stands, I think it's quite comprehensive, it is ... I've forgotten the word ... not a circular ...

A: it is a revision and recycling ..

B: it is a revision and recycling, so that you visit the ... that's right a spiral ... a spiral syllabus, so that what is covered in Elementary is also covered in a deeper, in a deeper ... yeah ... in more depth, so that I'm quite happy, especially with the new changes for the task pack, it doesn't make it quite so frantic, ... week by week, ... I'm quite happy with it.

A: Yes, I mean, within the task, ... in the task pack ... there should be a little bit of room to maneuver, ... for instance, ... changes which are being made at the moment allow a teacher to substitute the titles or the topics for pieces of writing, so that the students don't have any ... prior knowledge of what the task is going to be about, ... they can't prepare or ...

B: that's right, ... what I like about it mostly is that you can't teach it, you can't teach the task, it is a true test of the students' understanding, and their understanding is shown by their ability to use that ..

A: Well, I think that's all that is.

Interview 2

I. What is a task?

C: A task is speaking and writing. It's a comprehension activity, or sometimes, ... I guess it's a test of the points that were learnt during the week, the grammar points, either by writing or speaking, or reading or comprehending.

D: It's a set objective, usually it's in writing form, can be speaking, but it's usually in writing which is examining the students' knowledge of the specific grammar point or vocabulary area or, as you said, whatever the task calls for that week, ... it's like the end point of some accumulation of study and knowledge.

2. Think of a task (or several tasks) in your program. What do your pre-task activities focus on?

D: We are based in high school, which is very much based on repetition of grammar, so my pre-task activities would be focusing on students' having absorbed the grammar point ... and then ... perhaps there is a specific structure that is involved in them using the grammar point whether it's using a story or a leaflet or something like that ... and then perhaps there is a topic area that's used to convey the grammar point and that probably involves some sort of vocabulary that they hopefully would have absorbed and can use within the task itself, not necessarily a blank repetition ... but that they have absorbed the grammar or the vocab, and they can give it back to you with their own slant on it, ... I mean, ...

quite often a task is based on their own experiences on stuff like that, so that it's not just blank repetition, isn't it? ... or ... I mean ... What do you do?

C: Well, ideally it would always be nice to get them interested in a task ... wouldn't it? ... but hopefully we get some discussion going ... ahm ... bring some relevance into their lives ... that ... try to get them interested in it ...try to relate it to their experiences ... and stuff' ... and also try to make sure they understand that the task each week is helping them to achieve certain ... you know ... writing, grammar points, etc. etc.

3. What are your main objectives in connection with the tasks?

D: Your objective is that they got to have those tools ... we help them find those tools for themselves ... so that they can ... they are competent al doing the task ... yeah ... the main objectives are ... make sure they know what they are doing, or they have an awareness of what the task is or what the task is for, ... why we are doing th s so that they can do the task and that the task enables them to do other things in their lives as well, ... because we can't always focus on the task all the time.

C: Yeah

4. In what ways does the recommended textbook help you / students in working toward meeting the objectives of the task(s)?

D: I suppose the textbook provides ways and methodologies to explain, ... it provides a structure for the grammar point, basically, ... I mean the topic that is usually set with the textbook ... is just a means to convey the grammar point and is hopefully in a way that that is interesting and stimulating to the students ... and ... I suppose how it helps me ... it provides you with these ways and means of meeting the objectives of the tasks ... it's like stepping stones or whatever, you don't necessarily have to use those stepping stones but they provide some sort of point for you to go off and find your own stuff that is more interesting.

C: ' Yeah, OK, I guess it's a guideline to some degree ... I think it provides hopefully some pictures and stories and some interesting resources that you can use ... to ... present points that you are teaching ...

D: and that's important to have those resources ...

C: because you can't always use your own brain, sometimes you just don't know ...

5. In what ways do you modify the set tasks?

C: I don't ... task is set ... I don't play with it ...
D: not really ...
C: I modify the ways to get to the task ...
D: present the topics or ideas, things
C: modify to me implies change ... I don't ..

6. On what do you base your evaluation / assessment of the completed task(s)?

D: what points do we use to assess the task. I would say if it's a grammar point where ... if the task is based on a grammar point then if I'm looking for them

using the grammar point ... then ... using the grammar point is what I'm looking for ... in the way that the task's stipulated ... if we say use the past simple to write about an experience and they use the present simple, then obviously they haven't grasped the task, ... yeah ...so grammar, structure, vocab, flow, ... like it there a flow within the work, ... does it make sense, has it got connecting ideas. When you mark something what else do you look for?

C: I think you've covered everything here.

7.   What post-task activities do you organise?

C: Usually something light, quizzes, sport activities, visits to the dentist (ha.. ha..), something that is fun, that gets them talking obout ... talking and gets them out of the writing in a serious mode, but you can actually make a lot of use of that if they have been quite heavily involved in something quite serious you can really use that to get them talking.

D: Yeah, I think it's discussion that's the main thing ... actually getting them using a diff'erent area rather than just writing ... but ... actually talking about things and then maybe after ... when you hand back the task, then it can be a good time for them to focus ... look at the task and go OK I stuffed up in this area and should be more reflective ... what I mean ... for me ... post-task can mean immediately after or down the line, but directly afterwards, no opposite, if they've been talking, get them to listen so that they are not using just that one thing all the time ...

8.   What do you think of the students' perception or understanding of the purpose of the task(s)?

C: Hopefully, they understand that they are doing these things to improve their language and once they've grasped these various points of the task that they can go on and use those things in their future lives. I mean, that's the holistic viewpoint, isn't it?

D: Well, I think, it's important that they do have an understanding of the purpose, and I think in terms of just having an outline and giving them that outline, pointing to it constantly and reminding them that they have it ... asking them to point where the main teaching part is in the task ...

C: and also what you do with it as well, I mean, quite often you are just totally focused on the task that you are actually thinking that a task will teach me how to use this and I can get this in my future to get this goal or whatever ...

9.   In your opinion what do students learn from the tasks?

C: Hopefully, they'll learn some actual language ... ideas, I guess hopefully they learn lots of good vocabulary they can take away with them in their studies ... exam techniques, writing techniques, structures ... hopefully they are exposed to lots of ... some of the very diff'erent ways of thinking, ideas ..

D: Yeah, I agree with all those, but I think there is some specific things as well, hopefully they'll learn the grammar point, they learn how that can be used in writing, how writing help them achieve certain goals and it's not just writing ...

so reading nnd speaking and how that can help them achieve certain things in the future. I think that's important.

10.   What kind of changes would you welcome in the syllabus?

C: Study skills. I don't have enough time to teach study skills because there's an emphasis on grammar points and repetition of grammar points, ... and yet it is important to repeat and so on, but I'd like to be able to have more time or feel less pressure to teach grammar points, and to be able to teach study skills and critical thinking and not just focusing on the grammar point but being able to teach grammar points through a different way ... rather than just ... here is a sheet listen to the tape, you know what I mean ...

D: Yeah, sure ... so like more vocab, more speaking and that sort of stuff, that is what I'd welcome in the syllabus, rather than just this repetition ... but ... then ... it's important to have grammar ... balance is what I'd like a balance of these things, especially with kids who come from overseas ... their way of how they look ... approach to thinking and studying is completely different ... and how ... so we also having to teach them about the culture as well ... and how we think, and we don't have a chance to do that unless it's a byproduct ... I'm being too idealistic?

C: The only changes I could suggest ... I'd like that the fact that we seem to be teaching English that is based on British culture and not Australian culture ... most of the books teach ... they don't relate ... it's very hard to run these tapes ... I think a change would be that a syllabus is constantly changing and we as teachers contribute to that change ... and that we do get time to initiate more of it ...

D: Indeed.