

# **Theory-based Features of Task-based Course Design: isiXhosa for Specific Purposes in Local Government**

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## **Introduction**

Research in the field of second language teaching and learning over the past two decades has been characterised to a significant extent by the investigation of issues relating to the interaction of second language acquisition (SLA) theory on the one hand, and teaching methodology and materials design, on the other (Allwright and Bailey, 1991, Brown 2000, Cook, 2003, Gass 1995, Jordens 1996, McDonough and Shaw 2003, Van Patten 2002). Researchers have increasingly become preoccupied with refining and extending the theoretical principles underlying SLA and exploring the consequences and implications of theoretical principles for instructional methodology and materials (Bandar 2004, Cook, 1996, Coyle 2000, Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, Mitchell and Myles 1998, Pieneman 1998, Seidlhofer and Widdowson 1998, Sharwood Smith 1993). In particular, much work has been concerned with the form-meaning relationship in second language learning and teaching. A general view that emerged holds that, while course design and materials for communicative language teaching should reflect authentic language use, *focus on meaning* alone does not result in optimal language acquisition. Extensive research has dealt with questions of how SLA can be enhanced through incorporating *focus on form* principles in teaching methodology and materials design

(Doughty and Varela 1998, Ellis 2001, Fotos 1993, Larsen-Freeman 1995, Leow 2001, Odlin 1994, Rutherford 1988, Williams and Evans 1998).

Focus on form features in course design, materials and in language teaching methodology is argued to be a key component for attaining both greater complexity of language by learners' forms and for increasing the rate of acquisition towards target language (TL) competence (Caroll 1999, Long 1985, 2000, Pieneman 1998, Van Patten 1996, 2002). *Focus on form* principles are therefore considered to contribute to the attainment of higher levels of language proficiency if utilised in an integrated way with *focus on meaning* principles in second language methodology and materials design, taking into account the natural developmental learning and processing properties of learners.

This article has a two-fold goal. First, it aims to present an analytic description of a referential communication task for isiXhosa for specific purposes in local government, representing one unit of a series of tasks, within the framework of the task-based and genre-based approaches to communicative language teaching. Secondly, this analytic unit, illustrating *focus on meaning* principles, will be supplemented with analysis of the communication content in terms of the salient morphosyntactic language structures it exemplifies. This analysis will demonstrate how focus on form features of course design can be identified from communicative meaning for use in instructional materials design and in methodology.

The learning and teaching of a language for specific purposes has increasingly become a challenge in multilingual societies in many countries. The need for non-speakers of African languages to acquire communicative competence in an African language has emerged strongly in South Africa since the establishment of a democratic government in 1994, when African languages became official languages of the country. Adults, who are first language speakers of English or Afrikaans experience a great need for specific purposes courses in the African language spoken in their workplaces. This article therefore examines the analytic features of a communication task, typical of a course in isiXhosa for specific purposes in local government, as a special instance of communicative course design. Research into course design for teaching African languages for specific purposes in South Africa needs to become a priority, in order to address the needs of adults to learn African languages.

The article is organized into two main sections. The first section reviews the central properties of the task-based approach to second language learning and teaching in relation to the pedagogical norms of Valdman (1989), which mainly concern the role of authentic language input and learner processing factors. The second section presents the design features of a referential communication task for isiXhosa for specific purposes as regard focus on meaning considerations. This analysis includes reference to the rhetorical move structure characteristic of the genre-based approach, representing *focus on meaning* design features. A genre is defined as a spoken or written text, that serves a particular communicative purpose and is composed of a series of segments, called rhetorical moves (see Bhatia 1993:27f, Henry and Roseberry 1998:147). This section also discusses central principles of *focus on form* research and presents an analysis of the salient language structures in the communication task content, thus demonstrating how features of *focus on form* are identified from *focus on meaning*.

### **The Task-based and Genre-based Approaches: Properties and Pedagogical Norms for Second Language Learning and Teaching**

This section explores various perspectives on central issues underlying the use of tasks in second language learning and teaching. The perspectives relating to the task-based approach rest on a sound theoretical base that creates an interface between the fields of second language acquisition and pedagogy. The task-based approach is explored as it is employed in the field of second language learning and teaching. The first part of this section considers the concept of *task* as it is used in the L2 learning context. The requirements for a communication task, in order to promote language learning, are based on the principles of SLA. Different components of a communication task and the best task conditions for promoting learning are considered. Different kinds of communication tasks are discussed in view of the optimum task conditions. This section also considers the properties of structure-based communication tasks that focus on form. The value of focus on form for SLA is widely expressed in the literature and incorporated in task-based approaches. The principles of structure-based tasks are discussed

followed by a discussion of the criteria for developing structure-based tasks identifies *task essentialness* as most effective for relating form to meaning.

Referential tasks are communication tasks that emphasize the differences between the speaker and the listener's point of view. Referential communication tasks are designed to create discrepancies between the speaker and the listener's perspectives on the task at hand. Learners have to negotiate the variations in perspective in order to complete the task. The use of essentially transactional communication that exchanges information to promote SLA is motivated from recent literature. Referential communication tasks are in many ways identical to general communication tasks, but the difference lies in the underlying principles and processes that promote SLA, which are represented by these tasks.

The concept of *task* is analysed from an instructional perspective and the instructional task is shown to represent this view. The referential communication task is also supported from an instructional perspective. The task-based approach to L2 teaching focuses on method, rather than content, and pedagogy plays an important role in describing how materials can be effectively applied within methodology. Task-based language teaching is supported by modern pedagogic principles that focus on learning. Lastly, the context for specific purpose course design is described according to contemporary perspectives on language learning.

### **The Concept of Task and Task Requirements**

The concept of task refers to outcome-based activities, in other words activities for the sake of a given goal. A communication task is an interactional activity with a communication goal. In order to complete the task, learners are expected to request help when they do not understand. They communicate their needs and at the same time offer assistance or clarify their own messages. A communication task creates circumstances that allow learners to apply their production and comprehension processes (Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993).

A task should be designed in such a way that it contributes to the accomplishment of specific language learning objectives and promotes successful language acquisition. Principles for language learning, such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis or Long's (1985) Interactional Theory, support the notion that learners should be introduced to comprehensible input and

negotiate meaning. Nunan (1993) distinguishes between linguistic input (e.g. a radio broadcast), non-linguistic input (e.g. a photo) or hybrid (e.g. a map). Learners have to interpret the input and give feedback through understandable output. By negotiating meaning learners form new hypotheses about the language and modify their interlanguage. The notion of interlanguage refers to the systematic second language system that is distinguishable in the language use of second language learners. Second language learners typically pass through natural stages as they become increasingly proficient in a new language. These stages are often characterised by ungrammatical morphosyntactic forms, and in some stages, by 'regress' from apparent correct forms to incorrect forms, a phenomenon known as u-shaped learning (see Bardovi-Harlig and Gass, 2002:3). The learner's behaviour would reflect whether the task succeeded in providing comprehensible input, which the learner was able to interpret, react to by providing feedback on the production, and modify his or her interlanguage accordingly.

The interactant relationship, the interaction requirements, the goal orientation and the outcome options determine the nature of a task and the learners' behaviour. According to Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) the interactants can all have access to different information needed to complete the task, or only one interactant may hold the information and supply it if the others request it. An interactant can therefore either have a role of supplying or requesting information, or both. The communication goal can be similar or convergent, or otherwise divergent for the different interactants. There can only be one acceptable outcome or more than one acceptable possibility.

A communication task, which would best succeed in eliciting the required learner-behaviour, should meet the following conditions: First of all, every interactant has to have access to different information. The interactants have to manipulate and exchange the information in order to complete the task. Secondly, all the interactants have to request and supply information as to facilitate comprehension and production processes. Finally, negotiation of meaning is best promoted if the interactants have convergent goals and when there is only one possible outcome. These conditions ensure optimum opportunities for learners to produce, interpret and comprehend language, to give and receive feedback on production and adjust their interlanguage.

## **The Different Task Types**

Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) distinguish the following task types:

### **(a) The Jigsaw Task**

This is a collaborative, listening activity where learners have to choose and share information in order to complete the task. Both participants hold information which is needed and interaction is therefore imperative. This type of task fulfills all the requirements for a good communication task.

### **(b) The Information Gap Task**

This kind of task is similar to jigsaw tasks, except that only one of the interactants has access to information that is needed for completion of the task. This means that the other interactant has less opportunity to receive feedback and to modify his or her interlanguage. If the roles are alternated, then this task will fulfill the same requirements as the jigsaw task.

### **(c) The Problem-solving Task**

This kind of task has only a single outcome or solution, and all activity is aimed at finding this outcome. Both interactants have access to the same information that is needed for the task, which means that interaction is not necessary. Interactants could still ask for help or assist each other where there is ambiguity and modify their production as to be more intelligible.

### **(d) The Decision-making Task**

With this kind of task there is a choice of solutions or outcomes, but interactants have to work together to decide on one. As with problem-solving, it is not essential that the interactants exchange information, as they already share access to the same information. Interaction is necessary for reaching an agreement about the best outcome, but interactants do not have to participate to an equal degree in the task through either producing language or comprehending production. If there were to be only one acceptable, predetermined outcome, then the task would be essentially a problem-solving task.

### **(e) The Opinion Exchange Task**

This activity is built into any discussion. Interactants are not forced to

participate and they do not necessarily share the same communication goal. There is not a single, acceptable outcome which would compel a mutual understanding. If it had been agreed that interactants were only allowed to decide on one outcome, then there would be more opportunity for production, comprehension and interlanguage modification. With only one acceptable outcome, the features of the task would compare to that of a decision-making task.

### **Structure-based Communication Tasks**

Studies have shown that second language (L2) learners who receive instruction are at an advantage to naturalistic L2 learners and that focus on form promotes SLA, while it prevents fossilisation. Task-based grammar instruction develops L2 learners' grammar through hypothesis testing and inferencing. Consciousness raising activities at sentence level show how the lexicon and morphosyntax influence the meaning. According to Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) closed, information gap tasks are best for focus on form. They differentiate between closed tasks, which are determined or discrete, as opposed to open tasks that are undetermined. Closed tasks facilitate more negotiation of meaning, interlanguage modifications, as well as greater comprehension and focus on form, because the information needed for the successful completion of the task is very specific (such as in "Spot the difference" tasks). Loschky and Bley-Vroman emphasise that the design of closed tasks has to be very specific in order to make the learner aware of difference in meaning that the word order or lexicon brings about. Such consciousness-raising activities should bring about hypothesis-testing and hypothesis-restructuring, or what Rutherford (1988) refers to as *noticing* and *restructuring* of the organization of the target language.

### **Production and Comprehension Strategies that Promote Focus on Form**

In order to develop L2 learners' linguistic ability, tasks have to be designed specifically to encourage morpho- and syntax-based strategies for negotiating meaning. In this way a relationship between grammar and communication is established, and through practice production becomes

automatic, which leaves attention resources available for negotiating the meaning of new input.

According to Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) L2 learners can only rely on internal strategies for processing the syntax, semantics, pragmatics, morphology, intonation and lexicon, to understand input. The information is presented to the learner in linguistic and non-linguistic forms. Details of the communication situation will determine which of the above-mentioned factors contribute more to the learner's comprehension. Loschky and Bley-Vroman argue that by manipulating the input, the task designer can control the extent to which syntactical and morphological information are needed for comprehending the meaning in question. They argue that the learner has access to more diverse production strategies, and it is therefore more difficult to design tasks that would force learners to use syntactical or morphological strategies in order for them to develop their linguistic abilities.

## **Criteria for Developing Structure-based Communication Tasks**

Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) point out that in structure-based tasks the structural correctness has to be essential for comprehension and production of meaning. For most tasks there would be more than one linguistically correct way to structurally formulate meaning. Mother tongue speakers naturally tend to use a specific structure. Through native speaker–non-native speaker (NS–NNS) interaction language learners receive positive and negative evidence. They furthermore argue that although the use of the correct structure is not task essential for most tasks, it might be useful or more effective than a less natural or even unacceptable structure would be for the performance of a task. They emphasize that the task designer has to design a task in such a way that the value of the specific structure is as clear as possible to the learner. It is also possible of course to design a task in such a way that it is impossible to complete the task successfully without applying the correct grammatical knowledge. Loschky and Bley-Vroman maintain that in the case of comprehension tasks, it would be easier to implement task-essential structures; whereas with production tasks the designer would more likely be limited to structures that are useful or natural in certain settings.



According to Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) structure-based communication tasks are very valuable for exercises that would lead to automatization of the grammatical structures. The objective of grammar-based production tasks is to focus the learner's processing abilities on the meaningful function of a specific structure. They note that the task designer can manipulate the input, the context within which the input is processed and the learner's activities in order to achieve this objective. The designer of a structure-based comprehension task can create a narrow relationship between form and meaning by means of a task-essential design.

### **Referential Communication Tasks**

According to Yule (1997) referential communication tasks are transactional tasks that are characterized by extended, structured discourse. The discourse is purposeful and controlled in that there is a defined topic, as well as prescribed materials, a procedure and a point of completion that is reached when a set objective is achieved. Transactional communication is concerned with concepts like sender and receiver, and message encoding and decoding. Yule distinguishes between one-way information flow where the information is essentially transferred, and two-way information flow where information is exchanged. Yule describes tasks as open, when the goal is undefined and information exchange is optional. Closed tasks are designed as to require information exchange and a convergent effect within the task performance to reach a common goal.

Yule argues that referential communication tasks do not have any predetermined set of linguistic forms that have to be used. The tasks' function is purely to elicit speakers' discourse. He notes that different task types elicit different kinds of discourse, such as instructions or descriptions. He further explains that in principle a referential communication task has to provide the speaker with some pre-selected information to convey, the listener with a reason to attain the information in order to complete a task, and the awareness that the information gap exists. He maintains that the roles of speaker and listener, or sender and receiver, demand the skills of recognising the interlocutor's perspective, to make assumptions about their perspectives based on which the message is encoded and decoded, and to measure these assumptions to any feedback received. Referential

communication is defined within instructional environments where the context can be determined. Yule explains that in this sense *target* does not refer to the target language, but to a target repertoire. The emphasis is on the ability to use the L2 in communicative exchanges. L2 messages are formed and expressed within communicative events. Within these communicative events, a kind of socialization takes place. Yule advances the view that the participant has to assume a social role in referential communication. The social values that these roles represent, such as status, familiarity, expert or gender, have to be recognized in order for the participant to communicate effectively. He maintains that learners have to use communication strategies to negotiate meaning and communication outcomes. Strategies for negotiation of meaning include clarification or repetition requests, and confirmation or comprehension checks.

### **The Theoretical Rationale for Using Tasks**

According to Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) the theoretical perspective that supports the use of communication tasks is that which holds that language is best learned and taught through interaction. Therefore it follows that the use of tasks in L2 teaching relies on the learner's innate ability to acquire a language, and to use it creatively according to what is possible within the blueprint of the target language in the Universal Grammar (UG). The availability of UG for SLA implicates that L2 teaching only needs to facilitate noticing through consciousness-raising activities. This approach supports structure-based communication tasks that focus on form of language (not the *forms* of language).

The Input and Interaction Approach to L2 teaching does not only describe different learner interactions, but it also explores what kinds of interactions are more successful in promoting negotiation of meaning. As Pica and Doughty's (1985) studies of small group or pair work show, learner-learner interaction in instruction tasks offers more opportunity for negotiation of meaning, than learner-teacher interaction or, in other words, teacher-centered instruction. Allwright and Bailey (1991) conclude that learner-learner interaction leads to more conversational modifications and creates more opportunities for the learners to interrupt each other and ask for assistance. Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) refer to interactionist theories

of SLA which state that language learning is assisted through the social interaction of learners, especially when they negotiate towards mutual comprehension of each other's meaning. Allwright and Bailey (1991) point out that it is important to consider the learners' receptivity towards their fellow learners when structuring group work tasks. It is important to consider the effect of the kind of task, but also of the interactant relationship on learner participation in task-based teaching.

The Input and Interaction approach supports learner-centered teaching. According to Kumaravadivelu (1993) learner-centered teaching is also linear and cumulative, like teacher-centered teaching. This kind of teaching is content motivated and based on introducing all the forms of the TL. Such a linear approach cannot succeed because all languages are far too complex to be presented in this way. Kumaravadivelu defines that learning-centered teaching views language learning as a natural process that occurs during open communication. It is non-linear and language is not taught through systematic input. Kumaravadivelu asserts that learning-centered language teaching facilitates optimum conditions for meaningful interaction. Through communication tasks (language-in-use) negotiation occurs between the L2 learner's existing knowledge and new knowledge that the input presents. Kumaravadivelu argues that Krashen and Prabhu's views of SLA are best promoted when language is used to transfer information. Although their views do bear some resemblance to the Functional Approach, Kumaravadivelu notes that language is acquired through activity with the focus on meaning, not on functions or notions, topics or structures in the TL. Kumaravadivelu maintains that task-based L2 instruction facilitates SLA by involving the learners in activities that allows for achieving an outcome through language transactions.

Yule (1997) traces referential communication back to Piaget's studies of children's development in the 1920's. According to Yule (1997) learners rely on other knowledge of the world around them in order to develop their language. Learning to be verbally explicit about what is already known is a skill that is acquired through referential communication tasks. Referential communication is about the transactional function of language, and referential communication tasks create opportunities for negotiation of meaning and negotiation of communication outcome.

## **The Instructional Task**

There are different definitions for the concept of “instructional task in the scientific literature”. This variance indicates underlying differences in approach to methodology and content of L2 teaching. Kumaravadivelu (1993) discussed different views of this concept. He refers to Krahne’s view of tasks as skills that learners practice in the classroom for non-instructional objectives (in other words, for social communication) outside the classroom. Kumaravadivelu explains that Candlin views a task as one of a series of ordered problem-solving activities. These problem-solving activities involve the learners cognitively and communicatively, while they apply their existing and new knowledge in a collaborative exploration of revealing objectives in a social milieu. Kumaravadivelu (1993) describes Swales’ view of the instructional task as incorporating Candlin’s view, and points out that Swale emphasizes the goal-orientated nature of tasks, as well as the importance of acquiring the relevant pre-genre and genre skills for the different socio-rhetorical situations. Kumaravadivelu notes that Nunan views the instructional task as a communication task, which involves the language learner in comprehension, manipulation, production and interaction activities, whilst they focus on meaning rather than form.

Breen (1987) distinguishes between communication tasks, which are based on actual tasks that a person will undertake when communicating in the target language (TL), and learning tasks, which are selected on the basis of meta-communicative criteria. The latter introduce the learner to learning strategies and provide the groundwork for the learner’s engagement in communication tasks. Breen maintains that insight into the knowledge systems and how development is best promoted is important as to allow the learners to take responsibility for their own learning.

According to Kumaravadivelu (1993) a task-based perspective defines the instructional task as a communication task that is performed within a meaning-focused and interactional, methodological context. Kumaravadivelu explains that in the last fifty years language teaching has moved away from a scientific, methodological approach, and became more content orientated, focusing on curriculum design and teaching outcomes. Task-based teaching represents a shift back to method-orientated teaching, which recognizes the need for not only planning objectives and content but for specific classroom implementation.

Nunan refers to Gass and Varonis who observed that most negotiations occur between learners from different language backgrounds and different levels of acquisition. Nunan explores Doughty and Pica's research finding that two-way interaction and group work provide more opportunity for speech adjustments and negotiation of task outcome. According to Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993), jigsaw-type instructional tasks and convergent outcomes promote more negotiations and interaction modifications. These research findings reflect the interpersonal and interactive dimensions of the instructional task and demonstrate the large body of literature available for task-based syllabus designers.

Skehan (1996), elaborates on Long and Crook's emphasis on the importance of a needs analysis that show how learners need to use language in real-life, in order for task design to support a developmental relationship to such non-classroom activities. Long and Crooks emphasize a clear pedagogic relationship that tasks should have with out-of-class activities. For the purpose of vocational language teaching and learning the task's relationship with the real world has to be clearly defined in the task design.

### **The Task-based Syllabus**

Breen (1987) points out that planning for language teaching and learning is executed within the context of the broader curriculum of which syllabus design forms only a part. The general characteristics of contemporary syllabuses can be subscribed to two major paradigms for design: *analytic* and *synthetic* syllabuses. Long and Crooks (1993) maintain that although not one syllabus would be considered exclusively analytic or synthetic, depending on the units for analysis a syllabus can be placed on a continuum between these opposing poles of characteristics.

According to Long and Crookes (1993) analytic syllabuses do not focus on linguistic aspects, but rely on the L2 learners' analytic abilities to recognise linguistic patterns in the target language (TL) and to internalise it. Task-based teaching recognizes the role that focus on form plays in SLA to speed up the acquisition process and to promote development through consciousness-raising. Murphy (1993) asserts that a task acts like a catalyst for learning. Long and Crooks conclude that task-based syllabuses provide opportunity for focus on form (not focus on *forms* or language structures)

and acknowledge research findings on learners' interlanguage, according to which modified language is used as examples of the TL's code, especially in the beginning phases of acquisition.

According to Long and Crooks (1993) task-based syllabuses use *tasks* as units of analysis, but do not attempt to introduce language linearly, one task at a time. A task is used as an instrument whereby relevant examples of the TL are revealed. Through language-in-use the learner becomes aware of form-function relationships in the TL. Long and Crooks explain that learners internalize input, which is not destabilized by negative feedback, and incorporate this input in their long-term language faculty with other form-function relationships. In this way learners' grammar becomes more complex and their L2 develops.

Long and Crookes (1993) identify a six phase design programme for task-based teaching. Firstly a learner's needs identification is required – this is conducted according to the real-world target tasks that learners are preparing to undertake. Secondly, the specific target tasks are identified and classified according to more general task types; pedagogic tasks are derived from the task types, which are graded and sequenced to form a task-based syllabus. Thirdly, pedagogic tasks are graded according to the number steps and possible outcomes, the apparent cues, and the context in terms of time and place. Fourthly, task type and classroom routine also effects task grading. Fifthly, pedagogic tasks become increasingly complex, along with the learners' developing abilities, approximating target tasks in communicative success, semantic accuracy, pragmatic appropriacy, and grammatical correctness. Finally, evaluation is important in order to establish the degree of learning that has taken place, and to identify problem areas.

According to Long and Crooks the problems with task-based syllabuses relate to difficulties with task selection and grading, and sequencing tasks. Selecting tasks that represent learners' reality and relating these real tasks to their abilities are problematic. The potential of task-based L2 teaching for language learning for specific purposes is indisputable. Task design for language teaching and learning for specific purposes raises questions about the finiteness of tasks which represents the vocational eventualities. Long and Crooks note it is difficult to identify the target tasks and to differentiate tasks and sub-tasks.

## **Specific Purpose Course Design**

Grenfell (2000) asserts that by recognising that language learning is part of the same process whereby humans learn socio-cultural behaviours and the cognitive skills for living in a certain language community, we gain a different understanding of language. Such a view of language and language learning encourages an approach to language learning and teaching which is both strategic and communicative.

## **Vocational Language Teaching**

Vocationally orientated language learning, as an instance of language-learning for specific purposes has become increasingly important in modern societies. Certain vocational fields require proficiency in a language, whether it is to serve a certain language community, or to pursue an education or training, or whether it is to interact with colleagues. Multilingualism is required for specific purposes (Garcia Mayo 2000, Wieden 1998, Zemach 2003).

According to Thorogood (2000) vocational language teaching focuses on specific communication contents and therefore tends to limit the scope of the interaction. Thorogood explains that while national vocational qualification programmes address circumscribed vocational needs, they do not give sufficient linguistic grounding for language learning. He refers to statistics of language content that show only 20% of vocational communication is “technical” or domain specific, where foreign language training for work purposes regularly includes language intended for social interaction. At many levels social interaction forms an important part of transacting of business.

Thorogood (2000) notes existing vocational orientated programmes are based on situations that cover occupational eventualities. He argues that the range and scope of tasks may be so vast and unpredictable that it does not seem to prepare learners for real communication. Within task-based teaching tasks are seen as an instrument for language learning and not as the object of learning. The objectives of task-based language learning for specific purposes depend on the specific context of learning, but have remained general in terms of communication skills. The target tasks are selected from real world tasks that the learner would eventually undertake.

This guarantees relevance and authenticity. The essential language is related to the target tasks and essential structures for carrying out the task should be listed as priority. Wieden (1998) explains that although categories of vocabulary or domain specific words are recognized for vocational teaching programmes. These are mostly already acquired along with training and are often trade-specific rather than language-specific. He explains that language for specific purposes depends on domain-specific knowledge. The acquisition of this domain-specific knowledge and language is often one process. There is a matter of expertise involved that has to be made explicit. Vocational language is pertinent to a subculture that holds its own norms and conventions and requires a socially constructed pragmatic ability, which presupposes domain-specific knowledge.

Henry and Roseberry (1998), invoking the genre-based approach of Bhatia (1993), describes a genre-based approach to teaching languages for specific purposes. They define a *genre* as a text, either spoken or written, that serves a specific communicative purpose. They analyse the segments of the text, called *moves*, according to the communicative purpose of the genre. Henry and Roseberry explain that certain moves are obligatory, while others are optional and only contribute to the effectiveness of the communication. The aim of genre-based teaching is to raise learners' awareness of the organisation and linguistic features that are associated with the genre. Henry and Roseberry present evidence that awareness of the information structure allows learners to concentrate on combining information in a more textured manner.

### **Task Design for isiXhosa for Specific Purposes in Local Government**

This section explores a framework for task-based course design for isiXhosa second language learning for specific purposes in the context of local government. The communication task analysed represents one example from a series of target tasks identified for task-based vocational language teaching in local government. A study conducted at the Overstrand Municipality in the Western Cape forms the basis for identifying the scope and range of the task-design.

The target task is analyzed according to the task typology, as described by Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993), and Yule's (1997) principles



of referential communication. The generic structures and underlying lexical phrases, which are considered to be task essential for obligatory generic moves are explored. The purpose of such an analysis is to provide a basis for developing learning tasks, which focus on form, and to possibly illustrate tentative task complexity.

To specify the scope of the task design for task-based second language teaching is problematic. The pedagogic tasks have to equip the learner with the communication skills needed for real world activities. Second language teaching for specific purposes prepares the learners for the occupational eventualities. As Thorogood (2000) explains, the range and scope of tasks to accomplish this may be so vast and unpredictable and the broader range of work-based communication regularly includes language intended for social interaction.

Local government departments, or municipalities, include a large variety of professions and specialists in distinct fields. The domain-specific words vary not only from one department to another, but from internal language to external language. Some departments and specific professions within those departments communicate more with the public than others. The study at Overstrand Municipality, which provided the empirical data for this article, has shown that all the departments, and almost all municipal workers, communicate externally to a certain extent. More significantly, the Overstrand Municipality study has revealed that internal communication among different departments is a general occurrence. What seems essential is that the areas of communication that are shared by all the domains of the local government departments, and the communicative skills that constitute communicative competence for a municipal worker to communicate with colleagues, junior or senior workers, and the public, and the learning strategies to continuously develop one's ability, should be covered by the task design.

The isiXhosa task analysed below, representing one of the target tasks that were selected from real world tasks of municipal workers, is discussed according to considerations relating to task type and the requirements for communication tasks as described by Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993). The interactant relationship, interaction expectations, goal orientation, and outcome options are discussed. The potential of the task to elicit referential communication are noted, as well as the participants' roles

as described by Yule (1997). The task is first formulated in the target language, isiXhosa, with the English translation directly afterwards. The task typology analysis follows the task description, and is aimed at demonstrating the potential of each task to bring about negotiation of meaning and task outcomes as to promote isiXhosa second language acquisition.

## **TASK DESCRIPTION**

*Ilungu lasekuhlaleni litsalela umnxeba umasipala licele ukuthetha nomntu ophethe icandelo, uMnumzana Burger. UMnumzana Burger uzazisa ngokwakhe kwaye anike uncedo. Umntu uthi abuze malunga nokucima kombane kwaye umbane ungawulindela ukuba ungabuya nini. UMnumzana Burger umchazela uhlobo lwengxaki kwaye umxelela umntu ukuba kukho injineli elungisa ingxaki. Umntu aye akhalaze esithi uxakekile uyapheka kwaye akakwazi ukuqhubeka ngaphandle kombane. UMnumzana Burger unika ixesha loqikelelo acinga ukuba ukulungisa kuya kulithatha. Ilungu lasekuhlaleni kwakhona lichaza nesibane sasendleleni esophukileyo endlini yakhe. UMnumzana Burger ubuza malunga neyona ndawo yesibane sasendleleni. Umntu ubuza ukuba isibane esi siyakulungiswa nini. UMnumzana Burger umchazela inqubo kamasipala yesibane sasendleleni kwaye umchazela umntu ukuba iya kuba lithuba. Umntu uye akhalazele malunga nokulibaziseka. UMnumzana Burger uyaxolisa kodwa ecacisa ukuba umntu kufuneka abe nomonde. Bathi bebulisana.*

(A member of public phones the municipal electric services and asks to speak to the head of the department, Mr Burger. Mr Burger introduces himself and offers assistance. The person inquires about the nature of the power failure and when the power can be expected to be switched back on. Mr Burger explains the nature of the problem informs the person that there is a technician who is fixing the problem. The person complains that she is busy cooking and cannot continue without electricity. Mr Burger gives an estimated time that the reparation would take. The member of public then reports a broken streetlight at her house. Mr Burger inquires about the exact position of the streetlight. The person asks when the light will be fixed. Mr Burger explains the municipality's streetlight programme and informs the person that it could be a while. The person complains about the delay. Mr Burger apologizes but explains that the person has to be patient. They greet.)

The first part of this task is a typical information gap task, with the municipal worker holding the information and the member of public asking for information about the power failure. The goal orientation is divergent for the member of public expects immediate restoration of the electricity or a satisfactory explanation for a delay; while the municipal worker expects appreciation for the circumstances and patience from the member of public. The only acceptable outcome is the member of public's satisfactory understanding of the problem and its expected duration. The second part of the task is a typical jigsaw task, with both interactants holding information needed to complete the task. The member of public has information about the location of the broken streetlight and the municipal worker has information about the procedure of streetlight maintenance. The goal orientation is convergent in the sense that the municipal worker and the member of public want to be satisfied that the report is properly submitted and would be attended to. When the member of public is giving directions and identifies the position of the broken streetlight, the task could be elaborated with more detailed instructions or even tracing a route, where the information follower has to create specific referents or landmarks in town.

### **Rhetorical Move-structure Analysis**

The rhetorical move-structure for each of the target tasks is analysed according to obligatory and optional moves for the given genre (Bhatia 1993, Henry and Roseberry 1998). Each genre-type represents one or more communicative purpose and employs general conversational moves to realize those purposes. The analysis is based on an authentic dialogue that illustrates the tasks described above. The dialogue is recorded for reference with the numbers of the moves as it is analyzed. It should be noted that this is not a complete list of all the conversational moves that occur in the recorded dialogue, but that only those moves which are required for the successful completion of the tasks, or which contribute to the effectiveness of the communication, are represented.

### **TASK DIALOGUE**

Ilungu lasehlaleni (L)

UMnumzana Burger (B)

B: *Inkonzo zombane eOverstrand*

(Overstrand Electrical Services)

L: (4) *Molo, (1) [ndingathetha noMnumzana Burger?]*

(Good morning, may I speak to Mr Burger?)

B: (4) *Molo Nkosikazi, (2) [nguMnumzana Burger othethayo.] (5) [Ndingakunceda ngantoni?]*

(Morning Madam, this is Mr Burger speaking. How can I help you?)

L: (3) *[Ndingathanda ukwazi ukuba yintoni ingxaki nombane.] (6) [Kutheni umbane ucimile?]*

(I would like to know what the problem is with the electricity. Why is the power off?)

B: *Nenekazi, (7) [sinengxaki neengcingo zombane] ezilele phantsi emhlabeni (10) [ngenxa yemimoya emikhulu] ebekhe sanayo. (11) [Sixakekile sijonga yona – enye yenjineli seyilapho ukuyokujonga ukuba eyona ngxaki yintoni.] (13) [Sakuyilungisa ngokukhawuleza nangokungxama.]*

(Lady, we have a problem with electrical lines which are lying on the ground because of the strong winds we have had. We are busy to see to it – one of our technicians is already there to see what the exact problem is. We will repair it as quickly as we possibly can.)

L: (12) *[Ndixakekile ndiyapheka.] (8) [Uya kubuya nini umbane?]*

(I am busy cooking. When will the power come back on?)

B: *Nkosikazi kunzima ukutsho: (9) [ungathatha isiqingatha seyure okanye iyure.] Sisebenza ukutsho, malunga neeyure ezimbini, kodwa kunzima ukubuyisela umbane kwangoku. Kukho umsebenzi okufuneka wenziwe kwaye kufuneka ugqitywe kuqala phambi kokuba sibuyisele umbane.*

(Madam that is difficult to say: it could take a half an hour or an hour. We work on say, about two hours, but it is impossible to put the electricity back on right away. There is work to be done and it has to be finished first before we can restore the power.)

L: (14) *[Ndiyaqonda Mnumzana,] (15) [enkosi.] (16) [Ndifuna ukwazisa malunga nesibane sasendleleni ngaphandle kwendlu yam, esingasebenziyo] (20) [kwezintsuku zimbini zigqithileyo.] (22) [Ndingakubuza ukuba uza kuza nini ukuza kusilungisa?]*

(I understand Sir, thank you. I also want to inform you about a streetlight outside my house, which has not been working for the last two days. May I ask when are you coming to repair it?)

B: Nkosikazi, (17) [*unganceda undinike idilesi ethe ngqo kunye nendawo yesibane.*]

(Madam, if you can please just give me the exact address and position of the streetlight.)

L: (18) [*Isibane sisesitalatweni sesixhenxe kwisangqa sezithuthi.*] (21) [*Ndihlala kwanombolo weshumi elinesithandathu kwisitalato wesixhenxe kwaye esi sibane sophukileyo siphambi kwendlu yam.*]

(The streetlight is in Seventh Street at the traffic circle. I live in number sixteen Seventh Street and the broken streetlight is in front of my house.)

B: Nkosikazi, (19) [*ewe, singeza sizokusijonga*], kodwa (23) [*sinenkqubo yesibane zasendleleni ethe yayohlula idolophu yayimimandla emine. Into eza kwenzeka ngoku siza kwenza i-odolo yomsebenzi yokulungisa eso sibane sasendleleni. Emva koko iya kuthi ifakelwe ngexesha elilodwa elabelwe lo mmandla.*] Ngendlela yokuba (24) [*ingakule veki izayo.*]. Ndiza kukhe ndijonge ukuba ingeniso yenkqubo, kodwa ndicinga ukuba uhlala eVoëlklip uwela kwiveki yesine enyangeni, kwaye kuya (25) [*kufuneka ube nomonde kuba ingathatha ixesha.*]

(Madam, yes we can come and have a look at it, but we have a streetlight programme according to which the town has been divided into four areas. What will happen now is that we will make out a work order for repairing that streetlight. Then it will have to be fitted within the specific time allocated for that area. So, that can be next week. I will just have a look at how the programme proceeds, but I think that if you stay in Voëlklip you fall into the fourth week of the month, and you will just have to be patient because it could take a while.)

L: (26) [*Kodwa Mnumzana Burger, kwesi sithuba kumnyama tshu ngaphandle kwendlu yam, kwaye ndihlala ndedwa!*]

(But Mr Burger in the mean time it is pitch dark outside my house, and I live alone!)

B: (27) [*Ndiyaxolisa kakhulu ngaloo nto Nkosikazi.*] kodwa njengokuba bendikuchazele malunga nenkqubo akukho nto endinokuyenza malunga nayo.

(I am very sorry about that Madam, but as I have explained we work according to a programme and there is nothing that I can do about it.)

L: (28) [*Kulungile Mnumzana Burger.*] (29) [*uhlale kakuhle.*]

(Alright Mr Burger, good bye.)

## *Theory-based Features of Task-based Course Design ...*

B: (29) [*Ube nemini emnandi nawe Nkosikazi.*]  
(Good day to you Madam.)

Communication Purpose One: *Establishing a telephone conversation between the head of the department (B) and a member of public (L).*

Obligatory Moves:

- (1) asking for person B
- (2) identification of speaker(s)
- (3) identifying the purpose of the call

Optional Moves:

- (4) greeting
- (5) offering assistance

Communication Purpose Two: *Inquiry about a problem*

Obligatory Moves:

- (6) requesting reason for problem
- (7) stating problem
- (8) inquiring about duration of problem
- (9) stating time approximation

Optional Moves:

- (10) describing nature of the problem or describing the reason for the problem
- (11) explaining procedure for rectifying problem
- (12) complaining about the consequences of the problem to establish urgency
- (13) making excuses for delay or reassuring that repair is in progress
- (14) indicating comprehension
- (15) stating appreciation

Communication Purpose Three: *Reporting a problem*

Obligatory Moves:

- (16) reporting problem
- (17) asking the exact location of the problem
- (18) identifying location of the problem
- (19) agreeing to attend to the problem

Optional Moves:

- (20) describing exact nature of problem
- (21) instructions for how to get there
- (22) requesting exact time of repair
- (23) explaining procedure for repair
- (24) stating approximated time for repair
- (25) requesting patience
- (26) complaining about inconvenience caused and establishing urgency of problem
- (27) sympathizing or apologizing for inconvenience caused
- (28) acceptance of apology
- (29) greeting

### **Essential Language Structures of Target Task**

An analysis of the authentic dialogue which demonstrates the target task for language learning for the specific purpose of communicating in local governmental departments, serves to identify language structures that are essential for effective task participation. Consciousness-raising activities, which increase learners' awareness of the form of language, have to take account of generic structures and underlying lexical phrases of referential communication tasks. Not all the morphological and syntactic features of the different moves for every genre in the isiXhosa task are included in the following analysis; only those that are task-essential for the purpose of focus on form in the instruction process, are noted.

Requesting to speak to someone: imvume (permission)

*Ndingathetha noMnumzana Burger?*

potential morpheme -nga- + verb -thetha and prepositional phrase with na-, as head, + noun phrase

Identification of speaker: ukufanisa (identification)

*NguMnumzana Burger othethayo.*

identificative copula concord ng- + noun phrase and verbal relative as nominal modifier

Offering assistance: uncedo (assistance)

## *Theory-based Features of Task-based Course Design ...*

*Ndingakunceda ngantoni?*

potential morpheme -nga- + second person object concord ku- + verb -nceda and prepositional phrase with nga-, as head, + question word -ntoni

Identifying purpose of call: injongo (purpose)

*Ndingathanda ukwazi yintoni ingxaki nombane.*

potential morpheme -nga- + verb -thanda with clausal infinitive ukwazi and copulative clause yintoni ingxaki with prepositional phrase with na- as head.

Requesting reason for problem: ubango (cause)

*Kutheni umbane ucimile?*

question word kutheni with a situative clause as complement

Stating the problem: ukubika (reporting)

*Sinengxaki neengcingo zombane.*

associative preposition -na- + noun ingxaki, as well as with the noun iingcingo with descriptive possessive, which is formed by possessive concord + noun umbane

Describing the reason for the problem: unobangela (reason or cause)

*Ngenxa yemimoya emikhulu.*

sentential preposition ngenxa ya-, which denotes cause, + noun phrase with adjective -khulu, as a nominal modifier

Inquiring about the duration of the problem: ukubuza (questioning)

*Uya kubuya nini umbane?*

A stylistic movement of the subject to sentence final position emphasizes the question with question word nini. Future tense is formed by morphemes -ya with ku- + verb -buya.

Stating time approximation: ubude bexesha (length of time)

*Ungathatha isiqingatha seyure okanye iyure.*

potential morpheme -nga- + verb -thatha and coordinated noun phrase with conjunct okanye between descriptive possessive and noun.

Indicating comprehension: ukuqonda (understanding)



*Ndiyaqonda Mnumzana.*

The morpheme -ya- with the present tense indicative verb -qonda indicates emphasis.

Reporting problem: ukwazisa (to inform)

(i) [*Ndifuna ukwazisa malunga nesibane sasendleleni*] (ii) [*ngaphandle kwendlu yam*] (iii) [*esingasebenziyo.*]

(i) verb -funa with causal infinitive ukwazisa, as the head of the subordinate clause, with malunga na- + noun + descriptive possessive in the locative form

(ii) prepositional phrase with nga- + -phandle with possessive concord kwa- + noun indlu, denotes location and possessive concord + first person pronoun

(iii) negative verbal relative is nominal modifier of noun isibane

Asking the exact location of the problem: ukubuza (asking)

(i) [*Unganceda undinike idilesi ethe ngqo*] (ii) [*kunye nendawo yesibane.*]

(i) subjunctive mood -nike coincides with the purposive clause of verb and verbal relative -thi introduces ideophone ngqo as nominal modifier for object noun phrase idilesi

(ii) coordinated noun phrase with conjunct kunye na- + noun with descriptive possessive.

Identifying the location of the problem: indawo (position)

(i) [*Isibane sisesimalatweni sesixhenxe*] (ii) [*kwisanqa sezithuthi.*]

(i) noun with copulative verb + s + locative noun with descriptive possessive, which forms an ordinal number

(ii) locative preposition ku- + noun isanqa with descriptive possessive

Explaining the procedure for repair: ukucacisa (explaining)

(i) *Into eza kwenzeka ngoku siza kwenza i-odolo yomsebenzi...*

(ii) [*Emva koko iya kuthi ifakelwe*] (iii) [*ngexesha elilodwa...*]

(i) noun + relative in the future tense with neutro-passive and adverb of time ngoku and future tense morphemes -za ku- + verb -enza with noun and descriptive possessive

(ii) conjunctive of time emva koko with situative clause, which denotes future tense, with subjunctive mood for the successive action, i.e. passive verb –fakelwe

(iii) prepositional phrase with nga- + noun ixesha and quantifier –odwa, as nominal modifier

Sympathizing and apologizing: ukuxolela (apologizing)

*Ndiyaxolisa kakhulu ngaloo nto Nkosikazi.*

–ya-, which denotes emphasis, + verb –xolisa with adverb kakhulu and prepositional phrase indicating reason with nga- + demonstrative + noun

## Conclusion

The analytic framework of course design for isiXhosa for specific purposes in local government presented in this article aimed to demonstrate how a major challenge for effective communicative language teaching, namely the integration of *focus on meaning* and *focus on form* can be accomplished in course design. Thus, the pedagogical norms proposed by Valdman (1989) which emphasize the importance of authentic language input and use, while taking into account factors of learner processing can be introduced in a planned manner. Pedagogical norms guide the selection and sequencing of target language features, as shown in the analysis of the isiXhosa communication task. Many questions however remain relating to research of pedagogical norms for actual language use and the implementation of those norms for pedagogical purposes, from designing materials to instructional methodology. A wide range of issues as regard the processing of language specific forms and natural developmental acquisition of morphosyntactic forms by learners in SLA from a communicative approach promises exciting future research.

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