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The L in TBLT

Analyzing Target Discourse

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* 1. Introduction

One of the many positive features of task-based language teaching (TBLT) is its potential for providing learners with the Junctional second language {L2) abilities required to meet their real-world communicative needs. Identified via a needs analysis, the target tasks for specific groups or specific types of learners - what they need to be able to *do* in and through the new language - are the starting-point for task-based course design, for task-based materials writing, and eventually, for task-based, criterion- referenced. performance assessment. (For a recent overview, see Long, Lee & Hillman, 2019.) The striking growth in the number and methodolo­gical sophistication of NAs in recent years (Serafini et al., 2015, this volume) testifies to the increasing recognition of their importance if lan­guage teaching programs are to be relevant for learners and built on solid foundations.

A task-based needs analysis comprises two equally important parts. In the first part, using a variety of sources of information, of methods of obtaining that information, and triangulation of methods and sources, target *tasks* are identified for a particular group or type of learner. The process has been described in detail by Brown (2009, 2016), Long (2005, 2015: 85-168, 2018), Malicka et al. (2017), Serafini (this volume), and Serafini et al. (2015), among others, so will not be dealt with here. The second part involves the collection of genuine samples of the spoken or written language use (discourse) to perform the target tasks success­fully, and analysis of the samples, known as analysis of target discourse, to produce one or more archetypal models. This process, by which linguistic input is selected and graded for incorporation into task-based materials (i.e., into so-called pedagogic tasks), and then learned, and to the extent possible, taught - has received less attention in the TBLT literature (but see Long, 2015: 169-204). The collection, selection, modification, learning nd teaching of task-relevant language - the L in TBLT - is the focus of this chapter.

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* 1. Why Is the Second Part of a Needs Analysis Necessary?

It is rare for applied linguists or language teachers to be familiar with insider-to-insider communication in the academic disciplines, occupa­tions, or vocational training fields of interest to their students. Their expertise lies in applied linguistics and language teaching, after all, not in such fields as law, criminology, political science, architecture, medi­cine, engineering, computer science, nursing, cooking, or automobile mechanics, much less in the way language is used to socialize novitiates into each domain. Research has shown their intuitions can even be faulty about the language used to accomplish everyday social survival tasks with which they *are* familiar, such as ordering a cup of coffee (Bartlett, 2005) or making a restaurant reservation (Granena, 2008), and that the models presented in textbooks, based on their writers’ intuition, are often wildly unrealistic.

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The situation can be ameliorated to some extent when programs repeat­edly cater to the same types of learners. For example, an increasingly common situation in many parts of the world involves students working toward a bachelor’s degree in science, engineering, computer science, economics, political science, business, tourism, etc., at an English- medium university in their home country and/or, when they graduate, intending to study for a masters or doctorate domestic or the overseas university has language programs for students in the same areas year after year, and most universities do. then a thorough needs analysis is called for. It can identify target tasks for those types of students (not merely for particular groups of students), making development of subject-specific or occupation-specific task-based materials and tests a worthwhile long-term investment.

If a program is delivered by a stable (ideally, permanent), full-time, trained faculty, teachers can gradually become knowledgeable about their students’ occupation or major field of study, perhaps initially in part by collaborating with subject matter specialists from the area con­cerned. To take a common example in the occupational sphere, large-scale government English as a second language and foreign language programs (e.g., for law enforcement personnel, diplomats, diplomatic security staff, military linguists, and intelligence personnel) also have the same types of learners year after year. Over time, therefore, their teachers, too, can become very knowledgeable about their students’ work.

The same is true of L2 programs for school-age children. A foreign language needs analysis for elementary and secondary pupils is unnecessary, as most parents have little or no idea about their children’s future needs in the language, if any, or why they are being obliged to study a foreign language at all. However, the *second* language needs of immigrant and other minority language-speaking children soon to be moved into mainstream classrooms with native speakers are real to them and to their teachers. Second language programs for them should be based on a needs analysis of the tasks such children will face when mainstreamed, and knowledge of the content areas is readily available from other tea­chers within the same school building.

Last, but by no means least, even in what unfortunately tend to be unstable, poorly resourced programs for migrant workers and refugees, teachers quickly grow familiar with the typical social survival tasks the students and their parents confront during their first weeks and months in the new country (see Toker & Sagdi?, this volume). Many, such as using public transport, following street directions, renting an apartment, visit­ing a doctor, applying for a credit card, or interviewing for a job, are tasks with which the teachers themselves are already familiar, although some may present additional challenges for new arrivals, who may lack a credit history or documentation concerning their education, health status, prior employment, etc., and for some of whom attempting even apparently “simple" target tasks may be to tread delicately through what for them is a cultural minefield.

Those three examples are best-case scenarios, where teachers can gra­dually develop content expertise by dealing with the same types of stu­dents over time. Content expertise, however, does not necessarily equate to insights about language use. Absent insider knowledge, with the excep­tion of occasional corpus-based materials, the models that learners encounter in many commercially published language teaching textbooks are usually based on the intuitions of a materials writer as unfamiliar as the classroom teacher with genuine language use in the target discourse domain. And outsiders’ intuitions have repeatedly been found unreliable, sometimes risibly so. Major discrepancies are observed between textbook dialogs and discourse samples collected in several daily situations - for example, at the gas station, the restaurant, the train station, the post office, and elsewhere (Tabom, 1983). That is why the second part of a needs analysis is necessary.

Even for everyday “social survival” tasks, studies have often revealed embarrassing discrepancies between authentic language use and the lan­guage modeled in coursebooks. That includes tasks that applied linguists may have witnessed and performed many times themselves, such as giving street directions (Scotton and Bemsten, 1988), purchasing a train ticket (Long, 2015:188-191), attending a doctor’s appointment (Cathcart, 1989), or attending a business meeting (Williams, 1988). Given such findings, even with relatively simple, high-frequency, publicly visible tasks, it is obviously incumbent upon materials writers to obtain genuine examples of target language use in specialized discourse domains of which they have little personal experience or none whatsoever. Commercially published coursebooks usually rely on the textbook writer’s intuitions and employ oversimplified lexis, collocations, grammatical functions, topics, and dis­course structure. Dialogs purporting to represent ordering food in a restaurant, buying something in a shop, or interviewing for a job are often wholly unrealistic, and little more than thinly disguised vehicles for more practice of the grammatical *structure du jour* {structure of the day).

For all these reasons, designers of genuine task-based materials base pedagogic tasks on careful study of the target tasks identified in the first part of the needs analysis, and then of samples of genuine language use surrounding successful performance of those tasks - i.e., authentic target discourse (TD). In an analysis of target discourse (ATD), the typical internal structure of the TD, and the recurring patterns in the linguistic features that co-occur with obligatory and optional elements in that structure, are distilled to produce archetypal, or prototypical, models. The models are then elaborated {see below), not linguistically simplified, to match stu­dents’ current L2 abilities, and integrated into pedagogic tasks. These tasks of gradually increasing complexity {task complexity, not linguistic com­plexity) constitute the single most important source (not the only source) of new language for both teachers and learners, especially of task-specific and domain-specific language.

* 1. Collecting Genuine Target Discourse Samples

The first step in the second part of a needs analysis is to collect TD samples. These can take many forms, from written documents {textbooks, journal articles, prescription drug labels, email messages, job application forms, cell phone contracts, car rental agreements, repair manuals, etc.) to audio or video recordings of all sorts of spoken discourse (university lectures, office-hour appointments, job interviews, service encounters, sales pre­sentations, weekly research laboratory meetings, conference presenta­tions. doctors’ visits, street directions, restaurant orders, shopping purchases, etc.). When collecting data, care must be taken to observe any legal restrictions, which can vary from one country or location within a country to another, on the use of certain kinds of written documents or on recording certain kinds of public or private spoken transactions. Some recordings may require the parties’ written consent.

Once legal matters have been taken care of. it is important to obtain multiple examples of the same kind of TD. This is. first, in order to be able to identify, and where appropriate, subsequently remove, any idiosyn­cratic features pertaining to particular examples of written documents or to individual speakers, and second, and more importantly, to note variations due to such factors as workplace size, time of day, and location. Two workers may share the same *occupation,* but their jobs may be veiy different.

Differences in workplace *size* have fairly predictable effects. In a large hotel, for example, receptionists may predominantly deal with checking guests in and out. whereas their counterparts in smaller establishments may work alone much of the time and have to deal with every aspect of a guest’s stay. As a rule of thumb, solitary workers in large versions of almost any workplace (hotels, railway stations, airports, shops, museums, government offices, etc.) tend to be specialists, responsible for a narrower range of duties. Those in nominally the same occupation (receptionist, ticket clerk, shop assistant, museum guide, etc.) in smaller workplaces, tend to be generalists, with a wider range of duties. To take two extreme examples, compare the job of a teacher in a one-room rural schoolhouse with that of a teacher in a large urban high school, or again, of a surgeon tending to civilian victims of air strikes with that of a surgeon in a large modem hospital in Frankfurt. Tel Aviv, or New York.

Where *time* is concerned, the frequency and importance of target tasks for a hotel receptionist, for example, can vary depending on the shift being worked. More check-ins, requests for information and room changes occur in the afternoon, evening, and overnight, more provision of tourism infor­mation to guests, more check-outs, and more resolution of payment issues in the morning.

Where *location* is concerned, the names of everyday items can vary from one country, or region within a country, to another, most obviously, but not only, as a function of the variety of the target language involved. Compare, for example, the names for different types of bus and train tickets (day-tripper, cheap day return, round-trip, easy rider, etc.) in the United Kingdom. Australia and the United States, the increasingly impene­trable lexicons required in many countries for such a mundane task as ordering coffee, the names for parts of a car (boot/trunk, bonnet/hood. etc.) in the United Kingdom and United States, for “bread” in Saudi/MSA: (khubz, /obaz) and ECA: o^fayesh, ?eij}, or for “computer”: *jisuanji* (com­puting machine) in Mandarin, and *diannao* (electronic brain) in Taiwan. Of course, if as the result of a detailed needs analysis, it is known exactly where, for what purpose, and with whom, a group of learners will be using the L2. far from removing such variants, the syllabus designer will ensure they are preserved in the resulting teaching materials. This will include everything from the appropriacy or not of a whole variety of English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, etc., to appropriate pronunciation and local usage of T/V forms (e.g., in Spain vs. El Salvador), and of lexical items and collocations.

In light of these and other potential sources of variability, it is easy to see why it is important to collect as many samples of (especially spoken) TD as it is feasible for the analyst to handle. His or her job is to compare the samples, remove idiosyncrasies, and identify commonalities at the level of internal discourse structure, along with corresponding linguistic features at the level of grammar, lexis, collocations, formulaic utterances, phonol­ogy, and pragmatics.

* 1. Analysis of Target Discourse

**Analysis of target discourse** - analysis of language use surrounding the successful performance of target tasks - differs from a true dis­course analysis. A discourse analysis must meet certain requirements, and is predictive; it sets out to produce a generative model capable of handling new instances of the performance of a particular task or speech event, like a shopping purchase, a traffic stop (O’Connell, 2014), hotel reservation, job interview, weather forecast (Maie & Salen, this volume), office-hour appointment (Sagdi^ & Reagan, this volume), or classroom lesson.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975: 15-17) listed four requirements for an adequate discourse analysis:

1. The analysis must employ a finite set of categories: if new categories can be added each time the existing set is found unable to handle the data, the analysis is merely an illusion.
2. Categories must be transparent and operationally defined, so as to preempt fudging if problematic (non-fitting) data are encountered.
3. The system must be comprehensive, capable of handling all the data without recourse to a “miscellaneous” or “other” category.
4. The system must have two or more levels, with each level entering into a “consists or relationship with units at the level below it, and at least one impossible combination.

Sinclair and Coulthard’s analysis of classroom lessons had five levels: lesson, transaction, exchange, move, and act. Exchanges, for example, consisted of initiations, responses, and (optional) feedback moves (i.e., the infamous I-R-F sequence so prevalent in language teaching classrooms, most notoriously during audio-lingual and presentation, practice, and production lessons). The requirement that there be one or more impossible, or “ungrammatical,” combinations of categories (e.g., I-F-R) is because without such constraints, any structure would be possible, meaning in effect that the TD would have no structure, and the analysis, therefore, no predictive power.

An ATD (see Long. 2015: 180-87) is less ambitious and simpler. Only the second requirement applies. To guarantee that an analyst is not simply “making up” the findings, categories must still be transparent and operationally defined, so as to allow independent analysis of a subset of the same data by one or more raters and calculation of inter-rater reliability. The other three requirements, 1, 3 and 4, do not apply. There is no requirement 1, that an ATD employ a finite set of categories, because there is also no requirement 3, that an ATD be exhaustive. An analysis of relationships among types of teacher questions and types of student responses, for example, may not need to involve an account of everything, or anything, else in a lesson.

As for requirement 4. that of a hierarchical system, an ATD is “flatter” and. depending on the research question, the structure linear and not necessarily hierarchical at all; there may be an interest in just one level of analysis, and not necessarily in “consists of’ relationships with units at other possible levels. For example, conditions on the provision of negative feedback and learner uptake in teacher-student interaction may exclusively involve moves at a single level of analysis, (e.g., with type of error affecting type of feedback, and type of feedback in turn affecting the likelihood of uptake). It is obviously possible to relate items in a sequence to units at another level in the 1-R-F exchange structure {e.g., types of error to the “response” move, and prompts, elicits, and recasts to the “feedback” move), but that would not necessarily provide additional relevant information for an investigation whose focus is sequential relationships among errors, different types of feedback, and learner uptake. Unlike most discourse analyses, an ATD may also focus on more than one dimension of language use (although with care taken not to mix units from different dimensions). For example, some responses to learner error may be types of negative feedback in a pedagogically oriented ATD. but simultaneously examples of models, repetitions, recasts, and extensions, in a more psycholinguistically oriented analysis.

An ATD is a micro-scale exercise in data-mining. Samples of task performance are compared and distilled to reveal their typical internal structure. Once identified, sometimes in the form of a flowchart show­ing a sequence of obligatory and optional subtasks or moves (see, e.g., Hillman & Long, 2020; O’Connell, 2014), the analyst searches for the critical and/or most frequent linguistic correlates of those compo­nents. Lists are drawn up of the items commonly used to perform each of them. Formulaic expressions, lexical items, collocations, mor­phology, syntax and pragmatics are all of potential interest, some more so, some less so, as a function of the L2. target task, and type of TD being analyzed. Depending on how much variation is found in the way the task is typically performed, one or more prototypical models are produced. These models, along with the internal structure of the TD and the list of linguistic correlates, will constitute the core ingredients for the materials writer when producing a series of peda­gogic tasks of gradually increasing complexity that teachers and lear­ners will work on in the classroom.

* 1. Target Discourse Structure

A number of ATDs have been carried out in recent years, but few have appeared in the published literature. Based on his nonparticipant observa­tion during a ride-along program, and subsequent analysis of the tran­scripts of conversations during eight US police traffic stops, O’Connell (2014) summarized the typical pattern police officers followed, yielding the following TD structure:

* Greet the vehicle’s occupant(s) and introduce themselves (probably).
* Ask for a driver’s license and registration (always).
* Ask for identification cards from passengers (possibly).
* Ask about ownership of the car (possibly).
* Explain why the driver had been stopped (always).
* Ask where the driver was going (possibly).
* Tell the driver to stay in the car while the information the driver provided is checked on the computer in the officer’s patrol car (always).
* “Lecture” the driver about their vioiation(s) (probably).
* Issue a warning, a repair order, or a citation (always).
* Explain any action required of the driver or options regarding payment of the fine or court appearance (always).
* Return the license (always).
* Bid farewell (always).

O’Connell provided a flowchart representation of the structure, complete with alternative segments (not mentioned above) according to whether the office issues a warning, repair order, or citation, plus examples of the language used at each juncture, and prototypical models of conversations between police officers and motorists.

In a very different occupational domain, Hillman and Long (2020) provide an analysis of formal celebration speeches often required of US diplomats at meetings of Japanese-US associations and a variety of other ceremonial events, such as launches of new collaborative binational projects. The target task, delivering a celebration speech, presents a serious challenge for diplomats stationed in Japan, in part due to the importance of maintaining the appropriate register in Japanese for such occasions throughout, with the right levels of formality, deference, and politeness, often expressed via use of particular formulae and gramma­tical markers. (For the use of TBLT in teaching a morphologically complex language, see Gilabert & Castellvi, 2019.) Obligatory and optional compo­nents of the typical structure of celebration speeches - introduce self, congratulate organizers, thank organization, comment on the occasion, explain organization’s importance, express respect to organization, recognize other important guests, pray for future success, congratulate organizers again, thank organizers - are presented as a flowchart, with important and/or high-frequency Japanese lexical items, collocations, and formulaic utterances listed for each component, culminating in a prototypical celebration speech.

* 1. An Example: Buying/Selling a Cup of Coffee

One of the earliest published ATDs, a study by Bartlett (2005), involved a much simpler target task - buying/selling a cup of coffee - which will serve as an illustration of the process. Aside from English being the L2 in that case, the advantages are that (i) most readers will already be familiar with the task - in some cases, very familiar, (ii) interactions between customers and baristas are usually quite short, making provision of at least a few examples from the original study compatible with current space constraints, and (iii) model dialogs for similar tasks frequently appear in commercial language-teaching coursebooks.

Bartlett recorded a total of 248 conversations at three locations, two commercial coffee shop chains and a campus coffee cart, involving the task of buying and selling a drink item (usually a cup of coffee) and/or a sundry. Of these, 168 were transcribed. (That is far more than would be required for materials writing, of course. Bartlett was conducting a demonstration research project, as were Maie & Salen (this volume]) Bartlett (2005: 314) found:

a generalizable pattern of elements... It typically involved the sub-tasks of either greeting the server or responding to the service bid (Can I *help you?},* specifying the order, possibly confirming the order and options, some­times asking for additional information about a menu item, responding to the server-initiated *Anything else?,* and finally, the predictable sub-task of paying and closing (which was sometimes non-verbal).

She provided transcriptions of numerous samples of genuine TD. The two examples below (1 and 2) were typical.

**Transcription 1**

S: Can I help you ma’am?

C: Can I try an iced macadamia latte?

S: Did you want that blended or on the rocks?

C: Blended

S: OK. Did you want whipped cream on that?

C: Yes

S: Anything else for you?

C: (non-verbal response)

S: OK, That’ll be 4.48

C: (hands over money)

S: Thank you. 50 cents is your change. Would you like your receipt?

C: (non-verbal response)

S: OK. It’ll be ready for you in just one minute.

(Bartlett, 2005: 314)

**Transcription 2**

S: May I help you?

1. Hi. Can 1 get a double iced chai?
2. 2%?
3. 2%
4. Double iced chai 2%. Do you have a stamp card?

C: Yes

S: (stamps card) There you go. Alright (hands over change). Thank you.

(Bartlett, 2005; 315)

As noted earlier, it is important to obtain multiple TD samples (perhaps five to ten, depending on the target task and how much variation is found in the first few examples), as language use for the same target task can vary for a number of reasons. In this case, for example, baristas reported some differences (confirmed in Bartlett’s data) according to time of day. Morning and lunchtime “rush hour” customers were mostly regulars, performing the task through shorter interactions, less phatic talk, and more non­verbal confirmation of need and price. Regulars knew what they wanted and how to order it succinctly, allowing for more ellipsis on both the server’s and customer’s part. Interactions could be longer when customers were novices, or when problems arose, for example, because customers had forgotten their frequent-user card, specific names and sizes of drinks were unclear, an item had run out, or non-task-specific small talk occurred. Compare transcription 3, involving a novice customer, confused by the many options listed in the menu on the wall above the counter, and transcription 4, involving a regular:

**Transcription 3 (novice)**

C: All the different names and (3) Hey

S: Oh what are you looking for?

C: XXX the frappuccino?

S: Frio. We have like a chocolate one which says the mocha cappuccino C: (3) Where?

S: Third from the bottom is the iced mocha (that’s the) mocha frappuc­cino. The regular frappuccino is the XXX and cream

C; Oh right. What’s the difference between a regular one and a (.) mocha one?

S: That’s it one has chocolate in it and the other one doesn’t

C; Let me try the: e:r mocha

S: Mo[cha? OK]

C: [Yeah]

S: OK (40) three forty-eight please C; Three of ’em?

S: Forty-eight (said louder)

C: er XXX {blender noise)

S: Yeah (2) There you go (.) Thank you very much. You have a great day

(Bartlett, 2005: 317-318)

**Transcription 4 (regular customer)**

S; How about for you, sir?

C: A double latte

S; Hot? 2%?

C; (non-verbal)

S: (relays order to drink maker) Double hot latte 2%. Out of three. And your card (hands over card and gives change) WeTl see you next time after the Spring Break for your free drink

C: Alright

S: OK. Thank you.

(Bartlett, 2005: 316)

Many of Bartlett’s findings, notably those concerning ellipsis and inter- textuality, paralleled those from an earlier study of conversations between passengers and the ticket clerk in a one-man operation (the same person served as ticket clerk, porter, platform announcer, flagger, and kiosk seller) at a small railway station in rural Pennsylvania (subse­quently reported in Long. 2015: 188-91). “Due to shared background knowledge,” Bartlett writes (2005; 322), “there is a high degree of impli­citness and ellipsis in the server and customer turns,” as in transcrip­tion 5:

**Transcription 5**

S: What can I get for this morning?

C: Regular (XXX). Right to the top.

(Bartlett. 2005: 322)

The customer indicates he wants a regular coffee, with the cup filled right to the top. and no room left for milk or cream. No polite form is used, and both customer and server understand the meaning of “right to the top.” Bartlett continues, “Ellipsis is a time-saver when people are in a hurry or when there is a line. Moreover, to serve a customer or to order without a polite request form (Would you *like* XX? *May I have a* XX, pieuse?) was not impolite, but pragmatically appropriate in this context” (2005: 322).

In both settings, railway station and coffee shop, the context-embedded nature of the interactions allowed use of pronouns and deictics (those, *the hig one, this onejthat one, herejover there),* and intertextuality (e.g., referring to the menu on the wall, *third from the bottom):*

**Transcription 6**

S: Hi. Can I help you ma’am?

C: Yeah. Can I get- [MHL Note: not *May I have]* (Pointing through the glass display cabinet) Are those the scones?

S: Yuh huh

*C:* The big ones?

S: Yeah. We have blueberry or cranberry

(Bartlett. 2005: 324)

Although often used in commercial textbooks, generic terms are typi­cally absent in genuine transactions. Just as the uninformative *ticket* was used just once in twenty-one conversations at the railway station (perhaps significantly, by the only nonnative speaker among the passengers), mesa *{table)* only once in making a restaurant reservation in Spanish (Granena, 2008), again by a nonnative speaker, and *coffee* sparingly in Bartlett’s data - and then not with its everyday generic meaning, but the domain-specific sense of a brewed or drip coffee of the day. In the real world, the seller/ server already understands by their mere presence that the customer in each case wants a ticket, a table, or a coffee. Generic nouns are of little use in most such service encounters. The issue is. what *kind* of ticket, table, or coffee? Technical and subtechnical lexical items are the accepted currency and what learners need to know. In this case, that potentially means the names for a large variety of types of coffee *{espresso, latte, frappuccino, frio, americano, machiatto, regular, 2%, skinny, non-fat, vanilla, on the rocks, blended, iced),* and sizes *{double, triple, quad, tall, short, medium, grande, skinny, venti),* as well as toppings, other add-ons, and loyalty cards *{frequent-user card, stamp card, coffee card),* terms for some of which vary from one location to another.

Although an ATD can generally be performed by hand. Bartlett used concordancing software to identify the most frequent linguistic realiza­tions of subtasks. For example, the most frequent linguistic realizations of customer requests were *'‘Can Iget..*.?” (forty-two tokens), *“Can I have ..?”* (thirty-two tokens). “I’ll *have* ...” and *“I’d like..."* (seven tokens each). Conversely, despite frequently being a major focus of textbook models, few polite request forms, such as *please* and (only six instances of) “Could J ...?,” were observed in the 168 transcripts. Authentic TD contained ellipsis, implicitness, intertextuality, deixis, different uses of grammatical structures, e.g., *did {“Did you want* X?’’), and non-fluencies (fillers and incomplete utterances), features “all too often absent from models pre­sented in textbooks” (Bartlett, 2005: 329).

* 1. From Genuine Discourse Samples to Prototypical Models of Spoken or Written Target Discourse

An ATD is conducted to identify the typical internal structure of task performance, the typical sequence of its component parts (subtasks), and their linguistic correlates. (For an excellent example of the whole process for “Making a restaurant reservation in Spanish.” see Granena. 2008.) As noted earlier, variations due to workplace size, location, time of day. or other factors, are also of interest if frequent enough. The next step is to create one or more prototypical examples of the TD - in the present case, dialogs pertaining to a spoken service encounter. The models will serve as the basis for task-based pedagogic materials (i.e., pedagogic tasks).

Following the linear structure established for the TD, models should reflect the most commonly observed sequences of obligatory and optional moves, with any unwanted or unhelpful idiosyncrasies peculiar to indivi­dual speakers or locations removed. Retained are the grammatical form- function relationships; for example, *did* as a mitigation device, not a past tense marker *{Did you want whipped cream with that?]* and the specific “tech­nical” lexical items and collocations used in the domain of interest, along with other typical features of the TD, including appropriate levels of colloquial and idiomatic usage, and of ellipsis and intertextuality. If com­mon enough, examples of communication breakdowns (e.g., in this case, over the names of types of coffee) and their resolution should also be included. In the interest of naturalness and genuineness, the prototypical models should draw extensively on the language observed in the genuine samples. Important items, even if seemingly difficult, are *not* removed from the models as part of the usual *simplification* process. How will lear­ners ever acquire them if they never appear in the input? Rather, they are retained and made comprehensible through input *elaboration* (see below). Needless to say, while based on examination of genuine samples ofTD, and not simply products of a commercial materials writer’s data-free intuitions and imagination, judgment and creativity are still required.

Based on the findings of her ATD, Bartlett presented a prototypical encounter for a customer (not a regular) who orders one drink (a coffee) and a sundry {a scone). The dialog reflects features found in the genuine samples: use of domain-specific lexical items *{grande latte, blended, on the roclis, 2%, skimmed,* not the generic *coffee],* ellipsis *{Anything else? Here or to go?],* and pronouns and deictics resulting from implicitness, intertextuality and the context-embedded nature of the conversation (one *of those, the one in the back),* colloquial language when stating a price *{That’ll be* X) and handing over an item *{There you go], did* as a mitigating device, and even a false start by the customer (line 12). Idiosyncrasies were removed, in this case, for example, the term *skinny,* used only by employees at one of the three locations. Bartlett offers the following prototypical dialog:

**Transcription 7**

1. Hi. Can 1 help you?
2. Can I get a grande latte with vanilla?

S: Did you want tliat blended or on the rocks?

1. Blended, I guess
2. 2% or skimmed?
3. Uhm 2%

S: 2% OK, Any whipped cream?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| C; | Sony? |
| S; | Did you want whipped cream on that? |
| C: | Yes |
| S: | Anything else? |
| C:S: | No. thanks. That’s it. Oh no. Can I get- are those scones? Yeah we have cranberry and blueberry |
| C: | (pointing) 1 think I’ll have one of those |
| S; | A blueberry scone? |
| C: | Yeah. The one in the back |
| S; | This one |
| C: | Yeah that’s it |
| S: | OK. For here or to go? |
| C: | Togo |
| S: | OK. That’ll be 3.48 |
| C: | (hands over money) |
| S: | How about a frequent user card? |
| C: | Oh sure |
| S: | Thank you. 52 cents is your change (hands over change). And your card. OK. It’ll be ready for you in just one minute. |
| C; | Thank you |
| S: | (hands over drink) There you go. Have a nice day |
| C: | You. too. |

(Bartlett 2005: 338)

Bartlett (2005: 330-336) surveyed several EFL/ESL textbooks that included dialogs supposedly showing how to order food in restaurants or canteens (the nearest thing in the books to ordering coffee). Even though the authors often claimed their sample dialogs were modeled on real-life conversations, this seemed doubtful. They were in fact fre­quently oversimplified, obviously contained inauthentic communicative structure and unrealistic situational content, and could mislead learners (330). Most customer requests, for example, focused on *“Could* I “1 *would like ..“I’ll have ..*and *“May I*with no instances of the most frequently used in real life, *“Can 1 get ..*Dialogs in some books were little more than thinly disguised pattern drills practicing polite requests in repetitive question-and-answer sequences. One customer even made what Bartlett’s data had shown is an unlikely request for *“a cup of coffee.”* Typical features of context-embedded talk, such as ellip­sis, open-endedness, intertextuality and inexplicitness, were absent, as, in most cases, were pre-closings and closings. Textbook dialogs needed to be contextualized, Bartlett concluded, and to reflect genuine native speaker use. There is a bigger question, however. If the intuitions of textbook writers are so faulty when treating such a simple, familiar task, how reliable will they be about language use in domains about which the writers have no direct experience and about which they know little or nothing?

* 1. Linguistic Input in Pedagogic Tasks: Genuine, Simplified, Elaborated, or Modified Elaborated?

Buying/selling a cup of coffee was used to illustrate the second part of a needs analysis, the ATD process, which ends with production of proto­typical dialogs or other spoken or written texts for subsequent use in pedagogic tasks. These tasks constitute a major source of new language in the classroom, especially, but not only, of new domain-specific lan­guage. Once prototypical models of TD are available, the job of the analyst or materials writer (often the same person) is to incorporate variants of them into the design of pedagogic tasks for classroom use or computer- based instruction. Classroom experience shows that it is usually a good idea to expose students to one or two examples of successful native speaker performance of the full spoken or written target task first, just so they can see what they are aiming to achieve. Then, if the students for whom the pedagogic tasks are intended are sufficiently advanced, the models may be usable as they stand. If not, parts may need to be *elaborated* (not simplified) in various ways. The task, not the language, is simplified, thereby preserving the genuine target language use that learners will encounter and need to be able to handle when performing the target task outside the classroom. Sequences of pedagogic tasks are then gradu­ally made more complex.

Ordering a cup of coffee is, of course, a very simple, everyday “social survival” task. Things can get much harder. The following example con­cerns the opening paragraph of a written text about the role of soccer in society. Figure 5.1 shows four versions of the same text (again, a very short text, due to space limitations). Version A is the *genuine* version, originally written by and for native speakers, not for language teaching. Version B shows a traditionally *simplified* version of the same text, where what is lost through simplification is immediately apparent. Gone are the exam­ples (bolded in version A for easy identification) of idiomatic, native-like L2 use in the original, including lexis and collocations, and with them, some of the genuine passage’s meaning (see Long & Ross, 1993) as a result of substituting “groups” for “masses,” “each week” for “on a regular basis,” “with other people” for “with one another,” and so on. Each change entails a slight loss of information. Moreover, in version B, the easy flow of the natural-sounding genuine version has become a series of short, stilted- sounding. staccato-like sentences.

Version C. the *elaborated* version, preserves all the original bolded items, maintains roughly the same level of comprehensibility, and sounds closer to natural English usage, but at a price. As shown in Table 5.1, version C is considerably longer overall than both versions A and B, with a higher average number of words per sentence than both of them (triple the average for version B, and as measured by an approximation to s-nodes

**A Genuine**

Professional soccer brings larger masses of people together, and on a regular basis, than just about anything except wars. Matches at whatever level are one of the few remaining occasions when people express themselves passionately and publicly, and interact with one another instead of with anti-social computer screens and hand-held electronic devices.

**B Simplified**

Large groups of people meet each week for professional soccer games. The groups for soccer are larger than groups for anything except wars. Soccer games are one of the few times when people are still passionate in public. People communicate with other people at games. Games are social, not anti-social, like computers and cellphones.

**C Elaborated**

Professional soccer matches are regular times when large crowds, large masses of people, meet together on a regular basis, usually once a week. The crowds at soccer matches are bigger than for almost anything except wars. Matches at whatever level of soccer, from the highest level to the lowest, are one of the only times, one of the few remaining occasions, when people still show strong emotions, express themselves passionately, in public, singing and shouting, and interacting with one another socially, communicating with one another, with other people in the crowd, instead of with anti-social computer screens and hand-held electronic devices, like tablets and cellphones.

**D Modified elaborated**

Professional soccer matches are times when large crowds, large masses of people, meet together. The matches bring people together on a regular basis, usually once a week. The crowds for soccer are bigger than for almost anything except wars. Matches at whatever level of soccer, from the highest level to the lowest, are one of the few remaining occasions, one of the only times, when people still show strong emotions, express themselves passionately, in public. They sing and shout, and interact with one another socially. They communicate with one another, with other people in the crowd, instead of with anti-social computer screens and hand-held **electronic devices,** like tablets and cellphones.

Figure 5.1 Soccer texts: genuine, simplified, elaborated, and modified elaborated versions

per sentence,’ nearly twice its syntactic complexity). Nevertheless, studies have shown that despite these potentially serious disadvantages, the redundancy that elaboration provides can render spoken or written input almost as comprehensible to learners as simplified input, and with­out the negative consequences of linguistic simplification for acquisition (Yano et al., 1994),

Elaboration can be achieved through a variety of devices, some illu­strated here, including (but not only) the use of synonyms, appositional phrases, defining/resfrictive relative clauses, rephrasing, repetition.

' Here, tensed verbs and modals.

Table 5.1 *Soccer texts by the numbers*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Words | Sentences | Words/ Sentence | S-nodes | S-nodes/Sentence |
| Genuine (A) | 52 | 2 | 26 | 4 | 2 |
| Simplified (B) | 54 | 5 | 10.8 | 6 | 1.2 |
| Elaborated (C) | 106 | 3 | 35.3 | 6 | 2 |
| Modified elaborated (D) | 111 | 6 | 18.5 | 11 | 1.8 |

matching chronological order and order of mention, and a variety of prosodic changes, such as increased stress and brief one-beat pauses before and/or after key information-bearing items. All of these devices add *redun­dancy* to the input, increasing its comprehensibility without removing unknown items. Echoing similar first language acquisition findings for caretaker talk with young children, they were among the strategies and tactics found by research on foreigner talk discourse (FTD) in the 1970s and 1980s to be common ways in which native speakers modified their speech and the *interactional structure of conversation* with low proficiency nonnative speakers to establish and maintain comprehensibility, and to repair break­downs in communication (Chaudron, 1982; Long, 1983a. b).

Finally, version D shows a *modified elaborated* version of the same text. While stiU much longer overall than versions A and B, simply breaking up the rather unwieldy sentences of the elaborated version has restored sentence length and syntactic complexity to normal levels, while further increasing comprehensibility and preserving the meaning of the original text *and* the new language to which students must be exposed if they are to progress. (For illustrative studies, reviews of research findings, and additional comparisons and discussions of genuine, simplified, elabo­rated. and modified elaborated texts, see Farshi & Tavakoli (2019], Hillman [2021]. Long [2015: 250-59], Long [2020], Oh [2001], and Yano, et al. [1994].)

* 1. Learning and Teaching New Language in Task-Based Language Teaching

To this point, we have described the role of the second part of a needs analysis, the ATD, in identifying and selecting new language to be taught in a task-based course. The steps (the subtasks) in conducting an ATD are summarized in Figure 5.2.

Selection of both target tasks and language in TBLT is data-based and systematic, and unlike the world of commercial coursebook publishing (languages for no particular purpose), does not rely on a textbook writer’s intuitions. Intuitions are highly problematic even where simple tasks like

1. Collect spoken and/or written samples of the language used (i.e.. the TD), to perform the target task(s) successfully.
2. Identify TD segments corresponding to subtasks.
3. Determine which subtasks or moves are obligatory, and which are optional.
4. Draw a flowchart showing the sequence of subtasks or moves. (For two examples, see the flowcharts for police traffic stops and celebration speeches described above.)
5. List the linguistic items (grammar, vocabulary, collocations, formulaic sequences) that frequently co-occur with each move or subtask.
6. Use the results of steps 3-5 to create models of the TD of interest. (The models will serve as the basis for pedagogic tasks.)
7. Depending on student proficiency, elaborate the input as necessary.

Figure 5.2 Steps in an analysis of target discourse

ordering a coffee are concerned, and much more so when, as is often the case, target tasks and TD domains are less familiar or wholly unfamiliar to the materials writer. The L in TBLT must be *relevant* to meet learners’ communicative needs, and ATD is a way of ensuring that.

In the case of Bartlett’s model, domain-specific lexical items might seem the area of most potential difficulty. However, names and descriptors of coffee items are easy enough to teach using pictures or, better, a trip to a coffee shop (see Van den Branden. 2016, for a task-based field trip of that sort), and most students will only need to learn how to order the two or three types of coffee they prefer. In fact, it is not the coffees per se, but how to negotiate their purchase that is the problem. Solving that will entail the need to understand, use, and respond to colloquial language, deictics, ellipsis, multimodality and intertextuality (in Bartlett’s prototypical dia­log, concerning the location of scones and final payment), and rapid-fire fragments rather than the laborious and unnatural complete sentences common in textbook models. Depending on students’ cultural back­grounds and (lack of) familiarity with the society where the L2 is spoken, some may also need to learn how purchases are organized, for example in the USA as opposed to parts of the Arab world. Several chapters and case studies in this volume (particularly but not only, those in Parts III, IV, and V), address various aspects of task-based classroom language learning and teaching in detail.

Things that native speakers and “cultural natives” no longer notice because they are so familiar (and often because they have never experi­enced another culture), may be as much a challenge for some learners as the language involved in doing a task. For example, some recent arrivals in the United States whose vehicle is stopped by police may assume they should get out of their car and offer the officer money, as they would have to do in their country of origin. Suffice to say, neither is a good idea in the United States. In the case of a shopping purchase, it may be such things as power relationships between server and customer, whether bargaining is allowed, the level of formality and politeness expected or accepted, who initiates sales talk, when, where and how payment is performed, and so on. Some of this may eventually be learnable by observation of natives at play, but TBLT can speed up the process.

* 1. Conclusion

In sum, the first part of a task-based needs analysis involves the identi­fication of target tasks for particular types or groups of learners. The second part consists of an ATD. Representative samples of the typical subtasks and genuine language use involved in successful perfor­mance of those target tasks are examined for common patterns and the essential and/or frequent linguistic items employed to perform them. Based on the observed patterns, one or more prototypical models of spoken or written discourse are produced. These become the basis for the development of TBLT materials and constitute a major source of relevant new language for students and teachers. Depending on the level of students’ L2 proficiency, modified (elaborated, not simplified) versions of language in the models may be required. Guided by ten general methodological principles (for a detailed rationale and illustra­tions of their implementation, see Long, 2009. 2015: 300-28.), teachers implement them via pedagogic procedures they choose because they are appropriate for local conditions (the current pedagogic focus, learner characteristics, etc.) to facilitate students’ acquisition of the new lan­guage, in context, as they work on initially simple, progressively more complex pedagogic tasks - gradual approximations to the full target tasks identified in the first part of the needs analysis.

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Study Questions

1. What are the pros and cons of input elaboration?
2. How, if at all. could the first and/or second part(s) of needs analyses differ for *groups* of learners and *types* of learners?
3. Are there cases where native speaker intuitions could constitute a valid basis for materials writing?
4. Would an algorithm for input elaboration be desirable, and if so, can you sketch one?

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