Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:
Dr Seetha Lakshmi, Asian Languages & Cultures, National Institute of Education, Singapore

Abstract:
In 2004, the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice (CRPP) at the National Institute of Education (NIE), published a report on “A Critical Review of the Tamil Language Syllabus and Recommendations for Syllabus Revision (CRP36/03SL)”. 10 key recommendations were proposed ranging from effective use of Standard Spoken Tamil in classrooms to pedagogical approaches for the teaching of language skills to help students speak the language with ease and understanding.

This workshop will share a study based on developing and designing multimodal materials using task-based approaches Brumfit & Johnson 1979; Pica, 1993) to train teachers in the Diploma in Education Programme. It will discuss how learning is situated in learners’ social and therefore interactional practices. It investigates how tasks are not only accomplished but also encourages collaboration (Mondana Doehler, 2004).

Keywords: Language and Education; Teacher Education/Development

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CRPP Research and Task based approach
“A Critical Review of the Tamil Language Syllabus and Recommendations for Syllabus Revision (CRP36/03SL)”. 

10 key recommendations:
* Syllabus Review and Reform
* Effective use of Standard Spoken Tamil in classrooms
* Maintaining Appropriate Standards
* Use Accessible Language
* Redesign Tasks
* Prepare a Tamil Word List
* Make the Text Multimodal
* SEED
* Design Tamil Web sites
* Ensure Smoother Transitions
* Link Texts with Assessment
* De-link Mother Tongue Languages
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

CRPP Research and Task-based approach

Redesign Tasks:

“Related to the idea of using accessible language is that of reinventing, redesigning and improving the design of the learning tasks.

One of the problems in the learning and use of Tamil is that students in general do not find lessons interesting nor see how it can be used outside the classroom. The adoption of an integrated syllabus design will lead to a task-based syllabus. Grammar teaching is not central in this approach because learners will acquire the required grammar as a by-product of carrying out tasks. Finally, tasks motivate learners and engage them in meaningful communication.

Tasks should bear some resemblance to real-life language use. As one teacher commented: “We should give lots of activity-based lessons. In English we say ‘authentic tasks’.” Examples of real-world tasks are reading a set of instructions for assembling an instrument, finding solutions for a puzzle, reading a map or diagram and giving directions. For example, a trip to Serangoon Road where the children can actually participate in the real-life activity of buying vegetables for their family can help pupils see the relevance of the language and practise using it (Richards, 2001). “
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CRPP Research and Task based approach:

“Research conducted by CRPP on Tamil pedagogy indicates that students have few opportunities for extended speech and writing, and that group work opportunities are not fully exploited. A redesign of learning tasks with a focus on pupils using the language and (language skill) transfer to real-life situations is urgently needed.

Other suggestions made by focus groups include the introduction of activities such as drama and toastmaster’s clubs in Tamil textbooks. In order to improve the oral language proficiency of Tamil students it is recommended that syllabus and texts include approaches to drama and oral language. Stinson adopts an approach called *process drama*, where drama in the classroom focuses on the process for using language rather than on product and where both students and teachers work together. Process drama not only protects the student’s self-esteem, but also provides enjoyable reasons for oral language activities. This approach provides a context for repetition, practice and preparation. (Stinson, 2005; Stinson & Wall, 2003)”
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

*Task based approach in language teaching and learning and second language learning.

*“task-based language teaching is probably the most promising and productive one, the one which has drawn much attention from both second language teaching profession and second language researchers”.

(website: http://www.aubrun.edu/~nunnath/engl6240/foff.html.)
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in second language learning:

"...a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. Thus, examples of tasks include painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, taking a hotel reservation... and helping someone across a road. In other words, by 'task' is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between." (Long, 1985 p. 89)

"An activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command. Task may or may not involve the production of a language. A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task. The use of a variety of different kinds of tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative ...since it proficeds a purpose for a classroom activity which goes beyond the practice of a language for its own sake. (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1986 p. 289)"
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in second language learning:

"...a piece of work or an activity, usually with a specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, or at work." (Crookes, 1986)

"...any structured language learning endeavor which has particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task. "Task' is therefore assumed to refer to a range of work plans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning—from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such a group problem-solving or simulations and decision making." (Breen, 1987 p. 23)
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in language teaching and learning:

"An activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was regarded as a 'task'. (Prabhu, 1987, p. 24)

"...a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. (Nunan, 1989 p. 10)

"...an activity which involves the use of language but in which the focus is on the outcome of the activity rather than on the language used to achieve that outcome. (Willis, 1990, p. 127)

"...some kind of activity designed to engage the learner in using the language communicatively or reflectively in order to arrive at an outcome other than that of learning a specified feature of the L2. (Ellis, 1994, p. 595)
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in second language learning:

“a task can be defined as a meaning-focused language learning activity which leads to a specific outcome at its completion”

(website: heep://www.aubrun.edu/~nunnath/engl 6240/fonf.html.)
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in Pre and In-service course training:

* Trainees learn from one another.
* Some trainees become cultural teacher.
* More fun and interest in learning together through task based approach.
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in Pre and In-service course training:

* Teachers can be able to differentiate the activity and task based learning and teaching

* Teachers know how to plan their lessons with authentic tasks for Singapore context
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

Task based approach in Pre and In-service course training:

*Pictures and transcription from Pre-service course training
*Audio and Video excerpts from In-service course training
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

*School based research in the use of task based approach in Singapore schools
*the place of task based approach in native and non-native speakers’ situation
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:
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Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

* Authentic tasks based demonstration
* Hands on session for the workshop participants
* Presentation by the workshop participants
* Closing remarks
Workshop: Task-based approach in teaching language skills:

References:


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References:


Thank you. Vanakkam.
-seetha