

The use of tasks in the teaching of Portuguese as a Second Language

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Abstract: This article reports on the design and adaptation of a task cycle (SKEHAN, 1996; 1998) originally designed by student-teachers attending a workshop on teaching Portuguese to speakers of other languages. The original task was adapted by the researchers having in mind a group of pre-intermediate immigrants attending Portuguese classes. The data consisted of field notes made by the authors while the student-teachers were conceiving the task cycle, the original and the adapted tasks. We observed that, even though the Task-Based Approach seems to be a good proposal to expand and improve the Communicative Approach to language teaching, the design of tasks can be challenging, in particular the idea of the outcome for a language task and the maintenance of a coherent focus among the different subtasks that compose a task cycle. Nevertheless, the task cycle analyzed in this paper, with adaptations to the teaching context, was successfully used in the classroom.

Keywords: Task-Based Approach; Material design; Portuguese as a Second Language; Teacher Education.

Título: O uso de tarefas no ensino de português como segunda língua

Resumo: Este artigo relata a elaboração e a implementação de um ciclo de tarefas (SKEHAN, 1996; 1998), originalmente concebido por três alunos-professores que frequentavam uma oficina sobre o ensino do Português para falantes de outras línguas. As tarefas originais foram adaptadas pelas pesquisadoras tendo como inspiração um grupo de imigrantes de nível pré-intermediário matriculados em um curso de português da instituição. Os dados consistem em notas de campo feitas pelas autoras enquanto os alunos-professores concebiam o ciclo de tarefas original e as tarefas adaptadas. Pudemos observar que o *design* de tarefas pode ser desafiador, em particular a ideia de que deve haver um *outcome* (produto) para uma tarefa de linguagem e a manutenção de um enfoque coerente entre as diferentes subtarefas. Apesar desses desafios, o ciclo de tarefas analisado neste artigo, com adaptações ao contexto de ensino, pôde ser utilizado com sucesso em sala de aula.

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Palavras-chave: Abordagem Baseada em Tarefas; Elaboração de materiais; Português como segunda língua; Formação de professores.

Introduction

In our experience as teacher-educators in Brazil, we often encounter students who are eager to gain experience teaching Portuguese to speakers of other languages. Generally, these are individuals who are pursuing or who hold a degree in a foreign language or in Portuguese as a mother tongue. The perspective of teaching their first language (Portuguese) motivates them, but, at the same time, the challenge of knowing what and how to teach is always present at the initial stages. Every time we offer a workshop or a course addressing the teaching of Portuguese to speakers of other languages, we observe how language students, some of them with experience regarding second/foreign language teaching, tend to focus on grammar items as a point of departure to teach Portuguese as a second language in the Brazilian context. This recurrent observation inspired us to propose a workshop on how the Task-Based Approach (TBA) could be an alternative to implement the teaching of Portuguese having language use and successful communication as the central goals, rather than a narrow focus on language structure.

We side with Ellis (2003) who explains that though a relationship between research and pedagogy where the researchers dictate the most effective means for teachers to achieve their aims is not desirable, research *can* inform language pedagogy in many ways, such as suggesting new ideas for teachers to experiment with in their classrooms.

The present study investigated the design and implementation of a task cycle designed by student-teachers to be used as part of an outreach project in the field of Portuguese as Host Language, as our target audience for teaching Portuguese consists of immigrants and refugees. In this sense, the study addresses issues related to teacher education, material design, and Task-Based teaching. The task cycle proposed by the student-teachers was based on Skehan's framework for task design and implementation (1996, 1998), having in mind a specific group of learners: immigrants, mostly refugees and asylum seekers attending Portuguese classes offered in an extension project (PLAM – *Português como Língua de Acolhimento*) at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina*.

The article is organized as follows. First, we present an overview of the Task-Based Approach to Language Teaching, the theoretical framework informing the present study. Then, we describe the method employed to gather data for the study, focusing on the steps followed to design the task and to adapt it for implementation, and on the characteristics of the students

attending the Portuguese as a Host Language course in which the task cycle was implemented. The third section presents the results by comparing the original task cycle and its adapted version, and discusses major challenges in designing a task cycle. Finally, we conclude by posing some reflections about teacher education in the field of Portuguese as a Second Language.

Overview of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

In this section, we start by providing an explanation of the proposal known as the Task-Based Approach³ and how it differs from the Communicative Approach (CA). We then move on to define what we understand by task, also comparing and contrasting this type of activity from communicative activities. Finally, we briefly present Skehan's proposal of a framework for the design and implementation of tasks within a task-based cycle.

TBLT

One recurrent problem in attempts to design tasks we have encountered is the perception that TBLT and the CA are basically the same thing. This is probably due to the fact that TBLT and CA are both communicative approaches⁴. That is, both see language as social interaction, do not have grammar as their main focus, view learning as being constructed (rather than transmitted), see the teacher as a facilitator/mediator (rather than as a model/provider of knowledge), welcome errors, and aim at communicative competence (OLIVEIRA, 2014). This type of proposal for L2 teaching emerged in the 70s, after years of language instruction through methods that focused heavily on form, with the objective of developing, in learners, the capacity to express meanings (WIDDOWSON, 1978, in SKEHAN, 2003). For Breen (1984, in NUNAN, 2004), "when we put communication in the center, the goal of the curriculum (learners who can communicate in the L2) and the means (classroom procedures to achieve this goal) begin to merge: learners learn to communicate by communicating" (p. 8). According to Ellis (2003), this shift in focus – from form to meaning – was the result of lack of evidence that supported the more traditional methods combined with evidence of the existence of a learner's internal syllabus, which was not amenable to the instruction provided by the teacher (which followed a linguistic syllabus prescribed by the course/material designer).

³ Nowadays more commonly referred to as TBLT.

⁴ Others are the Project-based and the Content-based approaches, for example.

For this new type of instruction, there was the need to develop activities that would lead learners to go beyond ‘knowing that’ (grammar rules), getting them to ‘know how’ (deploying these rules to communicate) (NUNAN, 2004). Thus, a series of activities were developed so that learners would use language in episodes of authentic communication, making the field fertile for the emergence of *communicative activities*, which were later referred to as “tasks” (BYGATE; SKEHAN; SWAIN, 2001).

Even if many authors in the past referred to meaning-based activities of the CA as ‘tasks’, these two approaches cannot be equated. The main difference between TBLT and other communicative approaches, including the CA, is the use of tasks as units of teaching and learning, that is, having tasks themselves as the units for syllabus design (ROBINSON, 2001; SKEHAN; FOSTER, 1999; WILLIS; WILLIS, 2001). Still, within TBLT itself there are different possibilities of work which again can confound it with the CA. For example, Ellis (2003) argues that one ‘line’ within a very broad understanding of TBLT is actually not task-based, but task-supported. In a task-supported approach tasks are used in the place of communicative activities in pedagogical sequences that are still similar to the presentation/practice/production (PPP) technique. This approach is quite similar to the traditional ones, since it has a greater linguistic focus (than the task-based one), and makes use of tasks only in moments of freer production-very similar to what happens in the CA. The task-based approach, however, has tasks at the core of the curriculum, with language being used in interaction and for authentic communication. Nevertheless, even within the task-based strand there are different views on whether there can exist tasks that ‘also’ focus on form or whether tasks should only focus on meaning⁵.

The description of the TBA we offer here – Nunan’s – is an encompassing one, that brings characteristics that are common to different perspectives of this approach (that is, both perspectives which do not see room for a focus on form in tasks and those which see this aspect integral to a task – or at least to a cycle of tasks –, even if the main focus is on meaning and communication). According to Nunan (2004), the principles and practices of TBLT are: to be a needs-based approach, to propose that learning happens through interacting in the L2, to use authentic texts, to focus on the learning process, to see learners’ personal experiences as important, and to include both classroom language and language used outside the classroom. We end this section by presenting in a more detailed way the specific framework which guided the design of the cycle of tasks which was part of the present study – Skehan’s framework.

Since we have established that the major difference between TBLT and the CA (and also other communicative approaches) is the fact that this approach has tasks as units of teaching, in the section that follows we present the definition of task to which we subscribe.

⁵ Compare, for example, the frameworks of Willis and Willis (2007) and those of Skehan (1996; 1998) and Ellis (2003).

Defining 'task'

One of the main reasons why there are different frameworks for the design of tasks and/or cycles of tasks within TBLT is the fact that different scholars have slightly different definitions of task. In this study we follow Skehan (1998, p. 94), who defines task as an activity where “meaning is primary, there is some communication problem to solve, there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities, task completion has some priority, and the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome”. Willis and Willis (2001) emphasize that “[l]anguage in a communicative task is seen as bringing about an outcome through the exchange of meaning” (p. 173). The point we would like to stress here is the role of a communicative outcome in tasks (something that is not necessary in a communicative activity). To better illustrate this difference, we bring an example given by J. Willis (n/d) herself, on the British council webpage. The rubrics of the activity is:

Figure 1 – Rubrics of the activity

Work in pairs. Talk about your grandparents. Tell each other what you know about their past lives. Use the phrases and patterns from the box above.

Source: Willis (n/d)

The author then goes on to explain why even though this is a communicative activity, it is not a task. We could dismiss this activity as a task immediately, once it determines the language the learners should use (i.e., it has a linguistic focus), but here we use this example to illustrate what it means for an activity to have a communicative outcome. For Willis and Willis (2007, pp. 12-14), the more confidently you can answer yes to each of the questions below, the more task-like the activity is.

1. Will the activity engage learners' interest?
2. Is there a primary focus on meaning?
3. Is there a goal or an outcome?
4. Is success judged in terms of outcome?
5. Is completion a priority?
6. Does the activity relate to real world activities?'

For the activity presented, Willis (n/d) argued that we could probably answer yes to questions 1 and 6, since we sometimes do talk about our grandparents (6) and usually enjoy sharing their/our memories with other people (1). However, the answer to question 2 would probably be 'no', as mentioned above, since we should use the language provided in the activity (i.e., the purpose is much more of practicing a given linguistic structure than of sharing memories from grandparents)⁶. Now, when it comes to outcome, our objective in bringing this example, it is possible to notice that there is not a goal or purpose given for talking about grandparents, so this would mean answering 'no' to question 3. Question 4 asks whether success (in doing the task) can be judged in terms of outcome, but without an outcome there is no way of knowing whether one has completed the task the way it was expected. Something similar happens in relation to question 5, which asks whether (task) completion is a priority. Without a clear outcome established, how can learners know when they have finished it? It is not possible for learners to know when they have said enough to complete the activity and, thus, some learners might end up saying very little.

Willis (n/d) then explains that some small changes in this communicative activity could turn it into a task. First of all, to have learners focus on meaning, we should delete the final instruction in the rubrics, which leads learners to a concern with using a given linguistic structure when speaking, and not with communicating. Second, a goal or outcome should be added, so that learners know when they have completed the task. A possible goal the author suggests is: *Try to find out three things that your grandparents' and your partner's grandparents' lives had in common. What was the biggest difference between them?* When the pair has this answer, they have successfully reached the outcome of the task.

It is important, at this point, to bring another issue that can be misunderstood in relation to TBLT, which is the role of form/grammar in this perspective. By re-reading the two definitions of tasks we have offered in this section, it is possible to notice that both of them (WILLIS; WILLIS', 2001 and SKEHAN'S, 2003) refer to a 'primary' focus on meaning. That is, TBLT does not propose a sole focus on meaning as it happened at the very beginning of the CA, when, due to the proposal that L2 instruction started to focus on meaning rather than form, grammar often was virtually banned from the classroom (Oliveira, 2014). On the contrary, as Willis and Willis (2001) put it, "[m]ost current approaches to TB[L]T certainly recognize the importance of grammar" (p. 2). What differs is the fact that explicit instruction on different linguistic structures is not seen as a pre-requisite for language use, so these moments are expected to happen only towards the end of a task-cycle (or even after the end of the cycle itself) (WILLIS; WILLIS, 2001).

Nunan (2004) further explains how it is possible to conciliate a focus on communication with the acknowledgement of the importance of grammar. He states that saying that learners

⁶ But see Ellis' focused tasks (ELLIS, 2003).

are free to use any language they have to accomplish a task does not mean implying that form is not important. For him, “[g]rammar exists to enable the language user to express different communicative meanings” (p. 4), and that is why at least some tasks in a cycle should attempt to make learners focus, at least momentarily, on form⁷ in order to express their communicative intentions. We side with Nunan (2004) in the understanding that grammar is a resource that enables us to get things done, to make choices, to express ourselves as individuals, and to articulate our feelings and attitudes.

It is for this reason that even though Skehan’s (1998) framework was used as a guide for the task-cycle described in the present study, we will use Ellis’s (2003) definition of task, since it explicitly addresses the role of a focus on form as well as on meaning. According to Ellis (2003), a task is a work plan that involves primary focus on pragmatic meaning and real-world processes of language use, focuses on one or more of the four language skills, promotes opportunities for a focus on form, engages learners in cognitive processes, and has a defined communicative outcome.

Finally, it is valid to bring a distinction between two types of tasks made by Nunan (2004), so that we can clarify what we understand by a significant, meaningful, and ‘real’ use of language. For the author, target tasks use ‘real world’ language; that is, you are reading a recipe to your partner so that s/he can make and bake a cake, for example. However, there is another type of task which also uses ‘real’ language - pedagogical tasks. In this case, the tasks are similar to a target task, but they occur in the classroom, in a sort of ‘make-believe’ fashion. The example the author gives is that of drawing a map while listening to someone describing it. Even though the learner drawing the map might actually not have the intension of going to that place (at least not on that specific day or in the near future), this activity is something people do in real life and, thus, is seen as making use of meaningful language with the purpose of communication. As it will become clear when we describe our cycle of tasks, we agree with Nunan (2004) that this is a legitimate task.

In the last section of our theoretical background, we describe, with some detail, but not exhaustively, Skehan’s (1996, 1998) framework for the use of tasks for L2 instruction.

⁷ This shift in focus, from meaning to form, with the purpose of expressing one’s communicative intention is what Long (1991) termed Focus on Form, which differs from the focus on formS seen in more traditional L2 instruction, when a specific linguistic structure was chosen and taught preemptively to be later used in ‘communication’.

Skehan's framework for TBLT

Skehan (1996; 1998) argues that what makes his proposal different from that of other scholars in the TBLT field is the fact that his framework was proposed based on results from empirical research (e.g., FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1996) and it takes the cognitive challenges posed by different types of tasks into consideration (SKEHAN, 1998).

Skehan's proposal is psycholinguistic in nature, grounded on information processing⁸, and argues for the need for Focus on Form (LONG, 1991) to occur so as to allow for L2 development (SKEHAN, 1996). The rationale behind Skehan's framework for task design is that even though a focus on form is seen as necessary for L2 learning to happen, because of limited attentional resources learners are not able to focus on meaning and form at the same time in meaningful communication (the one TBLT aims at promoting). The result is that form will only be attended to if there are spare attentional resources to deal with it, or if something happens to direct attention to form (VANPATTEN, 1990, in SKEHAN, 1998). Skehan's idea, then, is to manipulate learners' attention when designing a task (or a cycle of tasks). For him, "the challenge is to channel attentional resources so that there is balanced concern for communication on the one hand, and form at a general level on the other hand, so that neither dominates at the expense of the other" (SKEHAN, 1998, p.126). With that, he proposes that L2 instruction revolve around cycles of tasks, which would comprise one (or more) pre-task(s), the task itself (a while-task), and one (or more) post-task(s).

The purpose for pre-task activities would be to introduce new language, to enhance the possibilities that restructuring will occur, to mobilize and recycle language previously learned, to ease the cognitive processing load of the main task, and to push learners to interpret tasks in more demanding ways (i.e., to get them to experiment with new forms of language). Some possibilities pointed out by Skehan (1996) are: teaching, consciousness raising activities, and planning. More explicitly, Ellis (2009) says the following activities might be good pre-task options: supporting learners when performing a task similar to the main task, providing a model⁹ of how the task might be performed by learners, activating learners' content schemata and providing background information through brainstorming, and predicting (pre-teaching) some of the vocabulary the main task will require, among other possibilities.

Skehan (1996) proposes that it is also possible to influence the amount of attention available for the learner (to focus on form) by manipulating the task in the during-task phase. In

⁸ According to information-processing theories, humans' attention is limited and, therefore, they need to focus attention selectively (MCLAUGHLIN, 1987).

⁹ Richard and Schmidt (2010) define a model as "something which is used as a standard or goal for the learner" (p. 370). We see this as an essential component of language learning, but as rather different from restricting language structures that can be used by learners to perform a task.

relation to that, there are a number of choices that can be made in order to influence the attentional availability of resources. The author gives as examples: *time pressure* (the more pressure, the less time for attention to form), *modality* (spoken tasks will allow less time for on-line planning and attention to form), *support* (if visual support is given, as in a here-and-now task, more resources will be left for the learner to attend to form), *control* (learners can control, or not, how the task is done), and *stakes* (though some learners might be naturally predisposed to avoid errors, it is the role of the teacher to induce learners to focus on form by linking task completion to wider pedagogic goals).

It is also possible to change the focus of attention (from meaning to form and vice-versa) in a more extended procedure (e.g., in a task-based course). Skehan (1998) briefly reviews two similar proposals, Willis' (1996) and Samuda *et al.*'s (1996), which tackle this issue. Both have a concern with focus on form, but since the instruction will take place for some time, there is no need to focus on form too explicitly at any moment (form is more (+) or less (-) focused on at different stages of the task). As a result, focus on form permeates the whole task structure, but meaning-based communication never has to be abandoned.

Finally, Skehan (1998) establishes two general objectives for post-task activities: altering the attentional balance, and reflection and consolidation. Since during-task intervention to make focus on form salient is not possible without interfering with the task objective, which is to focus on meaning, it is possible to inform learners, prior to task completion, that there is a post-task to come. The knowledge of a post-task might lead learners to devote a little more attention to form during task completion if they think this will help their subsequent performance. The effects of such intervention would possibly yield more accurate language since learners would refrain from attempting to use more complex language and focus on using what they are already familiar with.

Another possibility would be requiring that learners themselves (or others) analyze their performance in a given task. The main aim of reflection and consolidation would be to encourage learners to restructure, to use their performance in the task as input for "noticing the gap" (SWAIN, 1998, in SKEHAN, 1998), and thus develop language to deal with such lack of linguistic ability. It is expected that such activities will make form-meaning relationships and pattern identification more likely to be integrated in the developing L2 system (SKEHAN, 1998).

Nevertheless, though TBLT seems attractive – focus on meaning plus focus on form – and, according to Nunan (2004), almost a new orthodoxy, conceiving a task-cycle is complex and requires theoretical knowledge. So, how much 'training' would be necessary for the average L2 teacher to be able to design a task or a cycle of tasks? With this in mind, we set out to conduct this investigation being guided by the following research question: How do teachers incorporate the main tenets of TBLT when creating a cycle of tasks?

In the following section, we provide information about the participants, the teaching contexts (both the student-teacher workshop and the Portuguese as a Host Language course), and the guidelines provided to the student-teachers for task design.

Contexts of Investigation and task design and selection

The task cycle to be analyzed here was designed as part of the program of a workshop promoted by the *Núcleo de Pesquisa e Ensino de Português – Língua Estrangeira* (NUPLE). This group was created in 1999 and has been coordinating PL2 teaching and research-related activities at UFSC since then (SILVEIRA; XHAFAJ, 2017). One of its missions is to promote activities (e.g., elective courses, mini-courses, workshops) to help in the education of teachers of Portuguese as an L2. In the first semester of 2017, NUPLE researchers decided to offer a workshop that would focus on the main tenets of TBLT and how this framework could be used to design tasks to teach Portuguese to speakers of other languages.

The TBLT workshop took place in two three-hour meetings and required that attendees dedicate at least four hours outside the classroom to finalize the designing of a task cycle. The workshop was taught by three faculty members of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature who are affiliated to NUPLE (the two authors and a TBLT expert). Furthermore, three guest speakers (2 undergraduate and 1 graduate student) with experience in teaching Portuguese in the courses coordinated by NUPLE and elsewhere were invited to give an informal talk about the challenges of teaching their native language, the role of grammar when teaching Portuguese as a second language, as well as to demonstrate tasks designed to be used with pre-intermediate or intermediate learners of Portuguese as a second language.

The workshop program included a lecture on the principles of TBLT, reports on the peculiarities of teaching Portuguese to speakers of other languages, guidelines for the designing of teaching materials, and hands-on practice with the designing of a task to teach Portuguese to specific audiences: regular exchange students in the language courses offered by NUPLE or immigrants attending outreach language courses. The lectures were delivered on the first meeting, and at the end of this session, the student-teachers were organized in groups and started outlining a task cycle for a specific group of learners they had in mind. The student-teachers were encouraged to produce a first draft of their task cycle before coming back for the second meeting. In the second meeting, the groups brought their drafts and additional materials and information to conclude the designing of the task cycle. The instructors talked to each group to give them feedback on their task cycle. At the end of the second meeting, each group presented their task cycle and received feedback from other student-teachers and the instructors.

Sixteen people, undergraduate and graduate students, attended the two workshop sessions in which the main objective was to design task-based materials for the teaching of Portuguese as a second language. From this pool of participants, eleven gathered in four groups and designed tasks, presented them to the whole group, received individualized feedback on their tasks and had an opportunity to work on a second version of their tasks.

All groups were given two weeks to prepare a complete version of their task cycles, using a lesson plan framework provided by the instructors which contained the following sections: target audience, topic, objectives, content, methodology, resources and materials, procedures, evaluation, references, appendices. The student-teachers handed in the lesson plan with the task cycles and received written feedback from two instructors, and were given a chance to prepare a second version of the lesson plans.

From the four lesson plans, we chose one for analysis and implementation. This task was produced by three graduate students, two enrolled in *Letras* programs and one enrolled in the Anthropology program. They were all interested in the teaching of Portuguese as a second language and had some experience working in the field of language teaching and/or the teaching of Portuguese to speakers of other languages. These participants, henceforth referred to as student-teachers, reported that their teaching experience was highly influenced by the Communicative Approach to Language Teaching and that they would like to learn about how the Task-Based Approach could be used to teach Portuguese to speakers of other languages.

We adapted the selected task for use with a group of immigrants enrolled in the course of Portuguese as a host language, open to immigrants residing in Florianópolis and nearby cities. The course is part of the PLAM project (*Português como Língua de Acolhimento*), an extension program which is also coordinated by NUPLE researchers. This course is free of charge and is taught by a group of volunteer teachers. The three-hour classes take place on Saturday mornings, for four months (50-hours total). The target audience consists of immigrants, mostly refugees and political asylum seekers. The task cycle to be analyzed here was considered appropriate for the pre-intermediate group, which consisted of seven learners, five Haitians and two Russians. The learners attending the course in 2017, when this study took place, were adults in their 20s-40s, three females and four males and had been attending the PLAM classes for two semesters.

It is worth mentioning that class attendance is very irregular in the PLAM courses, which poses a challenge to the teachers. Due to the high drop-out rates (immigrants move around very often seeking for job opportunities) and the constant arrival of new immigrants in the city, the pedagogical team plans modular classes based on functions/themes, and does not assume the same students will be following the course regularly.

The PLAM pre-intermediate group was taught by a 25-year-old Brazilian teacher, an undergraduate student from the English *Letras* Program at *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina* (UFSC), with experience in the teaching of English and in the teaching of Portuguese to speakers of other languages. The teacher was assisted by two volunteer teachers (a graduate and an undergraduate student) who were in the classroom to help the students to complete their learning activities, and to gain experience with the teaching of PL2.

Designing and adapting the task cycle

In this section, we will first report on the challenges faced by the student-teachers when designing the task cycle. Next, we will describe the selected task cycle, and explain how the task was adapted for use with the target audience of pre-intermediate learners. Finally, we will briefly discuss how the task cycle was implemented in the PLAM class.

As the student-teachers started outlining their task cycle, we immediately noticed some trends in how they conceived their lesson plan. One fact that stood out was how the planning of the more experienced teachers was strongly influenced by the Communicative Approach to language teaching. Their lessons always started with the presentation of the topic and/or vocabulary. A few groups, though, had difficulty in tracing clear objectives to their lesson, showing a tendency to prepare a lesson with strong focus on grammar and/or vocabulary presentation. All groups were trying to use the labels pre-task, task, post-task persistently, thus showing how they were trying to incorporate the TBLT tenets in their lesson planning. They had difficulties in labeling each of the phases, which was expected (ELLIS, 2009). Furthermore, we noticed that all groups found it hard to think of the **outcome** of their lesson as a point of departure for their planning, as there was a clear tendency to think of linguistic outcomes (a composition, a role-play, a scripted dialog) instead of a real-world use for the language being learned.

As explained before, one task cycle designed by a group of student-teachers and deemed relevant for the pre-intermediate class of the PLAM project was chosen to be implemented after further adaptation by the researchers, in order to make the task cycle suit the target audience needs and to better reflect the TBLT principles.

The topic for the selected task cycle is the use of public transportation in Florianópolis city. The whole lesson revolves around providing information about how to use public transportation and helping learners with language components that could be used in this real-life situation. The group structured the lesson around a pre-task and three tasks (the last three were labeled Activity 1, 2, and 3 in the original lesson plan). The pre-task consists of questions

to introduce the topic and to help elicit and introduce relevant vocabulary. Task 1 elicits information about how the students make use of public transportation and is intended to expand relevant vocabulary. Task 2 provides an opportunity to present and elicit questions related to the use of public transportation and asks learners to use these questions to create a written dialog that depicts a situation in which someone is asking for information about public transportation. The learners are expected to read aloud their dialog, and their written production will be later evaluated by the teacher. Finally, Task 3 (the main task) asks learners to produce another written text, and this time the genre is a WhatsApp message giving directions to a person who is arriving in the city and needs to use public transportation to go to a specific place. Here, visual support, in the form of maps and bus itineraries, is used to help learners create the text. The outcome of this task, the WhatsApp message, will be read aloud and later evaluated by the teacher.

As we can see, the original lesson plan is highly influenced by the tenets of the Communicative Approach to Language Teaching, with an activity to elicit learners' previous knowledge and introduce the topic, followed by presentation of vocabulary and structures, and by moments of more and less controlled practice based on role-play and simulation activities. The idea of task cycles is present, but the connection between the activities is not very strong. They all address the same topic, but the student-teachers seem to struggle with the notion of outcome, which is essential for TBLT. If the outcome of this lesson is to give written directions to use public transportation, why do learners need to practice the use of questions to ask for directions as they did in Activity 2? Why do they need to write a dialog using these questions? Having these concerns in mind, we decided to adapt the lesson plan in order to make it more aligned with the idea of task cycles and to make it more adequate to be used with a particular group of learners we knew well: the pre-intermediate learners of the PLAM project.

The adapted version of the lesson plan still kept the central goal of helping learners to understand the public transportation system in the city they were residing and to provide and understand directions about the use of public transportation. The idea was to adapt the lesson plan in a way it would become more aligned with TBLT principles and to add a few teacher resources that were missing from the original lesson plan (city maps and bus timetables). Chart 1 below summarizes the main changes made to the original lesson plan.

Chart 1 - Comparing the original lesson plan and the adapted version

Original Lesson Plan	Adapted Lesson Plan
Pre-Task: questions to elicit information about transportation system	Pre-Task 1: The original idea was kept, but some questions were rephrased.

Activity 1: eliciting/introducing key vocabulary (T/Ss)	Pre-Task 2: Students worked in pairs to classify some words under major categories written on the board and added other words they found relevant.
Activity 2: eliciting/introducing key questions to ask about transportation. Students use questions to write a dialog and act it out. Dialogs are collected for correction.	Task 1: Pair-work: Explain to each other how to get to their home using public transportation or by walking.
Activity 3: writing a WhatsApp message to a visitor giving instructions about how to use public transportation from the bus terminal downtown to the learner's home.	Task 2: The first-draft of the lesson plan proposed an email as the text genre to be produced. We suggested the genre WhatsApp message would be more appropriate for the learners of PLAM project.
Wrapping up: students read texts aloud and teacher collects them for correction. Further information about transportation.	Post-Task: Reading aloud ¹⁰ was accompanied by questions for students to compare itineraries.

As Chart 1 shows, the warm-up activity was kept, with a slight adaptation that involved rephrasing the questions to elicit previous knowledge and introduce the topic. Chart 2 compares the sets of questions, showing that, in the adapted task, we tried to narrow down the focus of the questions, so that from the very beginning learners would discuss the transportation system in Florianópolis and to elicit information about what they already knew about giving and understanding directions related to transportation. We also included specific information about the task outcome (question f), so that learners would know from the start what they should accomplish towards the end of the lesson.

Chart 2 - Adaptions to the pre-task

Original task	Adapted task
1. Quais os principais meios de transporte aqui em Florianópolis? E no país de cada um/a de vocês?	a) Como vocês vieram pra aula?
2. Vocês vieram de ônibus para a aula de hoje?	b) Vocês usam o sistema de ônibus de Florianópolis com frequência?
3. Outros meios de transportes? Listar vocabulário.	c) Vocês acham fácil usar os ônibus de Florianópolis? Por quê?
4. Qual ônibus pegaram? (anote o nome ou número das linhas citadas na lousa)	[Pode continuar fazendo outras perguntas, com base nas respostas dos alunos, mas não estender a conversa por mais de 10 min.]

¹⁰ The reason we opted to ask them to read aloud their messages rather than sending them to classmates so that they could read in their phones was the fact that not all our students have access to the internet on their phones while in class.

5. Quanto custou a passagem?	d) Você sabe explicar como usar os ônibus de Florianópolis?
Perguntar aos alunos: Onde você pegou o ônibus? Mostre a variação: pegar, tomar (outras variantes regionais possíveis). Revise os advérbios de lugar, se necessário for. Marcar no mapa com os alunos o lugar de partida e verificar o tempo estimado.	[dependendo das respostas dos alunos, fazer mais perguntas para explicitar o objetivo da aula – tarefa escrita explicando como usar os ônibus de Florianópolis]
1. Onde você pegou/tomou o ônibus?	Perguntas adicionais:
2. Quanto tempo você levou de lá até aqui?	e) Sabe explicar, por exemplo, como chegar até o aeroporto, ou à rodoviária?
3. Quanto tempo você esperou no ponto?	f) Você sabe explicar como usar o ônibus para uma pessoa escrevendo uma mensagem no Whatsapp?

In the original lesson plan, Activity 1 was a teacher-centered activity making use of questions to elicit and present vocabulary, especially frequency adverbs. As Chart 3 shows, we altered this activity by designing a vocabulary activity (Pre-task 2) that first had students work in pairs to classify a few words under major vocabulary categories in the field of public transportation in the city the learners were residing (people, actions, bus types, bus objects and parts). The teacher should write these categories on the board, give some of the words to each pair, and guide the learners to classify the words they already knew. The elicitation of vocabulary should be done first in pairs, then by discussing all the vocabulary items with the whole class. Finally, learners should be asked to add other words they knew or would like to know to each category.

Chart 3 - Pre-Task 2 – adaptation of Activity 1

Pessoas	Coisas que você faz	Tipo de ônibus	Objetos e partes do ônibus
Motorista	Pegar o ônibus	Direto	Porta
Passageiro	Subir	Expresso	Catraca
Cobrador	Descer	Semi-direto	Assento
Outros?	Perder	Executivo (amarelinho)	Passagem
	Pagar	Intermunicipais	Corrimão
	Sentar	Outros?	Campainha/cordinha
	Passar na catraca		Degrau
	Ficar em pé		Cartão passe rápido
	Parar		Outros?
	Outros?		

We also made changes to Activity 2, which originally elicited vocabulary and presented question forms to ask information about transportations. The questions were intended to be used by the learners to write a dialog simulating a situation in which they would need to ask information about transportation, which would later be acted out and evaluated by the teacher. We considered that this role-play activity was not in tune with the outcome that was expected for the lesson, that is, producing written instructions about how to use public transportation to arrive at a specific place. Thus, we changed the role-play activity into a pair-work activity (Task 1), which required learners to work in pairs and explain to each other how to go to their home using public transportation or by walking, having as a point of departure the place where they were at that moment. Our reasoning was that this simple exchange of information would provide learners with an opportunity to display knowledge they already possessed about giving directions and the use of public transportation, as well as give them a chance to ask for help if they lacked grammar and vocabulary to explain directions and to talk about the bus system in Florianópolis.

Activity 3, in the original lesson plan, was the main outcome for the task cycle and consisted of having learners provide written instructions to a city visitor about how to use the bus system to commute from the central bus station to their home address. In what we call Task 2, we kept the original task proposed by the student-teachers, as we had already given them some relevant suggestions about how to make the task more adequate for the learners attending the PLAM courses. For example, during class presentation, we explained to the group of student-teachers that the original text genre they proposed in the first draft of the lesson plan (e-mail message) was hardly used by the learners, who reported often using WhatsApp or Facebook messages to communicate. Furthermore, in the first draft, the student-teachers proposed that the directions should explain how to commute from the airport to the learners' home. Instead, we suggested that the point of departure for the visitor should be the central bus station, as this route would be easier for learners to explain. In the adapted version of the task, however, we felt the need to provide additional scaffolding to help learners write the WhatsApp message. As can be seen in Chart 4, we provided them with written instructions on what should be written, including specific information about the content the message should include: bus fare, bus schedule(s), bus stops relevant for the trip, approximate travel time.

Chart 4 - Tasks 1 and 2 – adaptation of Activity 2 and 3

Etapa 3: Dando instruções de como chegar à sua casa de ônibus (15-20m)

Organizar alunos em duplas ou trios. Escolher a casa de um dos alunos do grupo para explicar como chegar da UFSC até a casa desse aluno de ônibus. Grupo anota as instruções e um representante vai na frente da sala e utiliza o mapa da Grande Florianópolis e/ou dos transportes para explicar o caminho para a casa do aluno X, de ônibus.

Professor e demais alunos reagem e comentam se as instruções ficaram claras ou se podem ficar melhor.

[Professores assistentes auxiliam os grupos na preparação do itinerário]

Etapa 4: Criar itinerário (aprox. 20 min)

- Mantenha a projeção do mapa. Explique a tarefa projetando as instruções no Power Point e entregando uma cópia das instruções para os alunos:

Instruções:

- Uma pessoa que você conhece está chegando em Florianópolis e você precisa explicar no WhatsApp para que a pessoa consiga ir de ônibus da rodoviária até a sua casa. Essa pessoa fala apenas português.
- Sua mensagem deve conter:
 - (a) o preço das passagens;
 - (b) os horários;
 - (c) os pontos de ônibus onde a pessoa deve subir e descer do ônibus;
 - (d) tempo aproximado da viagem.

Professor entrega informação sobre itinerário centro-casa dos alunos (alunos vão

trabalhar em pares e utilizar endereço do aluno para o qual tivermos mapa). Circule pela

sala de aula e auxilie os estudantes com suas dúvidas.

[professores assistentes auxiliam com a linguagem]

To close the task cycle, the student-teachers proposed that learners should read their messages aloud and hand in the written texts for teacher's evaluation, and that learners would receive further information (e.g., bus schedule, maps) to use the public transportation in the city of residence. We expanded the reading-aloud activity (Post-task) by proposing a set of questions for learners to answer while listening to their classmates' reading, as we thought this was a good opportunity to ask learners to focus on specific information provided by their classmates, thus increasing the chances for them to learn from each other by observing the different linguistic resources they used to explain the itineraries. This follow-up activity was also a way of promoting peer-feedback, as it gave learners an opportunity to tell each other whether the instructions were clear and complete. As can be seen in Chart 4, learners had to fill out a chart with the essential information that should be provided in the message (e.g., price, schedule, trip duration, bus information) and then compare the different itineraries to answer four questions that involved saying which learner (a) lives further from the bus terminal, (b) spends more money with the bus fare, or (c) uses more buses to commute. The last question was more subjective, as it asked which learner's house they would like to visit and why.

Chart 5 - The outcome Activity added to the cycle

Etapa 5: Comparar itinerários (aprox. 10-15 min)

- Passado o tempo da atividade, peça que cada grupo leia sua mensagem de Whatsapp.
- Enquanto os pares leem suas instruções, demais alunos fazem uma atividade de compreensão e comparação dos itinerários, anotando os seguintes itens (tabela entregue pelo professor). Professor lê as informações abaixo e certifica-se de que os alunos entenderam o que devem fazer.

Comparando os itinerários

Assista à apresentação de seus colegas e anote informações importantes para responder as perguntas abaixo:

Autor da Mensagem	Valor da passagem	Tempo de viagem	Número de ônibus que precisa pegar

Compare suas anotações e responda:

- Quem mora mais longe?
- Quem gasta mais para ir da rodoviária até a sua casa?
- Quem precisa trocar mais de ônibus
- Quem você gostaria de visitar? Por quê?

- Professor coleta os textos preparados para comunicação via WhatsApp, para correção.
 - Professor informa sites e locais para mais informações sobre o transporte público (*handout* – fazer).
- ⇒ Informe ao grupo que é possível pedir horários impressos de qualquer ônibus na Secretaria de Transportes no Terminal do Centro, acessando os sites das empresas de ônibus ou utilizando aplicativos como o BusMaps Floripa e o App Fênix.

We believe the adapted Lesson Plan is aligned with the TBLT approach because it incorporates essential features, namely:

- It has a primary focus on meaning and it is expected to engage learners because it addresses a topic that is relevant in the real world;
- It is designed to elicit information learners already possess and requires their active participation in the activities to reach an outcome;

- c) It brings moments of focus on form to help learners boost their vocabulary knowledge about public transportation and how to give directions;
- d) It focuses on meaning and it integrates skills, mainly speaking and writing;
- e) It allows evaluating the students' performance by verifying whether they succeeded in completing the two tasks that required explaining how to use public transportation.

To conclude this discussion, we would like to say a few words about the implementation of the adapted lesson plan in the class of pre-intermediate learners of the PLAM course. We gathered with the teacher in charge of working the class and explained the lesson plan to him. He made a few suggestions about the procedures for classroom implementation and we provided him with all the resources needed to implement the lesson (e.g., bus itineraries, maps, copies of specific activities). On the day of the class, we read and explained the consent form to the learners and explained to them why we were there. We sat in the back of the classroom, together with one teacher assistant who was present, so we could observe the class and take notes. Upon request, we joined the teachers and helped a few learners with the planning and writing of the WhatsApp message.

What we could observe was that the lesson plan was adequate and relevant for that group of learners. The teacher seemed to feel very comfortable while teaching the lesson and managed to get the learners intensely involved with all activities. We noticed that the learners particularly enjoyed the vocabulary building steps and the exchange of information about how to commute to their homes. However, we also observed that the outcome for Task 2, that is, the written task, posed a major challenge to a few learners. This was the only moment in class when the help of teacher assistants was required, as a few students struggled to write in Portuguese. The implementation of the lesson plan occurred on a rainy day and the class started with some delay. Due to this problem, there was no time for wrapping up the lesson by using the follow-up activity as we had planned. Thus, the teacher asked the learners to read aloud their messages and elicited impressions and/or questions from the students in a brief manner, which partially fulfilled our goal of providing a moment for peer-feedback about task completion.

Final remarks

The present text was written to demonstrate how principles of the Task-Based Approach can contribute to the teaching of Portuguese as an additional language. We began the text by highlighting central ideas, frameworks, and definitions presented by important researchers in the field. Then, we reported on a pedagogical experience with a group of student-teachers

attending a workshop designed to introduce the Task-Based Approach to the teaching of Portuguese to speakers of other languages. In the data analysis section, we discussed a cycle of tasks designed by a group of student-teachers during the workshop and pointed out the extent to which this cycle incorporated the notions of the Task-Based Approach. Finally, we proposed adaptations to the original task cycle in order to make it more aligned with the principles of the Task-Based Approach, having in mind a specific group of learners, briefly mentioning how the task cycle actually worked when it was implemented with a group of pre-intermediate learners of Portuguese.

We hope this text has demonstrated that the Task-Based Approach has potential in teacher education, and is a means to promote collaborative work in the language classroom. It is our understanding that by designing task cycles, language teachers will take on an active role in choosing the materials to be used in class, as well as better understand the need for planning, reflecting, and adapting their lessons and course materials. The use of task cycles is also expected to motivate learners, thanks to their focus on meaning and on real-world situations, which are brought to the classroom, with the necessary adaptations.

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