

# Developing a Model for Designing a Task-based Language Syllabus for Hospitality Management Students

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**Abstract** - This study aimed to review theories and existing models for designing a task-based language syllabus; to design and validate a task-based language syllabus; and to propose a model for designing a task-based language syllabus. The social development theory of Vygotsky (1978, 1986; Lantolf, 2000) was reviewed to examine the role of language learning as a social practice. Selinker's (1972) interlanguage theory was consulted to understand how and why L2 students express themselves in L1 language. Krashen's (1981) second language acquisition theory was included to help explain the students' second language acquisition inside the school or outside in the working place. Halliday's (1985) functional and communicative views of language were also studied for the benefit of the proposed model.

Various TBLT syllabus models by leading proponents were reviewed and considered. The participants were subjected to a needs analysis. Then, the research was processed by designing the proposed model syllabus and the learning material that goes with it. In the end, the proposed model was presented as the final output of the research.

The study confirmed that a step-by-step and comprehensive procedure was necessary to develop a model for a task-based syllabus design. On the whole, the Manarpiis Model for Designing a Task-based Language Syllabus stands on solid theoretical foundations of communicative teaching that could answer the language learning needs of second language speakers. The overall rating of Excellent thereby shows the proposed syllabus fit as an acceptable model.

**Keywords** – Second Language Acquisition, Task-based Language Teaching; English in the Workplace; Syllabus Writing

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language experts found out that engaging learners in tasks provides a better context for the activation of

the learning processes than form-focused activities, thus providing opportunity for the learners to learn language meaningfully and actively. Willis and Willis (2007) indicated that “the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom.” The use of tasks in classrooms gave way to the new approach in teaching in the mid-1980s called Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). As an approach, it provides language learning to students using tasks that are meaningful to their learning (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Believing in the concepts of TBLT, this research attempts to develop a model for designing a task-based language syllabus for hospitality management students taking the subject Speech and Communication course under their program.

A model as defined by Branch and Gustafson (1998) is an explicit representation of a reality. They assert that it imposes relationship in the sense that standards are set. Gustafson and Branch (2002) clarify the meaning of a model as one that can also function as “a visual and communication tool” that could help to conceptualize instructional design processes as its elements relate to each other.

Three most appropriate models were chosen that would best answer the needs of the model syllabus to be proposed – the Morrison, Ross, and Kemp or MRK Model (1994), Seels and Glasgow Model (1997), and the Dick and Carey Model (1996). These models each contain the five ADDIE components although not in the same order as they appeared in the elements involved.

This study also reviews task-based language design models which is also analyzed and compared and found similarities and differences with the researchers' viewpoints. These include the works of Nunan (2001) and Long (1985, 1991, 1997, 2005) in terms of sequencing a task-based syllabus. Meanwhile, the design of the syllabus was considered using the task-based language models of Nunan (1989), Candlin (1987), Shavelson and Stern (1981), Wright (1987), Willis, (1996), and Long (1985, 1991, 1997, 2005).

With regard to procedures of a task-based syllabus design, the works of Willis (1996) and Ellis (2003) are compared.

The research is anchored mainly on the SLA Theory of Krashen (1981), Interlanguage Theory of Selinker (1972), Social Development of Vygotsky (1962, 1981) and the Functional and Communicative Views of Language (Halliday, 1985).

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the present study is to develop a model for designing a task-based language syllabus for hospitality management students. Specifically, the research aims to review theories and existing models for designing a task-based language syllabus; design and validate a task-based language syllabus; and propose a model for designing a task-based language syllabus.

## III. METHODS

### Research design

The descriptive method of research was used in developing a model for designing a task-based syllabus for hospitality management students. An evaluation of the needs of the learners was done using CHED Memorandum Order No. 30 s. 2006. Balint's (2006) Need Analysis Form was also used in the evaluation of

the existing syllabus. CvSU syllabuses under HRM and Tourism for 2011 including the syllabus in Speech Communication were reviewed. Then, a needs analysis was formulated and later conducted and distributed to selected students in selected campuses of Cavite State University. The results were tallied and determined to find out the linguistic needs of the Hotel and Restaurant Management students. Then, the sequence, design, and procedure were considered afterwards. The matrix was also formulated using the CHED Memorandum where the competencies are stated. Big and small tasks were determined and procedurized and were used in writing the task-based syllabus study materials. The pretest/posttest was written afterwards and submitted to the advisers and experts for validating. The research focused next on validating the proposed model task-based syllabus design. The proposed syllabus model was tried out to a selected school afterwards. Feedbacks were then gathered and analyzed using simple statistical procedures to determine the acceptability of the proposed task-based syllabus design model. The final action was administering a posttest to the participating students.

### Participants

A total of 87 participants were asked to participate in the validation of the needs analysis, actual tryout of syllabus model, and validation of the instruments used.

Table 1. Total number of participants used in this study

	Students	Teachers	Practitioners	Experts	TOTAL
Needs Analysis	53	9	3	-	65
Actual Tryout	9	1	2	-	12
Checking and Validating of Instruments	-	8	-	2	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>87</b>

### Instruments

The following instruments were used in the study: 1) Needs Analysis Questionnaire; 2) Feedback Questionnaires that include a) Rating Scale for Evaluation of the Syllabus (Experts and Teacher Use); b) Interview Questionnaire for TBLT expert, Syllabus designer, practitioners, teachers; c) Interview Questionnaire for TBLT demonstrator and d) Questionnaire and Evaluation Sheet for Students' Use. Other materials included as instruments were digital camera with video to record the performance of the participating students and demonstration teacher. Also, a recorder was used to capture the interlanguage conversation happening between learners while accomplishing the tasks in the classroom.

The Needs Analysis Questionnaires used for this research was patterned after Prof. Martin Balint's (2006) Needs Analysis Form which he used for his Japanese students at Kwansai Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan.

Feedback questionnaires were prepared to evaluate and validate the proposed task-based syllabus including the task-based material made by the researcher.

### Procedure

The researcher designed an instructional design patterned after the Seels and Glasgow Model (1997) by providing three main phases namely: 1) Review, 2) Design and Process, and 3) Validation. In the review phase, theories and models were analyzed. In the

Design and Process, the procedure went from evaluating an existing syllabus, to formulating processes that go with the syllabus design up until validating of the syllabus by experts. In the Validation, the proposed syllabus was applied, analyzed, given feedback, and revised. The final output was the formulation and design of the proposed model Task-based language syllabus.

### Data Analysis

The rating scale used by the respondents in the research was formulated and validated in consultation with other rating scales like the one used by Factor (2007) and the questionnaire used by ITECH (2004) which assesses goals and objectives, design and organization, content, and methodology of a curriculum design. The researcher also formulated a validated interview questionnaire intended for use by the participants.

Percentage analysis was used for the data collected from the questionnaire for needs analysis. The data were carefully analyzed and interpreted. For content validation of the syllabus by a panel of experts, the weighted mean was determined. The experts' evaluation regarding the form and content of the syllabus was done

using the Likert Scale modified into four points by eliminating the neutral point to ensure exactness and concreteness of answer.

The numerical and descriptive values are as follows Excellent (E): 3.5 – 4.0; Very Satisfactory (VS): 2.5 – 3.49; Satisfactory (S): 1.5 – 2.49; Unsatisfactory (U): 0 – 1.49.

The weighted mean of the experts' validation of each of the four components were computed by multiplying the frequencies by the numerical value of each point in the scale. The product was added and the sum was divided by the number of validators. The data derived from the computations was subjected to analysis and interpretation.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After evaluating three instructional models, the Seels and Glasgow Model (1997) was found to be perfectly congruent with the demands of a task-based syllabus design. The main reason is attributed to the flow of its phases where a needs analysis is required first of all followed by instructional design, and implementation and evaluation. Table 2 shows the summary of comparison.

**Table 2. Summary of the three instructional design models**

CHARACTERISTICS	Morrison, Ross, and Kemp (MRK)	Seels and Glasgow	Dick, Carey, and Carey (DCC)
Orientation	Classroom-oriented	Product-oriented	System-oriented
Approach	Holistic	Systematic	Systemic and systematic
Primary Output	A few hours of instruction	An instructional package	Course or curriculum
Goal	Improve a piece of content	Improve efficiency of production	Create an instructional system
Required Level of Instructional Design Skill	Low	Medium to High	Low, Medium, High
Level of Front-end Analysis (Amount of resources needed)	Minimal (Little additional resources)	Moderate (Have significant resources that can be leveraged for the effort)	Extensive resources
Level of Formative Evaluation	Moderate	Moderate in overall model but extensive in the materials development phase.	Extensive throughout
Project Management Focus	Strong	Strong. This model is organized into three separate project management phases.	Strong
Learner Focus	Strong	Moderate. Learner characteristics are taken into account during analysis phase.	Moderate. Learner characteristics are taken into account during analysis phase.

*Note:* Created based on information from Dick and Carey's (1990) The systematic design of instruction; Gustafson, Branch and Maribe's (2002) Survey of instructional development models; Seels and Glasgow's (1990) Exercises in instructional Technology; and, Morrison, Ross and Kemp.s (2001) Designing effective instruction. (The Herridge Group, December 2004)

The present English and HRM syllabuses in CvSU were reviewed and were found to be not meaning-based or Type B because they do not satisfy the requirements which are: 1) there is a focus on accomplishing a practical goal in the context of an authentic situation; 2) the activities are less prescriptive, more open and free-flowing and more creative; 3) the learners do not learn the language consciously or intentionally; 4) the language is not being learned but used; 5) activities require learners to work in pairs or groups to negotiate for meaning; 6) activities in the classroom prompt communicative action (Ellis, 1993). Table 3 outlines the objectives, materials, setting, and classroom activities embedded in the CvSU syllabus.

### Summary of findings of the needs analysis

After the review of syllabus, the needs analysis was formulated and given to 65 participants. The needs analysis survey yielded the following important points to consider in designing the college English syllabus for hospitality management students using task-based language teaching:

1. Most students **Agreed** that they chose to take up Hotel and Restaurant Management because of the opportunity to speak English.
2. They **Strongly Agreed** in reinforcing their English speaking skills so that they could use it in their work abroad.
3. Most students **Agreed** that they have a goal to get a job in hotels or restaurants that requires the use of English.
4. The students **Agreed** that learning English is a challenge that they enjoy.
5. The students **Strongly Agreed** that they want to learn English to be more educated.
6. The students **Strongly Agreed** that learning English is important to get a good job after graduating from the university.
7. The students felt their overall current level of English ability is **Good**.
8. Most students, instructors, and practitioners agreed that teaching parts of speech and correct sentence construction is **Very Useful**.
9. The students, instructors, and practitioners also believed that using tasks that promote real working situation is **Useful to Very Useful** in learning English.
10. The students believed that the skills of **Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing** in that order are most useful to learn and practice for improving one's overall English ability.

11. The students, teachers, and practitioners all concurred that it is **Very Important** to have vocabulary practice in the English classes.
12. The students, teachers, and practitioners considered having grammar practice in the English class **Very Important**.
13. Most students **Agreed**, while teachers **Strongly Agreed** and the practitioners **Agreed to Strongly Agreed** that English skills used for their specific purposes inside the classroom could help them in their future jobs.

### Formulating sequence, design, and procedure

A meaning-focused TBLT syllabus design was made based on the philosophies set by TBLT experts like Nunan (1989) and Long (1985, 1997).

Based on the comparisons made of experts' models, and the researcher's advocacy on how a Speech Communication course should be designed, the present research proposed to include and define the role of each element by Nunan, 1989; Candlin, 1987; Shavelson and Stern, 1981; Wright, 1987; Willis, 1996; and Long (1985, 1991, 1997, 2005). Figure 5 shows the components of the proposed TBL syllabus.

The research constructed a more comprehensive procedure in presenting the task-based topic in the class. It included the elements "Check," and "Grammar Study," as important additions to the models of Ellis (2003) and Willis (1996).

The proposed lesson matrix was based on competencies found in CHED Memorandum Order 30 s. 2006 that is about the policies and standards set by the Philippine government for Hospitality courses in the tertiary level. The lesson matrix of the proposed syllabus is composed of the following components: 1) Course Contents – This refers to the general subject matter of the whole course or what the course contains; 2) Goals and Objectives – Goals are general plans of the course while objectives are the specific ideas connected to the goals; 3) Task Sequence – the order of task procedurized from what comes first to what comes last; 4) Language Function – the meaning of language focusing on standard phrases, structure, and vocabulary used in specific area such as Hotel and Restaurant Management; 5) Grammar Focus – the form of language focusing on grammar that will allow the learners to use the form correctly; and 6) Evaluation – the assessment of tasks carried out in the Activity phase where the teacher presents a grammar lesson.

A Task-based learning activity material titled English Communication for Hotel and Restaurant

Management Students was produced based on the formulated lesson matrix and based on the competencies found in CHED Memorandum Order 30 s. 2006. The contents of the lessons intended for Second Year Hotel and Restaurant Management students: (a) Cooking Procedures, (b) Mixing Cocktails and Mocktails, (c) Setting the Table, (d) Taking and Processing Orders, (e) Demonstrating Reservation Procedures and Checking In/Out of the Hotels, (f) Doing the Work of a Concierge, (g) Doing Housekeeping Works, (h) Applying for a Hotel or Restaurant Job. The lessons were procedurized following the sound principles of the task-based language teaching proponents. The designed procedures were as follows: (a) Identify big task, (b) Identify goal out of this big task, (c) Identify small tasks out of the big task (d) Identify objectives for each small task, (e) Sequence the big task and the corresponding small tasks from which task comes first or which task to be accomplished first up to the very last task. Figures 7 and 8 show a prototype of procedurizing a task while Table 4 shows the contents of the task-based materials highlighting the big task with its smaller tasks and grammar focus.

Included in the task-based procedure is the making of a pretest/posttest which were used by the learners before and after completion of the entire task-based lessons. These include the following: a) Test A – Self-Assessment (Can Do Statements): includes 40 statements that the learners will have to answer using the main question: “Using English, can I do the following?” It includes four choices of answers with 4 being the best choice – 4 (I can do this very well), 3 (I can do this well, 2 (I cannot do this well), and 1 (I cannot really do this); and b) Test B – Oral Demonstration (Situational): includes task-performance test using the target English. Task 1 is about applying for a job, Task 2 is analysis of pictures where two learners are partners taking turns in performing and completing tasks being asked for. Task 3 is describing a location to be performed in dyads while Task 4 is a task completion in table setting, while the last task (Task 5) is on ordering food in a restaurant.

The proposed task-based syllabus, together with the material and the evaluation sheets were shown via email to TBLT expert Dr. Dave Willis. Results of his scrutiny of the materials were sent back to the researcher via email:

**Evaluation of the syllabus, material and evaluation form by Dr. Willis About the Proposed Syllabus and Material**

- a. The sequence of activities designed seems to be very much in line with the principles of TBL.
- b. Language use and exposure comes before language focus.
- c. There is some pre-teaching of vocabulary, but not of grammar.
- d. Learners are encouraged initially to rely on their own language resources and there are then well designed language focus and practice activities to help them expand those resources.
- e. The text in Cocktails unit looks authentic. It seems to be a good way of introducing a topic and getting learners to talk.

#### **About the Evaluation Sheet**

The evaluation sheet seems to be well designed and should help to answer these questions if it is honestly applied.

#### **Comments**

- a. **Doubts about priorities in allocating time for different activities.** (I get the impression from looking at your materials that learners will be spending a lot of class time on practice activities. I would argue that class time is too valuable to be spent in this way. Of course you need to do some practice in class, but a lot of this mechanical work can be done for homework with gap filling exercises, listening to and repeating recorded material and so on. This would free up class time for learners to practice using the language. Something which they will find few opportunities for outside the classroom.”)
- b. **Texts used in cocktail tasks.** (“In some cases learners will need English to discuss things with fellow specialists. If they are talking about how to mix cocktails, for example, I would imagine they need to talk as experts. Your text on table setting seems to be a text of this kind. In that case it would be useful to have samples of experts talking and of specialist texts on mixing cocktails or whatever. In other cases they will be learning English to talk to customers – advising them on which cocktail to choose, for example. The text you have chosen would certainly be appropriate for this.”)

#### **Suggestions**

##### **Transitions and Sequence Words**

*Use:*

First of all; Secondly, Previously, Then; Later (on); But before all that; Finally, etc.

(“I think it is highly unlikely that you will find a text that sequences things in this way. One of the features of TBL as we see it is that it should aim to

teach natural English rather than English as we imagine it to be or as we think it ought to be. If you have found a number of texts which use these markers that's fine. But you should beware of starting from notions of what you or other materials writers believe to be important if those notions are not confirmed when you look at the way people actually speak and write.")

A syllabus expert who has supervised the design of syllabuses in her university for more than thirty years evaluated the proposed task-based syllabus. Her evaluation yielded highly favourable results. Table 6 shows the syllabus designer's assessment with a total of 3.91 which yielded a descriptive interpretation of Excellent, indicating her approval of the implementation of the proposed task-based syllabus.

For the tryout, five lessons were chosen by the researcher in consultation with the Demonstration Teacher. Upon agreement, the first four lessons were not supervised by the researcher. However, the fifth one, Applying for a Hotel or Restaurant Job, was observed. Pictures of the actual demonstration teaching were taken while the actual conversations during the proceedings were recorded using an electronic recorder.

Table 3. Evaluation made by experts, teachers, and practitioners

Criterion	Evaluators	WM	VI
<b>Goals/Objectives</b>	Expert	3.67	Excellent
	Teachers	3.96	Excellent
	Practitioners	4.00	Excellent
	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Design And Organization</b>	Experts	4.00	Excellent
	Teachers	3.72	Excellent
	Practitioners	4.00	Excellent
	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Content</b>	Experts	4.00	Excellent
	Teachers	3.72	Excellent
	Practitioners	4.00	Excellent
	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	Experts	4.00	Excellent
	Teachers	3.83	Excellent
	Practitioners	4.00	Excellent
	<b>Average</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Overall Average</b>		<b>3.91</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

Meanwhile, the Demonstration Teacher rated 4.00 all the criteria assessed. She felt that goals and objectives were overwhelmingly achieved by the

proposed syllabus. Likewise, she was impressed with the design and organization of the syllabus and felt that sequencing and procedurizing of the tasks in Hotel and Restaurant Management were achieved as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Demonstration teacher's evaluation of the proposed syllabus

Criterion	WM	VI
Goals/Objectives	4.00	Excellent
Design And Organization	4.00	Excellent
Content	4.00	Excellent
Methodology	4.00	Excellent
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

The overall rating of Excellent proves that the proposed syllabus that has undergone various processes is fit to be considered as an acceptable model. The synthesis of the Model shows the main elements of Approach, Design, and Procedure where the three frames are connected to one another by arrows indicating the process the proposed syllabus has gone through. The sub-frames in the Approach frame include functional view and socio-cognitive learning, indicating the theories of the nature of language and language learning which the Model believes in.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, the Manarpiis Model for Designing a Task-based Language Syllabus stands on solid theoretical foundations of communicative teaching that could answer the language learning needs of second language speakers since it promotes the use of a language (like English) functionally and it is designed to uphold social learning that readies the learners for authentic communication in the real world. The overall rating of Excellent proves that the proposed syllabus that has undergone various processes is fit to be considered as an acceptable model.

What appears to be the distinctive feature of the proposed model is the marriage of two approaches, which are, Task-based Language Teaching and English for Specific Purposes, which sealed the definition of a Type B syllabus as one that offers a functional and socio-cognitive learning to learners of a second language. It can also be concluded that the proposed syllabus may be applied to other disciplines other than Hotel and Restaurant Management like Tourism, Business Management, Health Sciences, Education, among others. In proposing a new syllabus, one has to consider an ID model that will serve as a pattern for the

phases which is therefore vital in organizing a syllabus design.

Formulating and designing a syllabus model depends on a comprehensive process, starting from evaluating an existing syllabus up to the revising of the proposed syllabus. Therefore, the introduction of a new syllabus depends on what the existing syllabus contains. If the old syllabus does not answer the learning needs of the learners, then it is necessary to introduce a new one which is way better and more improved. It can be supposed that a design is one of the most important points in the introduction of a new syllabus model. This design must therefore have its own distinction out of the elements involved to distinguish it as different from the existing syllabus. A language teacher must believe that through applying TBLT and through teaching English for the students' specific use, these learners will best achieve their goals to speak English easily. It can also be concluded that a "pure" TBLT class using the TBLT proposed syllabus model may succeed in the Philippine educational setting, provided the teacher is trained and acquainted with the communicative way of teaching a language.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended That ESP and TBLT be applied to other fields or programs like Education, Business Management, Tourism, Information Technology and other programs where English is a mandatory language used for communication. That language teachers be seriously trained in TBLT or formally, a seminar-workshop be conducted to re-introduce TBLT as a language teaching approach, so that Filipino teachers of English as a Second Language will be able to appreciate its effectiveness as a language teaching approach. That administrators be trained as well on the importance of new approaches to language teaching like the TBLT, for them to produce quality graduates who are good communicators in their respective fields, especially in hotel and restaurant management. That the proposed model syllabus be tried out in other colleges and universities and in different groups of learners so as to test its workability as a dependable, learning-enhancing syllabus. That language researchers construct a follow-up study to be able to falsify or affirm the findings of the present research, by trying out the entire materials for the proposed Task-Based syllabus with a bigger sample. That a more comprehensive TBLT module, highlighting grammar be developed. That the use of the proposed Task-based Syllabus in HRM be subjected to an experimental research to determine its relative

effectiveness in teaching English to HRM students or to other students enrolled in their respective programs.

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