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CHAPTER III

LEARNING TASKS AND TASK COMPONENTS

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

-- Confucius

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the task as a basic building block in the language curriculum. We shall look at some definitions of the term, and see how tasks are related to other elements in the curriculum.

3.1 What is a task?

In turning to the concept of 'task', the first thing we need to do is decide just what we mean by the term itself. If we look at what other people have written, we find that the term has been defined in a variety of ways. In general education and in other fields such as psychology there are many different definitions of tasks. There is also quite a variety from within the field of second language teaching, as the following definitions show.

"A task is a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others freely, or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making airtime reservations, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, taking hotel reservations, writing a cheque, finding a street destination, and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work and play, and in between.

(By Long. 1985)

The above definition is a non-technical, non-linguistic one. In fact it describes the sorts of things that non-linguistics would tell you they do if they were to be asked. In the same way as learners if asked why they are attending a language course, are more likely to
say. So that I can talk to my neighbours so that I can master the use of the subjunctive. The second thing to notice is that some of the examples may well not involve language (one can point a fence without talking). Finally the task may be subsidiary components of a larger task for example; the task of weighing a patient may be a sub component of the task of giving a medical examination.

Now let us see another definition. It is from a Dictionary of Applied Linguistics.

...an activity or action which is carried out as a result of processing or undertaking language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an introduction, and performing a command, may be referred to as task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative ... since it provides a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of language for its own sake. (Richards, Platt and Weber 1986)

In the above definition, we see that the authors take a pedagogical perspective. Tasks are defined in terms of what the learner will do in the classroom rather than in the outside world. This distinction between what might be called 'pedagogic' tasks and real world tasks is an important one.

The final definition is from Breen (1987b:23):-

... any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. 'Task' is, therefore, assumed to refer to a range of work plans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning - from the simple and brief exercise type to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making.

In general we shall consider a communicative 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 on form.
The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right.

3.2 What are the components of a task?

The definition of a language learning task requires specification of four components. The goals, the input, the activities derived from this input, and finally the roles implied for teacher and learners.

_Candlin_ (1987) suggests that tasks should contain inputs, roles, setting, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedback. Input refers to the data presented for learners to work on. Roles specify the relationship between participants in a task. Setting refers to the classroom and out-of-class arrangements entitled in the task. Actions are the procedures and sub-tasks to be performed by the learners. Monitoring refers to the supervision of the task in progress. Outcomes are the goals of the task, and feedback refers to the evaluation of the task.

_Shavelson and Stern_ (1981), who are concerned with general educational planning suggest that task design should take into consideration the following elements:

- Content – the subject to be taught
- Materials – the things that learners can observe/manipulate.
- Activities – the things that learners and teacher will be doing during the lesson.
- Goals – the teachers’ general aim for the task
- Students – their abilities, needs and interests are important
- Social community – the class as a whole and its sense of groupness.

_Wright_ (1987) suggests that tasks need minimally contain just two elements. These are input data which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners and an initiating question which instructs learners on what to do with the data. He rejects the notation that objectives or outcomes are obligatory on the grounds that, with certain tasks, a variety of outcomes might be possible and that these might be quite different from the ones anticipated by the teacher.
3.2.i. Goals

Goals are the vague general intentions behind any given learning task. They provide a point of contact between the task and the broader curriculum. The answer that a teacher might give the question: 'why did you get learners to engage in task X? will generally take the form of some sort of goal statement. Possible answers might be:

'I wanted to develop their confidence in speaking'
'I wanted to develop their personal writing skills.'
'I wanted to encourage them to negotiate information between each other to develop their interactional skills.'
'I wanted to develop their study skills'.

Goals may relate to a range of general outcomes (communicative, affective or cognitive) or may directly describe teacher or learner behaviour. Another point worth noting is that goals are not always explicitly stated, although they usually be inferred from an examination of a task. In addition there is rarely a simple one-to-one relationship between goals and tasks. In some cases a complex task involving a range of activities might be simultaneously moving learners towards several goals.

One classification of goals comes from a recent large scale language curriculum project in Australia (The Australian Language Levels, or ALL project):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>establish and maintain interpersonal relations, and through this to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, and feelings, and to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-cultural</td>
<td>have some understanding of the everyday life patterns of their contemporary age group in the target language speech community, this will cover their life at home, at school and at leisure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning-how</td>
<td>to negotiate and plan their work over a certain time span, and learn how to set themselves realistic objectives and how to devise these means to attain them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural awareness</td>
<td>to have some understanding of the systematic nature of language and the way it works</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note that the goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and that there may be tasks which cover more than one goal such as a small group discussion on socio-cultural goals. Since we are particularly concerned with communicative outcomes, it is worth noting that the all project subcategories communicative goals into three goal areas:

1. Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, and through this to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings, and to get things done.

2. Acquiring information from more or less public sources in the largest language (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, documents. Signs, notices, films television, slides, tapes, radio, public announcements, lectures or written reports etc.) and using this information in some way.

3. Listening to, reading, enjoying and responding to creative and imaginative uses of the target language (e.g. stories, poems, songs, rhymes, drama) and for certain learners, creating them themselves.

3.2.ii. Input

Input refers to the data that form the point of departure for the task. In fact, input for communicative tasks can be derived from a wide range of sources. Let's look at some of them.

- Letters
- Newspaper extracts
- Picture stories
- Telecom account
- Business cards
- Memo note
- Photographs
- Family tree
- Drawings
- Postcards
- Passport photos
- Street map
- Magazine quiz
- recipe
- Extract from a play
- Weather forecast
- Diary
- Bus timetable
- Notice board items
- Star signs
- Hotel entertainment
- Shopping lists
- Year book
- Note to a friend
- Menu
- Sports quiz
This list, which is by no means exhaustive, illustrates the range of data sources which exist all around us. Most, with a little imagination can form the basis for communicative tasks.

A similar range of stimulating source materials provides useful input for tasks which focus on writing. Morris and Stewart – Dore suggest that while it is probable, neither necessary nor desirable for teachers to provide students with the opportunity of learning all the different styles and registers of writing, it is possible to extent the writing options traditionally offered to students by making the following forms available as examples:

- Articles for newspapers, magazines and journals
- Reports to different kinds of groups
- Radio and television scripts and documentaries
- Puppet plays
- News stories and reports
- Short stories, poems and plays
- Bulletins and newsletters
- Editorials
- Instructions and handbooks
- Minutes of meetings
- Progress reports
- Recipes

The inclusion of such materials as input raises again the question of authenticity: what mixture of authentic and specially written material is valid: what do we mean by authenticity? A rule of thumb definition for authentic here is any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching.

3.2.iii. Activities

Activities specify what learners will actually do with the input which forms the point of departure for the learning task. Let us now take a look at some activity types. The first has been noted in classroom centered research directed towards the question: what classroom activities and pattern of organization stimulate interactive language use? It has been found that small group, two way information gap tasks seem to be particularly
appropriate for stimulating such language. A two way task is one which each participant has some knowledge not shared by any other participant. The participants are then set a task or a problem, which can only be solved if they pool their information. We shall now look at three different activities, proposed by Prabhu, Clark and Pattision (1989).

In the Bangalore project, three principle activity types are used: information gap, reasoning gap, opinion gap. These are explained as follows:

- **Information - gap activity** which involves a transfer of given information from one person to another or from one form to another or from one place to another, generally calling for the decoding or encoding of information or into language. One example is 'pair' in which each member of the pair has a part of the total information (for example an incomplete picture) and attempts to convey it verbally to the other. Another example is completing a tabular representation with information available in a given piece of text. The activity involves selection of relevant information as well, and learners may have to meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer.

- **Reasoning gap activity** which involves deriving some new information from given information through process of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships or patterns. One example is working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetable. Another is deciding what course of action is best (for example cheapest or quickest) for a given purpose and within given constraints. The activity necessarily involves comprehending and conveying information, as an information gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not identical with that initially comprehended. There is a piece of reasoning which connects the two.

- **Opinion gap activity** is one which involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude in response to a given situation. One example is story completion another is taking part in the discussion of a social issue. The activity may involve using factual information and formulating arguments to justify one's opinion, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions.
Clark (1987) proposes seven broad communicative activity types. Language programmes, he suggests should enable learners to:

- Solve problems through social interaction with others, for example, participate in conversation related to the pursuit of a common activity with others, obtain goods and services and necessary information through conversation or correspondence, make arrangements and come to decisions with others (convergent tasks);
- Establish and maintain relationship and discuss topics of interest through the exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitude, feelings, experiences and plans (divergent tasks);
- Search for specific information for some given purpose, process it, and use it in some way (for example, find out the cheapest way to go from A to B);
- Listen to or read information, process it, use it in some way (for example, read a news item and discuss it with someone, read an article and summarize it, listen to a lecture and write notes on it);
- Give information in spoken or written form on the basis of personal experience (for example, give a talk, write a report; diary, record a set of instructions how to do something, or fill in a form);
- Listen to read or view a story, poem, features etc. and perhaps respond to it personally in some way (for example, read a story and discuss it);
- Create an imaginative text (for some lectures only).

(Pattison 1987: 238 – 9)

Pattison (1987) also proposes seven activity types. These are as follows:

1. **Questions and answers:** These activities are based on the notation of creating, an information gap by letting learners make a person and secret choice from a list of language items which all fit into a given frame (e.g. the location of a person or object). The aim is for learners to discover secret choices. This activity can be used to practice almost any structure, function or notation.

2. **Dialogues and role plays:** These can be wholly scripted as wholly improvised, however, learners are given some choice or what to say, and if there is a clear aim to be achieved by what they say in their role plays, they may participate more willingly and learn more thoroughly than when they are told to simply repeat a given dialogue in pairs.
3. **Matching activities:** Here, the task for the learner is to recognize matching items, or to complete pairs or sets, 'Bingo', given phrases are examples of matching activities.

4. **Communication Strategies:** These are activities designed to encourage learners to practice communication strategies such as paraphrasing, borrowing or inventing words, using gesture, asking for feedback, simplifying.

5. **Pictures and picture stories:** Many communication activities can be stimulated through the use of pictures (e.g. spot the difference, memory test, sequencing pictures to tell a story.

6. **Puzzles and problems:** Once again, there are many different types of puzzles and problems. These require learners to make guesses, draw on their general knowledge and personal experience, use their imagination and test their powers of logical reasoning.

7. **Discussing and decisions:** These require the learner to collect and share information to reach a decision (e.g. to decide which items from a list are essential to have on a desert island).

The Clark and Pattison typologies are quite different. Clark focuses on the sorts of uses to which we put language in the real world, while Pattison has a much more pedagogic focus. So far task goals, input and activities are looked upon. The discussion and examples have demonstrated two difficulties; the difficulty of separating syllabus from methodology; and the difficulty of isolating individual skills when fully communicative behaviour is being encouraged. At the same time, a system for describing learning tasks which accommodate a wide range of teaching and learning behaviour from the conventional to the experimental have been developed. Various aspects like how the real world/pedagogic distinction manifest itself in all the task component, learner independence and the unpredictability of outcome in tasks where the interpretation and intention of the learner may differ from that of the teacher have been looked upon in this chapter. Now we shall look in greater detail at the roles of task.

3.3 Learner's Roles

'Role' refers to use part that learners and teachers are expressed to play in carrying at learning task as well as social and interpersonal relationships between the participants.
In their comprehensive analysis of approaches and methods in language teaching, Richards and Rodgers (1986) devote considerable attention to learner and teacher roles. They point out that a method (and, in our case, a task) will reflect assumptions about the contributions that learners can make to the learning process. The following table is based on the analysis carried out by Richards and Rodgers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Oral / Situational</td>
<td>- Learner listens to teacher and repeats no control over content or methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Audio-lingual</td>
<td>- Learner has little control, reacts to teacher direction, passive reactive role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communicative</td>
<td>- Learner has an active, negotiative role, should contribute as well as receive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Total Physical Response(TRP)</td>
<td>- Learner is a listener and performer, little influence over content and none over methodology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Silent Way</td>
<td>- Learner learns through systematic way and must become independent, autonomous and responsible learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Community Language</td>
<td>- Learners are members of a social group or community; more from dependence to autonomy as learning progresses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Natural Approach</td>
<td>- Learners play an active role and have relatively high degree of control over content language production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Suggestopedia</td>
<td>- Learners are passive, have little control over content or methods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis demonstrates the wide variety of learner roles, which are possible in the language class. These include the following:
- The learner is the passive recipient of outside stimuli;
- The learner is an interactor and negotiator who is capable of giving as well as taking.
- The learner is a listener and performer who has little control over the content of learning.
- The learner is involved in a process of personal growth;
- The learner is involved in a social activity, and the social and interpersonal roles of the learner cannot be divorced from psychological learning processes;
- Learners must take responsibilities for their own learning, developing autonomy and skills in learning – how to learn.

The last point raises the important issue of learners developing an awareness of themselves as learners. There is some controversy about whether or not learners should consciously reflect on language structure and learning process, although there seems to be a growing consensus that such reflection is valuable. There is also evidence that different learners will benefit from different learning strategies, and that they should therefore be encouraged to find out and apply those strategies which suit the best. The range of strategies can be seen in the following list. They require learners to adopt a range of roles, which are relatively uncommon in traditional instruction. They require the learner to be adaptable, creative, inventive, and most of all independent.

1. **Finding your own way**: Helping learners to discover what ways of learning work best for them. For example, how they best learn vocabulary items. It also implies learners discovering other ways of learning from other learners in the class, and using all senses to learn in as independent a way as they can.

2. **Organizing information about language**: Developing ways for learners to organize what they have learned, through making notes and charts, grouping items and displaying them for easy reference.

3. **Being Active**: Experimenting with different ways of creating and using language, for example with new ways of using words, playing with different arrangements of sounds and structures, inventing imaginative tests and playing language games.

4. **Making your own opportunities**: Learning language actively by performing tasks in class, for example by interacting with fellow learners and the teacher,
asking questions, listening regularly to the language, reading different kinds of
texts and practicing writing. There is much scope for rehearsal in the language
class.

5. **Learning to live with opportunities**: Not always relying on certain and safe
answers but trying to work things out with the help of resources, for example
using dictionaries. We might include here helping learners to keep on talking and
to understand the general gist of texts, rather than every language item in them.

6. **Using mnemonics**: Helping learners find quick ways of recalling what they have
learned, for example through rhymes, word associations, word classes, particular
contexts of occurrence, experiences and personal memories.

7. **Making errors work**: Learning to live with errors and helping learners to
prevent errors from blocking their participation in tasks. Helping learner to ask
for error correction and help and to learn from the errors they will make. It helps
if learners can estimate the relative gravity of errors and realize that errors vary
according to channel and text type.

8. **Using your linguistic knowledge**: Helping learners to make comparisons with
what they know about language from their own mother tongue, as well as
building on what they have already learned in the new language, both in terms of
formal rules and conventions for language use.

9. **Letting the context help you**: Help learners to realize the relationship that exists
between words, sounds and structures, developing their capacity to guess and
infer meaning from the surrounding context and from their background
knowledge and out of class experience.

10. **Learning to make intelligent guesses**: Developing the learners’ capacity to work
out meanings. Specifically, to focus both on the main parts of the message and to
relate these to the overall text and context. To guess on the basis of probabilities
of occurrence and meaning, and to try to work from what is relevant to the text
and task in hand.

While learning strategies, learning how to learn tasks and grammatical awareness tasks,
which invite learners to reflect on language and learning, might appear too non
communicative, they can be devised in ways which make them interactive and
communicative. Any activity which encourages learners to think about the nature of
language and ways of learning implies a more critical and reflective learner role than those in which the learner is memorizing or manipulating language.

3.4 Teacher's Roles

Turning from a focus on the roles of learners to those of the teacher, Richards and Rodgers (1986) suggest that learner roles are closely related to the functions and status of the teacher. They point out that some methods are totally teacher dependent, while others view the teacher as a catalyst, consultant or guide.

Richards and Rodgers point out that teacher roles are related to the following issues:

- The types of functions teachers are expected to fulfil, e.g. whether that of practice director, consulter or model.
- The degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place.
- The degree to which the teacher is responsible for content.
- The interactional patterns what develop between teachers and learners.

(Richards and Rodgers 1986: 24)

Problems are likely to occur when there is a mismatch between the role perceptions of the teacher and the learner. For example, it is not uncommon in adult ESL classes for the teacher to see self as a guide and catalyst for classroom communication while the learners see her as someone who should be providing explicit instruction and modeling the target language. In such a situation it is necessary for there to be consultation and negotiation between teacher and learners.

Dubin and Olshtain (1986) look at a range of metaphors or providing an account of teacher and learner roles. They suggest that:

The term play and players hold out a rich potential for developing language learners. Only superficially is play a recreational activity, confined to the interests of children ... As a player, one must participate actively. At the same time, one must concentrate by observing what others do. Players take part in all of the interactional configurations which are important in a communicative language course: as individual, in pairs, in small groups, and in whole group displays. As players participants can come to view language learning as something quite different from knowing which they associate with other schooling experiences in their lives.  

(Dubin and Olshtain L: 81 – 2)
One might think that in reading and writing tasks, being essentially solitary activities, learners will adopt a restricted range of roles. In fact, the roles can be varied and diverse as they are in oral/aural language work.

We have seen that tasks can be analyzed in terms of power and control: Drills and the like vest power in the teacher, while communicative tasks such as role plays, problem solving tasks and simulations give much more control to the learner. There is little doubt that the types of communicative tasks which have been developed for second and foreign language learning are intended to change the balance of power in the learner's direction.

Authority, power and control have become major issues with the rise of communicative language teaching. When we ask learners to communicate in a language over which they have only partial control, we are asking them to take risks and many of them may feel unhappy about. For many older learners, particularly those who have learned other second languages in classrooms where traditional approaches prevailed, the fact that they are asked to extemporize in a language over which they have only rudimentary control is extremely threatening.

3.5 Curriculum Development and Learning Tasks

Curriculum is a large and complex content, and the term curriculum is used in a number of different ways in some contexts it is used to refer to a particular programme of study (for example the science curriculum or the mathematics curriculum). In other contexts, it is used more widely. For our purpose we shall use syllabus to refer to the selecting and grading of content, and curriculum more widely to refer to all aspects of planning, implementing, evaluating and managing an educational programme. Around forty years ago, Ralph Tyler suggested that a rational curriculum is developed by first identifying goals and objectives, then by listening, organizing and grading the learning experiences, and finally, by finding means for determining whether the goals and objectives have been achieved (Tyler 1949).

More recently, it has been suggested that at the very minimum a curriculum should offer the following:
A. IN PLANNING
1. Principles for the selection of content what is to be learned and taught.
2. Principles for the development of a teaching strategy how it is to be learned and taught.
3. Principles for the making of decisions about sequence
4. Principles on which to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of individual student and differentiate the general principles one, two and three above to meet individual cases.

B. IN EMPIRICAL STUDY
1. Principles on which to study and evaluate the progress of students.
2. Principles on which to study and evaluate the progress of teachers.
3. Guidance as to the feasibility of implementing the curriculum in varying school contexts, pupils contexts, environments and peer group situations.
4. Information about the variability of effects in differing contexts and on different pupils and an understanding of the causes of the vitiation.

C. IN RELATION TO JUSTIFICATION
A formulation of the intention or aim of the curriculum which is accessible to critical scrutiny. (Stenhouse 1975.5)

This rather imposing (although by no means of exhaustive) list serves to demonstrate just how comprehensive the field of curriculum, study can be.

Turning more specifically to language teaching, the distinction traditionally drawn between syllabus design and methodology suggests that syllabus design deals with the selection and grading of content, while methodology is concerned with the selection and sequencing of learning activities. If one sticks to the traditional distinction, then task design would seem to belong to the realm of methodology.

However, with the development of communicative language teaching, as the investigator has indicated, the distinction between the syllabus design and methodology becomes difficult to sustain: one needs not only to specify both the content (or ends of learning) and the tasks (or means to those ends) but also to integrate them. This suggests a broad
perspective on curriculum in which concurrent consideration is given to content methodology and evaluation.

Within this perspective, the investigator makes no substantial departure from the traditional approach to curriculum design. With a traditional approach the curriculum designers first decides on the goals and objectives of instructions. Once these have been satisfactorily specified, the curriculum content is specified. The learning experiences are then decided upon, and finally, the means for assessing learners and evaluating the curriculum are established. The process is a linear one which operated in one direction, with a feedback loop from evaluation to goals as the following diagram shows:

Figure 1: Traditional Approach to Curriculum Design

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Goals ----> Content ----> Experience (tasks) ----> Evaluation
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Applying this to language curricula, one would first decide on why one's learners are coming along to learn in the first place. This would provide a rationale for the specification of grammatical items, functions, notations, topics and so on. The learning experiences (or as we are calling them, tasks) would be specified. Finally, means would be established for deciding whether the content has been learned and the goals achieved. This final evaluative step would allow us to decide whether our goals, content and tasks need to be modified.

But while this might seem to be a logical way of designing a curriculum, in practice it can be unnecessarily rigid, a more flexible approach, in which content and tasks are developed in tandem, generally leads to a more satisfactory and coherent end product. Taking a set of curriculum goals as out point of departure, we simultaneously specify content and develop learning tasks. This can be illustrated in such a process as follows:
In this model, content and tasks are developed in tandem so that content can suggest tasks and vice versa. There is also a feedback loop so that the results or the evaluation can be fed back into the curriculum planning process.

So far we have described the curriculum process from the perspective of the curriculum of syllabus designer. Such people usually, work at a more general or abstract level than those actually responsible for developing teaching materials, or for the day to day task to teaching. Classroom teachers, for instance, are generally presented with curriculum guidelines or sets of syllabus specifications, and are required to develop their courses and programmes from these. As their immediate focus in on the day to day schedule of work with learners in classrooms, their conception of tasks is somewhat different from that presented above.

They tend to see lessons or units of work as the basic building blocks of their programmes. These lessons and units in turn are composed of sets of more or less integrated tasks and manipulated exercises of various sorts. The teacher's immediate preoccupation is thus with learning tasks and with integrating these into lessons and / or units. For the classroom teacher then, a planning framework is likely to look something like the following:
The notion of task therefore has an immediate relevancy, and planning for the teacher is a matter of putting tasks together, whatever the more general syllabus or curriculum sets out. Thus, while curriculum designers are more likely to take a long term perspective, setting out plans for semesters and years, teachers and materials writers more often do their detailed planning in relation to lessons or units or work.

3.5.1. Task Rationale

The classroom tasks are generally justified or rationalized in either 'real world' or 'pedagogic' terms. Tasks with a real world rational require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviours required of them in the world beyond the classroom. Tasks with a pedagogic rational, on the other hand, require learners to do things which it is extremely unlikely they would be called upon to do outside the classroom. As they cannot be justified on the grounds that they are enabling learners to rehearse real world behaviours, they must have an alternative rationale. This usually takes a psycholinguistic form along the lines of will, although learners are engaged in tasks which they are unlikely to perform outside the classroom, the tasks are stimulating of
real world tasks will precede with reference to some form of needs analysis, and pedagogic tasks will be selected with reference to some theory or model or second language acquisition.

The distinction being drawn here can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 4: Distinction between real world and pedagogic tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Communicative Classroom tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>real world</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>Needs analysis $\text{SLA theory/ research}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedagogic</td>
<td>Psycholinguistics</td>
<td>(David Numan, The Second Pedagogy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example of a real world task might be

- The learner will listen to a weather forecast and identify the predicted maximum temperature for the day.
- The learner will listen to weather forecast and decide whether or not to take an umbrella and sweater to school.

An example of a pedagogic task might be:

- The learner will listen to an aural text and answer question afterwards on whether given statements are true or false.

In fact, this distinction between real world and pedagogic tasks is not hard and fast. Rather, it is a continuum, there will be some tasks which, though in principle authentic, are of such unlikely occurrence that the learner will come across them only in the classroom (for example, for younger children, making a formal introduction). There are some obviously pedagogic tasks for which it is possible to create real life contexts (for example, listen to an oral text and write a sentence restating the gist.) and there will be
some tasks residing at the center of the continuum which will be difficult to assign to one category or another (for example, listen to weather forecast for tomorrow and write a note to friend telling about the weather.) This distinction, nevertheless, is a powerful one.

Those who justify pedagogic tasks do so on the grounds that, while learners might not want to carry out those precise tasks in the real world, involvement in the tasks will provide them with skills for those real world tasks which are difficult to predict in advance, or which are not feasible to practice in class. For example, the learner who has mastered the pedagogic task of listening to a news report about a terrorist attack in Jammu & Kashmir and then completing ‘yes/no question’ which require them to distinguish between true and false indifferences might be able to use the listening and thinking skill which they have developed for comprehending radio and television news broadcasts outside the classroom.

In some language courses, on the other hand, all tasks are specific to the real world. Learners progress towards course goals by undertaking classroom activities, which require them to practice repeatedly the largest real world activities. However, it is unusual for real world tasks not to be modified or adopted in some way when they are brought into the classroom. For example the interview could be re-recorded at a slower pace, the teacher might replay it several times, and the students might be given assistance in the form of three or four clues or suggestions rather than having to come up with the correct answer unaided.

3.5.ii. Classroom Practices

The classes of majority of Indian colleges are very large and the main focus in the class is on teacher's activity. The teacher is at centre of the learning process. The students merely reproduce the words and sentences spoken by the teacher in a mechanical manner. Occasionally they answer questions asked by the teacher which are factual type and based on the lessons of the text book. In this manner all the students do not get a change to answer the question. Most of the students feel very shy to speak in an unfamiliar language in front of the class. Teaching is mostly based on the teaching of form introduced in the lesson. Practice is also form focused.
Classroom interaction as is mainly like one way traffic from teacher to the learner, from the teacher to the teacher is very little and learner to learner is nil. So, there is no opportunity in a class to produce natural language and create inquisitiveness for the language. Instructions are given in Gujarati to the beginners as well to the intermediate level learners. Most of the time vernacular language is used in an English language class. So, source of exposure to the language use is minimal. Though there are certain external sources like television, radio, newspapers, magazines and story books but they are hardly utilized by the learners.

A number of experiments have been carried out in India with an aim to improve upon the present situation. All these experiments are based upon the developments in language teaching throughout the world. Many of the developments have been at the level of syllabus design and are associated with the concepts of notional and functional syllabuses. Others are concerned with methodology. A large number of interesting new procedures and techniques have come up which challenge our traditional views of what should happen in the classroom. These developments share a common background with a common set of assumptions, which has enabled to put them under the single label of communicative teaching.

3.6 Communicative Learning Tasks

The development of communicative language teaching has had a dramatic effect on the role that learners are required to adopt. This is particularly true of oral interaction tasks. In the small group interaction tasks learners are required to put language to a range of uses, to use language which has been imperfectly mastered. For example, to negotiate meaning, in short, to draw their own resources rather than simply repeating and absorbing language. This can sometime cause problems if the teacher is teaching a language for which learners already have set ideas, particularly if it differs greatly from the teacher's own.

3.7 Communicative Language Teaching and Curriculum Planning

From the remarks already made, it should be obvious that the current interest in tasks stems largely from what has been termed the communicative approach to language
teaching. In this section I would like to briefly sketch out some of the more important principles underpinning communicative language teaching.

Although it is not always immediately apparent, everything a teacher does in the classroom is underpinned by beliefs about the nature of language and about language learning. In recent years there have been some dramatic shifts in attitude towards both language and language learning. This had sometimes resulted in contradictory messages to the teaching profession, which in turn has led to confusion. Among other things, it has been acceptable that language is more than simply a system of rules. Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning. In turns of learning, it is generally accepted that we need to distinguish between learning that and knowing how. In other words, we need to distinguish between knowing various grammatical rules and being able to use the rules effectively and communicating appropriately.

This view has underpinned communicative language teaching (CLT). A great deal has been written and said about CLT, and it is something of a misnomer to talk about the communicative approach as there is a family of approaches, each member of which claims to be communicative. During the seventies, the insight that communication was an integrated process rather than a set of discourse learning outcomes created a dilemma for syllabus designers, whose task has traditionally been to produce ordered lists of structural, functional or notional items graded according to difficulty, frequency or pedagogic convenience. Process belongs to the domain methodology. That is considered to be "somebody else's business". They cannot be reduced to lists of items. One of the clearest presentations of a syllabus proposal based on process rather than products has come from Breen. He suggests that an alternative to the listening of linguistics content would be to:

... prioritize the route itself; a focusing upon the means towards the learning of a new language. Here the designer would give priority to the changing process of learning and the potential of the classroom to the psychological and social resources applied to a new language by learners in the classroom context... a greater concern with capacity for communication rather than repertoire of communication, with the activity of learning a
language viewed as rather than predetermined objectives, all indicates priority of process over concern. (Brenn 1984: 52–3)

What Breen is suggesting is that, with communication at the center of the curriculum, the goal of that curriculum and the means begin to merge; the syllabus must make account of both the ends and the means.

What we do with our more formal approaches to the specification of structures and skills? Can they find a place in CLT? We can focus on this issue by considering the place of grammar. For sometime after the rise of CLT, the status of grammar in the curriculum was rather uncertain. Some linguists maintained that it was not necessary to teach grammar, that the ability to use a second language would develop the process of using the language to communicate. In recent years, this view has come under serious challenge, and it how seems to be widely accepted that there is value in classroom tasks which require learners to focus on form. It is also accepted that grammar is an essential resource in using language communicatively.

This is Littlewood's view. In his introduction to communicative language teaching, he suggests that the following skills need to be taken into consideration:

- The learner must attain as high a degree as possible of linguistic competence. That is, he must develop skill in manipulating the linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended message.
- The learner must distinguish between the forms he has mastered as part of his linguistic competence, and the communicative functions which they perform. In other words, items mastered as part of a linguistic system must also be understood as part of a communicative system.
- The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language of communication meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations. He must learn to use feedback to judge his success, and if necessary, remedy failure by using different language.
- The learner must become aware of the social meaning of language forms. For many learners, this may not entail the ability to vary their own speech to suit
different social circumstances, but rather the ability to use generally acceptable forms and avoid potentially offensive ones.

(Littlewood 1981:6)

Here the investigator takes the view that any comprehensive curriculum needs to take account of both means and ends and must address both content and process. In the final analysis it does not really matter whether those responsible for specifying learning tasks are called syllabus designers or methodologists. What matters is that both process and outcomes are taken care of the fact there is a compatible and creative relationship between the two.

Whatever the position taken, there is no doubt that the development of communicative language teaching has had a profound effect on both methodology and syllabus design, and has greatly enhanced the status of the learning 'task' within the curriculum.

3.8 The New Learner – Centred Perspective

One particular aspect of humanistic education which has attracted a good deal of interest in recent years has been the incorporation of learner centred principles into the language classroom. In a learner centred curriculum, information by and about learner is built into every stage of the curriculum process. This involvement of the learner in curriculum, planning, implementation and evaluation requires the adoption of new roles by all those involved in curriculum process, but particularly on the part of the teacher and learners. Teachers have to accept that learners have a right to have their views incorporated into the selection of content and learning experiences, and need to provide learners with the appropriate opportunities for them to make choices. Learners, for their part, need to develop a range of skills related not only to language, but also to learning how to learn.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has initially tried to give a comprehensive detail of various aspects of a task. A task is an activity that is carried out using language such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, or reading a set of instructions and assembling a toy. Task-based syllabus is one based on tasks that have
been specially designed to facilitate second language learning and can be used in teaching or learning the communicative purposes. It is organized around tasks that students will complete in the target language. The rest of the chapter has detailed explanation of the different terms like learner's role, teacher's role, task rationale, classroom practices and communicative learning task etc.