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COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE FACTORS AFFECTING TASK DIFFICULTY IN EFL READING

por

IDONÉZIA COLLODEL BENETTI

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Opção Língua Inglesa e Linguística Aplicada

Barbara O Baptista

Profª Drª Barbara Oughton Baptista
COORDENADORA

Barbara O Baptista

Profª Drª Barbara Oughton Baptista
ORIENTADORA

BANCA EXAMINADORA:

Barbara O Baptista

Profª Drª Barbara Oughton Baptista
SUPERVISORA

Loni Kries Taglieber

Profª Drª Loni Kries Taglieber

Prof. Dr. M. Rafael Salaberry

Florianópolis, 10 de Setembro de 1998.

To God for the blessings of health and life,
and for helping me to believe

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ABSTRACT

Título: Cognitive and Affective Factors Affecting EFL Reading

Idonézia Collodel Benetti

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

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Advisor: Barbara Oughton Baptista

This study is an attempt to investigate, through sets of tasks, four different kinds of mental operations - Identifying, Deducing, Defining and Reordering, within three categories of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, with the sub-goals of (1) discovering the order of difficulty of these operations in the context of the foreign language teaching, (2) exploring what learners do when working through a task, and (3) evaluating their cognitive effort. All sets of tasks had a similar pattern, consisting of three basic elements: A Pre-Task to be attempted by the whole class under the guidance of the researcher; Task I, which was carried out by participants in dyads; and Task II, which was also carried out by participants in dyads. Tasks I and II were similar in that they involved the same situation, sets of facts/topics, and reasoning processes. Tasks II, however, dealt with a new topic, in spite of maintaining the same framework. The purpose of the Pre-Task was to provide a context for identifying

difficulties that the students might be experiencing, thus allowing the teacher to reduce the difficulty level and provide appropriate assistance to students in Task I. A questionnaire was passed out after Tasks I and II, to obtain the students' assessment of overall difficulty of aspects such as Vocabulary, Familiarity, Pre-Task, Portuguese, Grade and Time, in an attempt to separate linguistic difficulties from difficulties of the mental operations themselves. The fact that no hierarchy was obtained and few correlations were obtained among the variables of the questionnaire is attributed to an overlap among the mental operations, to factors inherent to each task, and to affective factors.

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RESUMO

O presente estudo tem por objetivo investigar, através de atividades, quatro diferentes tipos de operações mentais - Identificar, Deduzir, Definir e Reordenar, em três categorias da taxionomia de Bloom, com o propósito de: (1) descobrir a ordem de dificuldade destas operações no contexto do ensino de língua estrangeira, (2) verificar o que os alunos fazem enquanto trabalham em um exercício, e (3) avaliar o esforço cognitivo destes alunos. Todos as unidades de exercícios eram de padrão semelhante, consistindo de três elementos básicos: o Pré-execício feito por toda a classe sob a orientação da pesquisadora, o Exercício I feito em duplas pelos participantes da pesquisa, e o Exercício II feito pelos alunos em duplas. O Pré-exercício e o Exercício I eram semelhantes, envolvendo a mesma situação, os mesmos fatos/tópicos e o mesmo processo cognitivo. Os Exercícios II mantiveram a mesma estrutura, porém apresentaram um tópico novo. O objetivo do Pré-exercício era providenciar um contexto onde os alunos pudessem trabalhar as dificuldades do Exercício I previamente, e assim permitir à pesquisadora reduzir o nível de difficuldade dos exercícios e dar assistência apropriada aos sujeitos para a execução do Exercício I. Ao término dos Exercícios I e II, foi passado um questionário para obter a opinião dos alunos sobre as dificuldades relacionadas a fatores tais como: Vocabulário, Familiaridade, Pré-Exercício e Português, uma tentativa de separar as dificuldades lingüísticas das dificuldades relacionadas às operações mentais. Como não foi possível estabelecer nenhuma hierarquia quanto ao grau de dificuldade dos exercícios e foram poucas as correlações obtidas entre as variáveis do questionário, estes fatos são, então, atribuídos a três principais fatores: a) várias operações mentais ocorrendo ao mesmo tempo, b) fatores inerentes a cada exercício e c) fatores afetivos.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the problem

Brazil is a country where English is considered to be an important foreign language, included as a subject in the curriculum of most primary and secondary schools, where it is quite common to see it treated as any other subject like History and Science. In other words, it is a subject in which assignments are written, tasks are carried out, and rules are taught.

Because of that, Brazilian schools are the ideal setting to find students who do not express themselves in the target language. Year after year, they repeat sentences out of context, memorize long word lists and "parrot" dialogues far from their daily situations. In a context like that, it is easy to perceive that teaching is generally based on a grammar-centered book, which does not treat the language as a whole, but only describes its rules, explains why an utterance is incorrect, and focuses on sentences that are grammatically identical.

Indeed, the main goal of this teaching is to lead the students to master the grammatical system of the target language and to improve their accuracy or linguistic competence. Thus, the students are just acquainted with activities which embody the meaning of words and sentences in isolation, and not their meaning within the context of discourse. Besides that, within this traditional pedagogic system, teachers decide both what classroom learners will learn and in what order they will learn the content proposed. Broadly speaking, the majority of language professionals prefer to adopt a language textbook which imposes an organization of content on the learner. In other words, teachers usually follow the syllabus embodied in the textbook.

Thus, in this kind of classroom with which most of us are familiar, it is normal and expected that the teachers will make most, if not all, of the decisions about the teaching content, and teaching will be based on some sort of published and pre-determined materials. Teachers usually go into the classroom with also a pre-determined syllabus, and it is seen as an obvious part of their job to do so.

Taking into account the reality of English teaching in Santa Catarina, the main problem regarding classrooms is that in the majority of public and private schools there is no syllabus as a guide for teachers. Because of that, most professionals use the syllabus of a textbook, but some develop their own syllabi, making their own decisions about what to teach, and still others are completely lost at the time of developing their teaching programs.

Language study, in this kind of setting, is frequently perceived as dry and dull. For many reasons students are often hostile to English classes and their teachers and, as a consequence, behave badly during classes. Teachers, on the other hand, complain about unruly, noisy, unresponsive and unco-operative students, who cause problems and are difficult to handle.

However, in this researcher's point of view, when students start with a negative attitude, much can be done, if the teacher takes into account that: 1) if the class is interesting, a lot of the problems will disappear; 2) interested students do not misbehave in the same way; 3) perhaps the greatest single cause of indiscipline is boredom; and 4) a bored student is a discipline problem, whereas an interested student who is involved with the class context will not lose respect for the teacher and the ongoing class.

At the heart of these problems, the researcher's original intention was to work on tasks which had in common elements of fun, surprise, play and challenge, involving problem-solving, content- teaching, stories and so forth; all of which she considered as elements which could

help to hold the interest of seventh grade students, trying to avoid the problems mentioned above. It was expected that the effect of students carrying out mental operations such as observing, discriminating, gathering and organizing information, finding and handling information, applying rules, drawing inferences, and problem-solving could and should be cognitively stimulating, while it should not overload the students with useless information. It could give language learning the appropriate intellectual challenge that is unfortunately lacking in many classrooms in Brazil. Thus, the researcher's growing interest in changing her daily teaching reality and the importance of observing and being aware of what goes on in the classroom, in a general sense, led her to carry out the experiment reported in this thesis.

In the original plan, the study was to be based on and entirely developed according to Bloom's taxonomy; i.e the knowledge categories, their applications and results should be placed into an ordered framework, according to Bloom's studies. However, as the classes developed and the data were collected and analyzed, many different and relevant factors not mentioned in this taxonomy became apparent. These other particular aspects of the language classroom had to be also pointed out and analyzed, in order to adequately evaluate the results. For example, from an affective point of view, language evokes associations with various emotions such as anger, disgust, and happiness and these feelings are manifested in student behavior and output during classes, thus being parallel to the cognitive effort expended.

It is important to emphasize that Bloom's well known taxonomy of educational objectives and their application to language teaching should not be dismissed a priori, since language courses generally aim at involving these cognitive processes. On the other hand, in spite of being expressed by verbs or actions which point to clear and precise objectives (e.g. 'identify' and 'define'), they are not by themselves always appropriate, since depending on the topic as well as on the purpose for which the objectives were stated, more than one cognitive operation

is activated. Besides that, language demands the constant adaptation of learners' linguistic resources to new situations. So, these detailed expressions of objectives have to be seen with caution.

In this experiment, in addition to the interference of extraneous variables, the tasks were found to involve several overlapping mental operations, making it difficult to evaluate the difficulty of each one. Consequently, the simple application of Bloom's scheme of the cognitive domain to provide an ordered classification in this study was not found to be satisfactory. To compensate for the inadequacies of the taxonomy to evaluate student performance of the tasks, it was necessary to analyze other variables which appeared to influence the results in this study.

1.2 How this thesis is organized

CHAPTER TWO of this study comprises eight sections and deals with the review of the literature related to four main areas: 1) Task-based Instruction, with a discussion of the history, the conceptual basis and the principles of this approach, as well as the factors which can influence tasks difficulty; 2) Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, with a definition and explanation of the six knowledge categories proposed by Bloom and their respective mental operations; 3) Content-teaching, with a definition and evaluation of the approach; and 4) Reading Skill, based mainly on Grellet's typology of reading comprehension exercises and techniques to facilitate understanding.

CHAPTER THREE describes the classroom observation before the experiment was applied; the subjects; the materials; the procedures for carrying out the experiment and for

administering and scoring the questionnaires; and the students' reaction while performing tasks.

CHAPTER FOUR reports the results of the study, showing tables which summarize the group data and the results of the analysis. Here the tasks are analyzed individually and the variables are statistically correlated. Finally, a subjective analysis is carried out in an attempt to explain the results.

CHAPTER FIVE sumarizes the limitations found in this study and offers, based on the findings of this research, ideas related to the pedagogical implications for the classroom.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Task-based instruction

2.1.1. Brief history

Task-based teaching, like many other innovations, entered the language teaching field having its genesis in mainstream education. According to theorists such as Brown (1994:83) and Nunan (1991:279-281), task-based learning, despite its recent appearance in the syllabus field, is not a new method, since the idea of using the learning 'task' as a basic planning tool already existed in the general educational field. Nevertheless, because of its relatively recent arrival on the language teaching scene, this subject does not have ancient roots recorded in the annals of language teaching methodology history. To emphasize this, Nunan (1991:279-281) affirms that "over the last 25 years tasks have evolved as important components within curriculum planning, being recognized as essential elements for motivating and facilitating language learning. He adds that just in recent years, mainly in the eighties, "task-based language teaching has been an important addition to the repertoire of foreign and second language teachers", becoming a powerful influence in language education, affecting language teaching methodology, syllabus design and materials development.

The term "task-based" has been used in the field of language teaching since 1979, when Prabhu (1987:1-7) started the Bangalore Project with students in Southern India applying a task-based methodology. He is considered a pioneer in this area and, since the publication of his book Second Language Pedagogy (1987), which has possibly the most detailed description

of task-based teaching, his proposals have been widely cited and promoted by his followers in the specialized literature.

Among those who advocate this approach to teaching, Folley (1991:62-75) cites several researchers who had already followed programs based on tasks since 1982. According to him, the practical implementation of the task-based approach to language teaching has been carried out in immersion courses in Canada and in English programs and in modern English courses in Europe. He also cites several educational innovators such as Long (1985), Long and Crookes (1989,1991) in the United States, Nunan (1988,1989) in Australia, Prabhu (1987) in India, Candlin and Edelhoff (1982) and Carter and Thomas (1986) in Europe, as researchers and syllabus designers who have adopted a task-based approach in language pedagogy.

To conclude, task-based learning is an area which has grown enormously in importance during the last ten years calling education innovators' attention to a move in language teaching towards task-based approaches to instruction.

2.1.2. Conceptual Basis

There has been, of course, a good deal of variation among syllabus designers on how to describe or define the term "task", generating various approaches to the issue. For example, Long (1985 cited in Nunan 1988b:45) says that a task is a work or an activity "people do in their everyday life". In order to illustrate this, he cites common actions such as: buying something, making hotel reservations, washing a car, etc, as examples.

Another definition of tasks deserves to be mentioned, since it is more adequate to the purpose and scope of a classroom situation. It is so considered because it is related to the teaching/learning process, going straight to the specific field, which includes teachers and learners acting together in the same context. For this specific context, Richards at al (1985:289) present a more pedagogically oriented characterization, suggesting that a task is

"...an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response). For example, drawing a map while listening to an instruction and performing a command...A task usually requires the teacher to specify what will be regarded as successful completion of the task."

In this sense, when the teacher chooses the exercise trying to focus on what students can do with language in terms of finding solutions to problems, dealing with certain situations and doing specific pedagogic tasks, he/she promotes the development of the learner's linguistic and cognitive competence in an integrative way.

Pedagogically speaking, Nunan (1988b:45,159) explains what he considers to be a pedagogic task. For him, it is "a unit of planning/teaching containing language data" and takes place only in a classroom situation, where the learner is required to carry it out. Indeed, pedagogic tasks form the nucleus of the classroom activity, including techniques designed to teach students to perform the target task. Following this train of thought, Wright (1987:48) considers instructional tasks those tasks "with instructional questions which ask, demand or even invite learners (or teachers) to perform operations on input data."

Breen (1987:23) uses the word "task" in a broad sense, saying that it is "any range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating learning...". In his definition of tasks he includes "from simple and brief exercises to more complex and lengthy activities".

To sum up, the definitions we have looked at share one thing in common: they all imply that tasks involve communicative language use in which the user's attention is focused on meaning rather than on linguistic structure. And, for the purpose and scope of this study, the term 'task', as in the examples provided, is considered to be an activity which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing and interacting in the target language.

2.1.3. Tasks: principles, characteristics and aims

A task-based approach to language teaching and learning looks at communicative tasks as a system which focuses upon the sharing of meaning through spoken or written language. At this point, it is helpful to provide some principles that guide tasks and task-based instruction, as well as task characteristics and aims. According to Prabhu (cited in Johnson 1982:35), a strong principle is that learners will place great emphasis on communicating meanings, but not necessarily worry about the exact form that they use. In Phrabu's own words, "structure can be best learned when attention is focused on meaning".

As the father and a researcher in task-based instruction, Prabhu (1996) suggests that if the emphasis given in class is on meaning, the language will be learned incidentally, without concentrating on grammar points. He claims that it is impossible to eliminate all attention to form in any kind of teaching and, in any case, this elimination would be inconsistent with normal language use. Going deeper, he points out that the attention to form should come from the process of dealing with meaning, without being predicted or planned by the teacher. He also believes in the importance of the development of comprehension before production and sees meaning and tasks as the focus where language learning can occur.

Another important principle is that learning should happen as a result of some experience. So, the students are asked to perform activities in which they have to use a foreign language. His central hypothesis is that, in solving problems and being involved in learning tasks, the students naturally come into contact with the target language. Therefore, the task-based approach concentrates on learning exercises in which students are actively involved trying to reach solutions to them. Prabhu also believes that learners use and develop their own cognitive abilities and language through the solutions of logical, mathematical and scientific problems.

Nunan (1991:279), who has similar arguments to Prabhu's, presents five characteristics of a task-based approach to language teaching.

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language
2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language, but also on the learning process itself
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences, important contributing elements to classroom learning
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom

Besides the characteristics attributed to the task-based approach to language teaching, Nunan (1991: 284), in an attempt to provide links between tasks and the broader curriculum, articulates sets of goal statements. In his opinion, goals are related to what "learners want to do with the language outside the classroom". In his point of view, typical goal statements include:

1. To develop the skills necessary to take part in academic stud
2. To obtain sufficient oral and written skills to obtain a promotion from unskilled worker to site supervisor
3. To communicate socially in the target language
4. To develop the survival skills necessary to obtain goods and services
5. To be able to read the literature of the target culture

Touching upon the same issue, Tarone and Yule (1989:104) mention that "the aim of the task-based procedure is to provide a speaker with some information to convey, a listener who requires that information and an awareness that an information gap exists." From their point of view, this approach is necessary to promote an atmosphere in which learners are engaged in an effort to cope with communication.

Skehan (1996:38) gives a practical definition of "task" which encapsulates, in general terms, its principles, characteristics and aims. He understands a "task" as "an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome". For him, activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote language

learning. Besides that, he agrees that a task needs to be meaningful to the learner and that it needs to resemble activities done in the real world.

Summarizing, Prabhu, Nunan, Tarone and Yule and Skehan, as well as the other theorists already mentioned, have put forward arguments for "task-based" approaches to second language instruction, which focus on developing the ability to perform a task or activity, and not on the explicit teaching of grammatical structure. Trying to define tasks and their principles, characteristics and aims, these researchers have argued in favor of such an approach which they claim creates more favorable conditions for the development of second language ability than does an approach that focuses on the explicit teaching and learning of the rules of the language alone.

2.2. Components of a task

One of the strengths of task-based language teaching is that the conceptual basis is supported by a strong empirical tradition. Thus, empirically supported by a healthy research agenda, scholars such as Brown (1994), Candlin (1987), Wright (1987) and Nunan (1996) point out some components which are involved in a task. Taking into account this issue, this section will focus on these components, reviewing them in light of current theory.

In an attempt to mention the components of a task, Brown (1994:229) includes in his list the following "dimensions of communicative tasks: goal, input from the teacher, techniques, the roles of teachers and learners, and evaluation." Similar to that, Nunan (1996:47) also presents a list of task components. He points out four elements which, in his point of view, a task should include : the goals, the input, the activities, and the roles implied for teachers and learners. For him, tasks should contain some form of input data which might be verbal (for

example a reading page) or non-verbal (for example a picture), and the students have to work on an activity which is in some way derived from this input data.

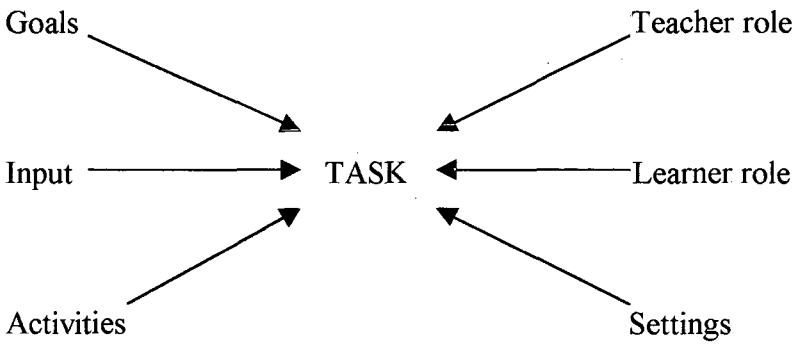
Candlin (1987:10-14) goes further by showing more components which he considers of great importance. Besides input, roles, outcomes and feedback, he also includes "setting", "actions" and "monitoring". For this researcher, "roles" specify the relationship between participants in a task, "setting" refers to the classroom arrangements and out-of-class activities entailed in the task, "monitoring" refers to the teacher's supervision of the task in progress, and "action" is the procedure to be performed by the learners.

Wright (1987:48-50) suggests that tasks, which he calls "instructional tasks", need at least two elements. He synthesizes in his list just "input data" which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners, and an "initiating question" which constitutes the main focus to generate instructions to learners on what to do with the data.

At this stage, an opinion from the field of education deserves to be mentioned. Shalveson and Stern (1981:48), speaking of tasks in the teaching of any subject, suggest that task design should take into consideration the following elements: a) content, b) materials, c) activities, d) goals, e) students' abilities needs and interests and f) social community (class and its sense of "groupness").

As Nunan (1996:47-48) has suggested, "the majority of learning tasks have just three components: (a) the goals they are intended to serve, (b) the input data which form the point of departure for the task; and (c) the activities or procedures which the learners undertake in the completion of the task." Besides that, he affirms that two important additional elements, which in turn imply certain roles, can be included: (a) the roles for teachers and learners, and (b) the settings and conditions under which the task takes place. In order to illustrate this scheme, he

provides a diagrammatic representation to analyze a communicative task and its constellation of elements. Nunan's framework is shown below:



To conclude, among those who tried to provide a conceptual scheme for tasks, Nunan (1991: 281), conceptualizing tasks in terms of the key elements of goals, input data, activities/procedures, role (implied for teachers and learners) and settings, selected and suggested a convenient means of "synthesizing the considerable amount of research activity which provides an empirical basis for task-based language teaching and learning".

2.2.1. Goals

From the perspective of task planning, though the trajectory is important, one can not ignore the goal. Needless to say, teachers are conscious that failure to provide bridges between goals and learning activities can lead to a situation in which the result of a class can be frustration. An important step, then, in the development of a language task is identifying learning goals. Teachers, in planning their classes, should have in mind the general purposes for which the tasks are being taught and learned. In other words, the teacher must think about what he/she hopes to achieve in the classroom and what he/she hopes the learners will achieve

in the classroom, providing a specification of what learners should be able to do as a result of instruction.

Nunan (1996:48), trying to conceptualize the term "goal", says that "goals are the vague general intentions behind any given learning task. They provide a point of contact between the task and the broader curriculum."

In conclusion, by examining the goal statements or a language task, one can usually identify the value judgments and belief systems from which they are derived. It is also through the examination of the goal statements that it is possible to identify whether the syllabus developer has taken as his or her point of departure the language, the learner, or the learning process.

2.2.2. Input

If we take a long, careful look at task-based language teaching, with its focus on the task as a significant building block in the development of language curricula, we will notice that task-based instruction focuses on a whole set of real world tasks themselves. The input, in this case, consists of some data which form the point of departure of the task and come from a wide range of sources; generally from a variety of authentic sources. Such data may be linguistic (that is reading and listening texts of various sorts) or nonlinguistic (for example, diagrams, photographs, picture sequences) or a combination of the two.

To illustrate this, the book Think Twice (1994) written by Hover contains examples of the data sources which exist all around us. He suggests the following : letters, driver's license, newspaper extracts, social security forms, business cards, photographs, shopping lists, recipes, pictures, stories, and timetables.

According to Nunan (1996:53-61), communicative tasks have minimally some sort of input data plus an activity. In his point of view, these two items form the point of departure for the task, i.e., the activity specifies what learners are to do with the input received.

2.2.3. Activities

The bulk of task-based research has focused on the activities which learners carry out in relation to the input data. Taking into consideration the importance of activities in the task-based teaching/learning contexts, it is necessary to know, in light of the specialized literature, what is meant by the term 'activity'. Indeed, "activity" is a very popular term in the specialized literature and refers to anything that learners actually do in the classroom, implying some sort of activity performance on the part of the students.

Baudains (1993:3) states that activity "is the umbrella term for all kinds of structured student behavior, introduced by the teacher with the general aim of furthering mastery of the foreign language". He lists games, conversation, exercises and tests as types of activities, through which the learners work towards the aim of learning and improving language.

Following this train of thought, Nunan (1996:59), as we have already seen in the previous section, affirms that "activities specify what learners actually do with the input which forms the point of departure for the learning task". He also proposes three general ways of characterizing activities: a) rehearsal for the real world, b) skills use and c) fluency/accuracy.

Stern (1993:177) goes further, pointing out a new current involving the activities' issue: communicative activities. In his view, this type of activity could be classified as "any activity-talk, task, problem, project - that involves the learner in 'real' communication", without emphasizing the structural or functional aspects of the code, focusing on the topic, message or

theme. Besides that, he also points out that communicative activities are not necessarily in-class activities; they could also take place outside the classroom.

In short, whatever differences there may be among various theorists, they all agree that an activity is something that learners do (inside or outside the classroom) and, in the case of second language, it opens the doors to the teaching/learning development supporting its realization.

Added to that, taking into account the current theory, of all the concepts in language teaching which have been widely used in recent years, the terms "communicative" or "communication" are no doubt top of the list. A number of researchers, such as Krashen (1982:10) and others mentioned in this chapter, have assumed that informal learning through communication and attention to meaning has certain qualities which formal learning lacks. For those reasons, they have argued in favor of communicative activities, which are believed to encourage subconscious learning, since, in their point of view, in acts of communication the learner's attention is mainly on the meaning of the message and not on the code.

Based on the hypothesis that development in a second language requires "not a systematization of language inputs or maximization of planned practice, but the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication" (Prabhu 1987:1), Prabhu, the main architect of the Bangalore Project, experimented with three different types of task in his project. These included (a) information-gap activity, involving a transfer of information from one person to another; (b) reasoning-gap activity, requiring students to derive new information from given information; (c) opinion-gap activity, which involves articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude as a response to a given situation (Prabhu 1987:46-47). More detailedly, the following are the typical examples of tasks used in Prabhu's project: interpreting railway timetables and filling in reservation forms; interpreting rules for concessional bus fares and relating them to the needs of individual students; reconstructing a

school timetable and working out when various people can meet; deciding how quickly or cheaply to get from A to B with the help of a map; and so on.

Parrot (1995: 28-29), in his book Tasks for Language Teachers, which has as its main purpose the orientation of professional teacher trainers, directors of studies, senior teachers and anyone else who has the responsibility for organizing sessions in a program of teaching education/development, gives some ideas about activity types such as: reading, listening, watching, speaking, writing, drawing, ticking, numbering, teaching, matching, comparing, ordering, ranking, classifying, selecting, recalling, producing, recording, gathering data, putting forward arguments and adding.

Clark (1987:238-239) proposes seven broad activity types, focusing on the sort of uses to which language is put in the real world context. He suggests that a language program should enable learners to solve problems, establish and maintain relationships, discuss topics of interest, search for specific information, listen to or read information in spoken or written form, listen to, read or view a story and create an imaginative text.

Wajnryb (1996:15) touches upon this issue, viewing tasks as "a key way of achieving active involvement. She includes a task typology in which tasks may be personalized, generative, inquiry-based, inductive and problem- solving.

Tarone and Yule (1989:115-116), approaching the issue of communicative acts, point out examples of classroom activities, which provide the learner with practice in the use of communication. They cite writing, giving information, identifying an intended referent, giving instructions to a listener, identifying pictures, and narrating about individuals in a story sequence. Summing up, they cite description, instruction and narration as classroom activities.

Pattinson's activity types (1987), cited in Nunan (1996:68), are the following: questions and answers, dialogues and role-plays, matching activities, communication strategies (paraphrasing, borrowing or inventing words, using gesture, asking for feedback, simplifying),

pictures and picture stories, puzzles and problems, discussions and decisions. All of these activities have as their main purpose to involve learners in oral interaction.

Many different scholars such as Nunan (1991:86-87), Somerville-Ryan (1987:107), Foster and Skehan (1996:306-307) and Yalden (1989:122) present a task typology based on selling/buying tickets, filling gaps (information-gap tasks), exchanging personal information, decision- making, narration, language games, simulations and so on.. Yalden goes deeper dividing her typology into three parts: 1) professional tasks, 2) social/professional tasks 3) practical tasks, and Brown (1994:179), referring to activities which are appropriate to group work, suggests games, role-play and simulations, drama, projects, interviews, brainstorming, problem solving and decision-making, information-gap, jig saw, opinion exchange.

Taking into account the reading skill, Grellet (1981:12-22) proposes a typology for reading comprehension activities showing: a) activities designed to develop basic reading skill and strategies (scanning and skimming); b) activities which focus on teaching learners how to identify the text using linguistic and non-linguistic clues, how to identify the essential organization of a text (chronological sequence, description, analogy, contrast, classification, etc). Besides that, this author also presents more complex activities designed to get readers to read between the lines, to go beneath the text's surface by judging it and evaluating it.

To summarize, all these kinds of activities cited above are said to focus on meaning and they have two different aims: 1) decision-making as in activities such as drawing according to information given, solving a problem, completing a table which reorganizes information, in order to make the students active in the reading process; 2) simulating situations as natural as possible as in activities such as completing a document, comparing several texts, answering a letter based on the information from this letter.

2.2.4 Teacher and learner roles

The idea that students will depend on teachers to learn and do classwork is certainly not new. Nowadays, a great number of students still attribute to the teacher the dual role of "parent and enforcer" Block (1996:180). The teacher is still seen as a "controller", a "provider" with total control, someone who "makes" students "do" and someone who "pressures" students within a certain time period. Block, in his research, reports students' comments such as "she made us speak English", "she came around to help when we were working in groups", "gave us more time to finish the last activity...". He also realized that expressions like "get involved" were rarely used by the students.

Parrott (1995:93-99) gives a list of roles including teachers as diagnosticians, planners, managers, providers, friends, judges, disciplinarians, police officers, facilitators, listeners, counselors, helpers, monitors, leaders, etc, and advocates that "the role of the teacher depends on the aims and nature of a particular classroom activity", emphasizing that, in some cases, the same teacher plays a dual role or a multiple role.

Brown (1994:157-162; 419) goes further by saying that teachers can play many roles in the course of their teaching. His list includes the roles of controller, director, manager, facilitator, resourcer, knower, authority figure, counselor, guide, confidant, friend and parent. In order to justify such a great diversity of teachers' roles, he points out that these different roles depend on the country the teacher is working in, on the institution where he/she is teaching, "on the type of course and on the makeup" of the students. He suggests that according to the different situations, some roles will be more or less prominent than others. He also asserts that teachers' attitudes also depend on how they view classroom teaching as a whole, i. e., if they have a traditional notion of teaching (teacher-centered) or an interactive notion of teaching (learner-centered).

According to Richards and Rodgers' view (1986:24), teacher roles are related to the following :

- the types of functions teachers are expected to fulfill, e.g. whether that of practice director, counselor, or model
- the degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place
- the degree to which the teacher is responsible for content
- the interactional patterns that develop between teachers and learners

In addition, following Breen and Candlin's (1980:89-112) ideas related to the communicative classroom, a teacher may have three main roles acting as a facilitator, a participant/observer and learner within the communicative process. Reinforcing that, Oxford (1990:10) says that new teachers' roles are changing, shifting from the "doctor", who "cures" the ignorance of the students to someone who is able to identify "students strategies, and helps them to become more independent" while he/she becomes and less dominant.

Taking into consideration the roles teachers and learners assume during class work, Nunan (1996: 87) points out that, if a teacher gives a learner a different role, this procedure requires the teacher to adopt a different role, as a consequence; therefore teachers and learner's roles are, in some way, complementary. To illustrate this, Richards and Rodgers (1986) devote considerable attention to this issue. For each approach or method presented, they also show the related learner role. They analyze learners' roles as: passive, interactor, negotiator, listener, performer. They also mention the students, who are involved in a social activity and in the teaching/learning process. He points out that teacher and learner roles effectively define the classroom profile and the interactional patterns developed between teachers and learners during classes realization.

Nunan (1996: 81) citing Rubin and Thompson (1982), offers a list of strategies which require learners to adopt a range of roles which are not common in a traditional classroom. Those strategies require learners to be "adaptable, creative, inventive and most of all

independent." What is proposed here is that learners must be encouraged to think and this attitude, of course, implies a more critical and reflective learner role.

On the other hand, Dickinson (1987:18-35) argues in favor of the use of self-instruction. His arguments are: a) in some cases, it is impossible for learners to attend regular classes; b) problems such as differences in aptitude, cognitive styles and learning strategies are easier to solve; c) it facilitates the development of strategies promoting autonomy; d) it has a positive effect on motivation and learning how to learn. In this case, the learner is playing a self-directed role, since he/she is working without the direct control and help of a teacher.

Of course, much more can be said about learner and teacher roles. But, despite the various different roles presented, what these authors have suggested is that all pedagogic tasks contain roles for teacher and learners within the time frame of any one lesson, and besides that, they agree that there is a range of roles that a teacher may adopt, and a range of corresponding learning roles as well. They also suggest that in place of the more traditional view, in which the teachers occupied a pivotal role, a modern view is emerging bringing a teacher, who assumes a collaborative and consultative role, facilitating and guiding learning and, helping learners to become more critical and reflective, and less dependent.

2.2..5. Setting

The word 'setting', in the context of a teaching/learning situation, is defined by Wajnryb (1992: 131) as being "the social arrangements in which the task is carried out". Trying to define "setting" Nunan (1996: 91-93) says that it "refers to the classroom arrangements specified or implied in the task, and it also requires consideration of whether the task is to be carried out wholly or partly outside the classroom". In other words, setting is not simply a matter of decorative background. It is the context that provides a time frame, a place frame and a set of expectancies for interpreting messages; context gives meaning to the text and

provides the atmosphere to a dynamic interaction among participants. In this sense, Nunan (ibid.) prefers to deal with "settings" and "roles" together because, in his opinion, they can be considered "an important factor influencing roles and relationships" (ibid.). Besides that, he takes two different aspects of a learning situation making the distinction between "mode", which implies individual, pair or group work, and "environment", referring to where the learning actually takes place.

Under the rubric of setting, which encapsulates 'mode' and 'environment', Stern (1993: 350-351) cites three areas which are part of these social arrangements; (a) class size, which can be arranged according to students' age, maturity, aptitude, and so on; (b) group composition, which takes into consideration the students level (beginners, intermediate, advanced); and (c) interpersonal relationships, which involve the extent to which the teacher can influence the social climate of the class (social interaction).

Finally, it is undoubtedly true that the teacher must consider the environments in which the target language will be employed, in order to promote social conditions for productive learning and personal growth. The teacher's perception of his/her role together with the students' age, maturity, aptitude, level and social interaction will help him/her to avoid the lack of necessary support which a good class context requires. Of course, the settings in which language occurs are very diverse, but they all have two things in common: teachers must be able to analyze and interpret the situation within which they teach, and they must be able to plan, develop a policy and come to decisions in the interests of their students.

In summary, this section has touched upon "task" and the way some scholars look at it in terms of its goals, input data - linguistic or otherwise - on which it is based, the activities, and the teacher and learner roles and settings implied by it. In other words, what linguists have suggested is that, in analytic terms, a task will contain some form of input data (verbal or non-verbal) and an activity which is in some way derived from the input and which defines what

the learners have to do in relation to the input. The task will also have a goal and roles for teachers and learners.

2.3. Factors which can influence task difficulty

There have been a number of attempts to determine the factors which contribute to a task's complexity and, as a consequence, to its difficulty. In order to account for the simplicity or complexity of a task, it is relevant to mention Brindley's factors (cited in Nunan 1988a: 67-73), which can contribute to determining a task's difficulty. In Brindley's considerations about subject matter, he points out some factors he considers important coefficients for the selection and grading of content according to its complexity. As he asserts, learner, tasks and text interact to determine task difficulty. In his writings, Brindley presents one of the clearest classification of these factors. Still according to Nunan, Brindley divided the factors affecting complexity into three types: 1) learner factors, 2) task factors and 3) text factors.

2.3.1. Learner factors

2.3.1.1. Learners' background knowledge

(Prior learning experience, cultural and linguistic knowledge)

Citing Richards (1983), O'Malley and Chamot (1990:36) point out that learners make use of two types of knowledge in order to identify meaning: real world knowledge and linguistic knowledge. In a general sense, many theorists (described below) agree that the sum of an individual's life experiences is an important factor which can influence his/her performance on tasks, helping the student to carry them out in an easier way. On the other hand, the lack of a certain life experience could interfere, causing some difficulty while the students are

performing their activities. Approaching the same subject matter, Breen (1987:30) emphasizes that "During Task-in-Process, learners will render content... depending upon their own current background knowledge. Learners will work on the basis of what they recognize in task content and, from this, apply the knowledge which they see as demanded by the content." Then, if task content is familiar in some way, learners will locate in the task those features which they believe they already know. At the same time as they identify and locate familiar aspects, they also identify and locate those aspects of content which are unfamiliar and, as a consequence, represent problems for them. Brindley (cited in Nunan 1988a: 73) affirms that "content familiarity has been shown to assist learners to process information." In this case, familiarity with the subject, familiar situations and real life conversations help understanding. It is needless to emphasize that the degree to which the background knowledge of the language user can be utilized to assist in comprehension will undoubtedly help learners more or, alternatively less at the time they are carrying out tasks.

Within the specific context of language learning strategies, Oxford (1990:49) agrees that nonlanguage hints are extremely important to help students to guess the meaning of what is heard or read in the target language. If the learner faces the absence of knowledge related to vocabulary, grammar or other elements in the target language, he/she will seek and use clues that are not based on language. Hence, the importance of his/ her general world knowledge, the knowledge of the context and the situation, the text structure, his/her personal relationships, the knowledge of the topic under discussion, etc, as a powerful and very frequently used way to guess the meaning. In this sense, individuals relate their prior knowledge to the knowledge which they are gaining from experiences in the world.

On the basis of general background knowledge, still according to Oxford (1990:93), the students build a bridge between new information and their prior knowledge including knowledge of the target culture knowledge, knowledge of the topic under discussion and

general world knowledge of current affairs, art politics and literature, using strategies of association. She also affirms that "all listeners make mental associations with prior knowledge" and that "good listeners make many more of these associations, make them more personally meaningful and intentionally use them for guessing" if compared with ineffective listeners.

For Tarone and Yule (1989:106) learners or even native speakers prove to be dependent upon a minimum knowledge of the language and of the world. To illustrate their statement they cite the specialized knowledge of professional mechanics about engine parts in contrast to laymen's unfamiliarity and reduced knowledge about the inner workings of engines.

Considering also the importance of the linguistic background in listening and in reading, Oxford (1990:49) reports that linguistic background knowledge serves as a support, or acts as a strategy, giving the learners clues to the meaning of unknown words. This compensatory strategy of using background knowledge to help understanding is used to compensate for "the absence of complete vocabulary, grammar or other aspects of the target language" and the transfer of the linguistic knowledge is applied. This common direct application of linguistic knowledge (words, concept and structures) from one language to another, in order to understand expressions in a new language is considered "economical and productive" for second language learners. (Littlewood, 1989:25) To emphasize the significance of this transfer of learners' previous knowledge of a language (first language or any other) to a new task, Richards (1989:65-66) says that it is a way to recognize the input they received.

Thus, the native language of every learner is an extremely significant factor in the acquisition of a new language, exercising an interfering effect on the target language. Students use the first language as a basis for understanding and/or producing the second language. In other words, they take advantage of what they really already know about language to assist comprehension or production, to guess unfamiliar items from the context; they also look for relationships and structure in language input in order to infer meaning.

To illustrate this, if a context presents a linguistically complex content, if its subject matter is expressed in unfamiliar vocabulary and if its discourse structure is complicated, it may overload the learner unduly. Bygate (1994), in his research about the repetition of the same task, goes deeper by emphasizing that when a learner encounters a task for the first time, he/she behaves in one way; but when he/she is familiar with it the learner will be more proficient. For him repetition of the task is good. Because subject matter with which the second language learner is familiar is easier to handle than topics which are entirely new. The less familiar we are with the issues involved, the more difficult it is to understand second language discourse.

Under the rubric of background knowledge, cultural knowledge also plays an important role in this field. Related to that, O'Malley and Chamot (1990:167) affirm that part of the students' cultural background knowledge is due to prior schooling, which is related to a cultural context. In this sense, when learners are carrying out tasks they take advantage of their prior educational experiences and use their knowledge gained in academic situations. Following this train of thought, Breen (1987:29-30) points out the relevance of "familiarity", citing students' socio-cultural and linguistic knowledge, since language and culture are intrinsically intertwined. He says that learners will deal with the unknown, moving forward on the task, if they recognize "familiarity" in the content

In sum, the effective use of background knowledge is an attempt to build connections between the new language and the knowledge about the already existing concepts. The amount of existing knowledge stored, whether it is real world knowledge, cultural knowledge or linguistic knowledge, will be used, according to what the scholars mentioned above, by learners to aid in interpreting the meaning of texts.

2.3.1.2. Learners attitudes (confidence and motivation)

As important as the knowledge domain is the affective domain, which consists of relevant emotional factors that can, still according to Brindley's classification of factors, influence the students; they may find a task easier or more difficult depending on their level of anxiety. At this point, it is important to emphasize that the affective variables, (also called "Personality Factors" by Brown 1987:99-121) are a very difficult phenomenon to investigate, since they are highly subjective. Citing Brown, Oxford (1990:140) states that "The affective domain is possible to describe within definable limits". According to Tarone and Yule (1989:133) it is very difficult to know for sure how confident the learner is when the task is being performed, or if the students have the necessary level of confidence to carry tasks out.

Indeed, the term "affective" is related to emotions, attitudes, motivations and values. The affective side of the learner is probably one of the strongest influences on language learning in terms off success or failure, being a crucial factor in the learner's ability to overcome mistakes in the process of learning a second language. According to Littlewood (1989:59) a bad experience would be an inhibiting factor preventing some learners from fully exploiting what they know, causing anxiety in classroom learning situations. On the other hand, as Brown (1994:23) affirms, "the eventual success that learners attain in a task is at least partially a factor of their belief that they indeed are fully capable of accomplishing the task".

Closely related to, and in some cases subsumed under the notion of confidence, is the concept of self-esteem. For Allwright and Bailey (1991:178-180), it is impossible to know for sure "whether high self-esteem is a cause of success or a product of it". They affirm that students approach a new task with more confidence if they have succeeded in a previous task. In their opinion, learners have their self-esteem reinforced when they have a good experience, while carrying out a task. In comparing learners with low self- esteem and with

high self-esteem, they say that students with high self-esteem "hesitated less, corrected themselves more, did not need prompting, and so on."

As we can see, the answer to the classic chick- or-egg question: **does high self-esteem cause language success or does language success cause high self-esteem?** is unfortunately impossible to be answered with confidence. On the other hand, common sense would suggest that they are interactive factors related to self- confidence which makes them important aspects of any human behavior. Brown (1987:101)

At this point, in the treatment of affective factors, it is relevant to point out "motivation" as an important human need which is essential to second language acquisition. From Littlewood's (1989:53) point of view, motivation is a complex phenomenon which is crucial in second language and in every other field of human learning. For him, it is motivation that " determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres". In this sense, in spite of being much too complex to be explained, motivation is probably the most important characteristic that students bring to a learning task, and the "will" to learn is one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure.

According to various authors, motivation can be seen from different perspectives. Cook (1993:73-74) sees it from the point of view of Lambert and Gardner, who divided it into two basic types, which they called "integrative" and "instrumental" motivation.

The concept of integrative motivation is seen by Cook (1993:73-74) as the positive influence of the target language and culture on the learner. It would provoke a desire to affiliate in some way with the speakers of the target language, motivating learning the language to take part in the culture of its people. Learners are motivated, in this sense, because they wish to learn in order to relate better to and integrate with speakers of the new language. Still according to Cook, "the more that a student admires the target culture... the more successful the student will be in the second language classroom."

Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, takes place when a second language learner wishes to achieve goals utilizing the second language for furthering a career, reading technical material, translation, and so forth (Cook, 1993:73-74). In this sense, a learner with instrumental motivation is more interested in how the second language can be a useful instrument for gaining a necessary qualification or improving employment opportunities.

Yet another dimension of integrative/instrumental dichotomy is brought to light by looking at "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" differences in motivation. These appear in the literature and are also sometimes used to characterize types of motivation. Brown (1994:33-46) tries to define intrinsic motivation as an intrinsic set of motives (primary driving force) within learners. Based on this statement, we can conclude that, as the name suggests, intrinsic motivation is an inner involvement which comes from learners and it is expressed in their behavior. As for extrinsic motivation he describes it as being an external factor "carried out in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self".

In addition to these factors, there are many others which can affect task difficulty. Nunan (1996: 116) asserts that there are many learner factors such as maturational level, which are difficult to discuss without reference to a particular learner group. Citing Pearson and Johnson (1992), Nunan (1996:101) mentions other factors called "inside the head" and "outside the head" factors. For him the first category includes the input factors and the second one includes the process of comprehending, understanding and using language, which every learner brings to the task.

As we can see, psychological research suggests that motivation generates success and stimulates learners to invest more energy in the task. What has emerged is that whatever the basis of the motivation of the learner, its level - high/low - has an impact on expected learner roles. According to Wright (1987, cited in Wajnryb 1996: 31), highly motivated learners have a tendency to synchronize their roles with the teacher's role. Besides that, they are more inclined

to co-operate with the teacher in the various processes involved in classroom learning. Indeed, at this stage and for the scope of this work, it is important to focus on the fact that, again, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can not be viewed as working separately in determining the success of a language learner. As in the case of instrumental and integrative motivation, they may also operate together in learning a new language.

Summarizing, it is easy to conclude that second language learning is an emotional activity involving countless affective variables. Besides that, taking into consideration intrinsic" and "extrinsic" motivation, researchers such as Brown (1987:116) states that "second language learning is rarely motivated by attitudes that are exclusively instrumental or exclusively integrative. Most situations involve a mixture of each type of motivation" it does not matter if there is a desire for a wider social contact among speakers, or the purpose of learning the language for a career or other practical reasons.

2.3.2. Task factors

2.3.2.1 Relevance

Other important factors can be taken into consideration at the time of analyzing the interaction existent between the student and the classroom learning tasks. Still following Brindley's classification, Nunan (1988a: 68-73) points out some relevant factors such as 'relevance', 'complexity' and 'time and help available', which he judges essential in determining task difficulty. The present section is designed to present a review about what some scholars have said about these subjects.

Under the term 'relevance', Nunan (1996:109) referring to tasks and learners, asks the following question: "Is the task meaningful and relevant to the learner?" In other words, in his opinion, a task's relevance and meaningfulness are central points to be considered at the time

of planning lessons and designing tasks to be carried out. With respect to relevance, Krashen (1982: 67) has argued that the subject matter of second language classes should be both interesting and relevant, since even in our first language we find it difficult and boring to deal with activities which are not specially interesting or relevant.

In more recent years, with the purpose of facilitating learning, researchers have indicated that a task should be one to which teachers and learners can relate Nunan (1996:14-20). In other words, what they have suggested is that information by and from learners should be used in planning and implementing language programs. They call this procedure "learner-centered curriculum". In such a situation, content and tasks are developed in tandem, i.e., students and teachers work in a collaborative effort to avoid bad surprises such as irrelevant and meaningless tasks and content. As Nunan (1996:16) has suggested, generally when learners are involved in decision making on content selection, there is a tendency to have a "more satisfactory and coherent end product". Besides that, the advantage of adopting this procedure is that it leads to a process where content can suggest tasks and vice versa.

In order to make tasks manageable and more relevant as a means to progress in a new language, Breen (1987:40-41) emphasizes that the "task designer has to enter into a dialogue with learners for whom the tasks are being planned." From his point of view, this interaction with the target students will lead to an awareness of the learners' purpose in learning a new language, their background knowledge, their interests, motivation and attitudes in learning a different language, as well as their preferred ways of working. Still according to Breen, a task designer should be informed about the students' objectives and needs and, besides that, maintain learners' involvement through their evaluation of tasks. Completing this developmental cycle, tasks designers should become more sensitive to the learners and, as a consequence, "be as close as possible to the group of learners who are using the tasks".

Illustrating that, in real life a negotiation occurs between speaker and listener, who work together to clarify the intended message. Similarly, a negotiated syllabus is the one which: a) involves negotiation and consultation between teachers and students, b) allows full learner participation in selection of content, mode and route of working, and c) includes tasks' goals and objectives, learning preferences, negotiation of preferred methodology and the sharing of evaluation on procedures.

On the other hand, the idea of a negotiated syllabus, in spite of being both fascinating and stimulating in terms of discussion, requires a considerable attention on the part of those who are engaged in this kind of model. Nunan (1988a:2-5) demonstrates some of the practical difficulties of developing a learner centered model by asserting that: a) This kind of orientation "implies differentiated curricula for different learners, b) When dealing with inexperienced learners, it is often necessary for the teacher to begin by making most of the decisions" (pp 3), c) The initial content "is not seen as definitive - it will vary, and will probably have to be modified as learners experience different kinds of learning activities" (pp 5).

In conclusion, the recognition that the learner, rather than the teacher, is central to the language learning process and that the learners' affective, cognitive and linguistic needs should all play a part in determining the content and implementation of whatever syllabus type is decided upon, the importance of content relevance and syllabus negotiation has promoted, among teachers, syllabus developers and researchers a growing awareness of how to design and improve content to be personally meaningful and relevant to learners. Scholars in this field agree that these two strands must be brought into the teaching learning context, embodying the central principle that the learner's needs are of paramount importance.

2.3.2.2. Complexity

Besides content or task relevance, complexity is another important factor which deserves to be mentioned. It is, of course, closely related to the level of difficulty encapsulated in a task, such as the steps involved in an activity, the complexity of its instructions, the cognitive demands that it makes on the learner, the amount of information the learner is expected to process in performing a task, and so forth.

In recent decades, there have been a number of attempts to determine the factors which contribute to task complexity and, as a consequence, its difficulty. Candlin (1987:18-21) offers some factors which he thinks to be significant in determining difficulty: cognitive load, communicative stress, clarity of task goals, code complexity and familiarity of task type.

Based on Candlin's ideas, Skehan (1994:191) presents a list of features which he thinks are involved in task complexity, constituting factors that introduce difficulties contributing to how difficult learners will perceive the task itself. He organizes his list into the following categories:

Language Factors: Syntactic complexity and range
Lexical complexity and range
Redundancy and variety

Cognitive Factors: Familiarity
Familiarity of material in the task
Familiarity of task-type and discourse genre

On-line processing
Reasoning operations required
Nature of input material used in the task
Degree of organization of input material

Prabhu (Prabhu 1987: 87-88), supported by his experiments in the Bangalore Project, suggests that the following factors are the most significant ones in determining task difficulty:

1. Information provided
   The amount and type of information handled will affect difficulty
2. Reasoning needed

The number of steps or cognitive operations (e.g. deduction, inference or calculation) will affect difficulty.

3. Precision needed
   Difficulty increases with the degree of precision called for.
4. Familiarity with constraints
   Learner's knowledge of the world, and familiarity of purposes and constraint will affect difficulty.
5. Degree of abstractness
   Working with concepts is more difficult than working with the name of objects or actions.

Nunan (1988: 60), referring to task listening and citing Anderson and Lynch (1988), shows a range of factors affecting difficulty which, according to them, can be attributed either to the listener, the task or the listening material:

- the sequence in which the information is presented
- the familiarity of the of the listener with the topic
- the explicitness of the information contained in the text
- the type of input
- the type and scope of the task to be carried out
- the amount of support provided to the listener

The theorists we have seen and others such as Brindley (1987), Nunan (1985), Anderson and Lynch (1986) and Prabhu (1987), all cited in Nunan (1996: 112; 141-143), agree that the learners' familiarity with purposes and constraints affect task difficulty. Prabhu, in his book Second Language Pedagogy (1987), and in the Bangalore Project, argues in favor of preliminary activities (pre-tasks) which introduce tasks and set contexts familiarizing learners; Pre-tasks are designed to provide prior knowledge, the situation and the cultural context preparing students to perform "tasks".

Besides equipping students with the language that they need and activating schemata when the real "task" is presented, a pre-task is, according to Bygate (1994, cited in Johnson 1996:141), a way of manipulating complexity. He also identifies four intervention points: Pre-task Stage, Task Selection, On-Task Conditions and Post-Task Follow-up. Similarly, Skehan (1996:54) presents his table of methodological stages in implementing tasks. He suggests: Pre-

Task Work, During, Post 1 and Post 2. In Pre-Task, the objectives are to reduce cognitive load and establish the target language.

More precisely, theoreticians have attempted to suggest factors which will determine the complexity of what the learner has to do, as well as the ways of manipulating this complexity. The frameworks presented here, with their sets of hypotheses, have clearly the purpose of assessing task difficulty and deciding what order tasks should come in. This crucial issue of sequencing tasks will be presented later in this chapter. For now, it is easy to deduce that it is very difficult to determine task complexity, not only because of the number of factors involved, but also because of the interaction of these factors with each other. To illustrate this, Nunan (1996:116) affirms that "the difficulty of a task based on a simple input task can be increased by setting activities which require different learner responses. The same learner responses can be made more or less difficult by the selection of input, or by making demands on the learners' background knowledge".

2.3.2.3. Time and help available

Other important factors mentioned by Nunan (1988a: 71), based on Brindley's studies, are time and help available to the learner during the task performance. For him, in the beginning stages, "learners may require more help" and assistance from the teacher to supply words and interpret students' utterances. Besides the teacher's help, students can get assistance from other learners, books or other learning aids. To illustrate this, in the case of interactive tasks, they will be better performed if the interlocutor provides help, i.e. if the interlocutor is able to supply words and interpret his/her partner's utterances.

Associated with a sympathetic and helpful interlocutor is the time and the time pressure imposed by partners during task performance. Time limit concerns how quickly the task has to

be done, and whether there is any urgency in the manner in which it is done. In classroom contexts, on some occasions learners may be given more or, alternatively, less time to complete the task. In this way, time pressure may be controlled, explicitly with the learners being told how quickly they have to perform the task. It is, of course, true that some tasks have a time limit, while others can be done at the speed the learners choose.

Dealing with the practicalities of classroom teaching from an administrative point of view, Brown (1994:398-401) has asserted that time is one of the most difficult aspects to control. He suggests that activities must be neither too long nor too short; this means that the time allowed has to be sufficient for genuine interaction and creative language. Writing about the same subject matter, Nunan (1991:71) advocates that " 'Time on Task' has been shown to be a highly significant factor in learning." Stern (1993: 351) also points out the importance of the time aspect in language learning. He associates time with student factors "such as age, aptitude and prior language experience as intervening variables".

In short, it is obvious that the amount of assistance provided to the language learner is a prominent factor in determining task difficulty. In the same way, the amount of time allotted for the tasks is another factor which clearly influences difficulty. Reinforcing all ideas about time presented in this section, Tarone and Yule (1989:126) relate that "the accuracy with which learners produce certain language forms seems to vary systematically in relation to the amount of time they have to perform the task."

2.3.3. Text factors

2.3.3.1 Size, density and the format

Still following Brindley's criteria for determining task difficulty, text factors are presented by Nunan (1988a:72-73) in his works about learner-centered approaches to curriculum

development. He points out that the size, density and presentation of texts can influence difficulty. In other words, there are many different points to be taken into account at the time of choosing and analyzing texts to hand out in the classroom. These points, according to Nunan (Ibid.), are related to how long the text is, how much information it contains, how concentrated the information is, how much repetition/recycling of the information is allowed for, how dense and complex the structure is and how clearly the main ideas are expressed. At first , it seems reasonable to assume that learners will perform better with short, manageable texts than with longer and more complex ones. For example, it is easier to recognize the cognate words in a text than to understand and analyze details. Thus, "density and complexity of texts may be reflected in such factors as length of chunks to be processed, complexity of utterances and the amount of specialized vocabulary" printed in a text. Nunan (1988a: 72)

Added to that, the presentation/format of a text for Nunan (1988a: 72) plays an important visual role which can, in his point of view, affect learner performance. He is in favor of "authentic" format, arguing that it helps learners to process information (e. g., a student can easily identify newspaper cuttings, letters, maps, menus, movie listings, etc). The quality of printing in the case of written texts is also significant.

In conclusion, as theorists have stated, difficulty will be affected by the length of the text, the propositional density, the amount of low frequency vocabulary, the explicitness of the information, the discourse structure and the clarity with which the main idea is presented. Besides that, the layout and the quality of print can also influence learners' performance during the task contributing to its difficulty and, sometimes, leading the students to a frustration in terms of failing to understand the text.

2.3.3.2. Text and contextual clues

At this point, it is not new that content familiarity has been shown to assist learners in processing information, hence the importance of the subject matter of the text itself. In considering content, Brown and Yule (1983a:83) confess that "surprisingly little is known about what constitutes a difficult content". What is known is that there is an interaction between the linguistic difficulty of a text and the amount of background knowledge which the listener or reader is able to exploit in comprehending the text.

Besides content familiarity, Nunan (1991:73) emphasizes the importance of organizing the information in a logical sequence. For him, a passage in which the information is presented in the same chronological order as it occurs in real life is easier to process than one in which the information is presented out of sequence.

In relation to the intended listener, Brown and Yule (1983a:83) suggest that the text should be of students' own interest, in spite of it being difficult for the teacher to find material which would interest everyone. In this sense, they suggest that texts, "which are not addressed to the listener, may be boring to the learner and therefore difficult to process".

The amount of support provided to the learner can also influence text difficulty Nunan (1996:98). If a passage is divided into headings and sub-headings, if the presence of extra-linguistic clues such as drawings, tables, photographs and so on, exist to support meaning, it should be easier to process than one in which there is no contextual support.

Reinforcing this idea, Oxford (1990:47-48) touches upon the same issue by saying that the use of non-linguistic clues is a compensatory strategy for those learners who have lack of background knowledge when dealing with an unknown subject matter, or even when they do not know all the words in a text.

Touching upon the listening and reading skills, Brown and Yule (1983:83-90), point out two factors which significantly affect the difficulty of listening texts. The first factor has to do

with the number of elements in the text and the ease or difficulty of distinguishing between them. The second one is the text type. Based on investigations with secondary students, they found that "descriptions were easier than instructions, which were easier than stories". Texts presenting abstract concepts, discussions and relationships, or those presenting the expressions of opinions and attitudes were considered the most difficult.

In summary then, a text which is not addressed to the student and, in which the topic is out of sequence and unfamiliar to the learner will be more difficult to comprehend than one with a familiar topic, presented in a chronological order and addressed to the listener.

Broadly speaking about the content of the statements, "logistically, activities which involve ticking, numbering, or ordering statements are clearly easier than those which involve producing materials, recording interviews or gathering data through questionnaires" (Parrot, 1995:30). To illustrate this issue, presumably identifying a named item by pointing to it is cognitively less demanding than describing it. However, all these kinds of operations can involve significant cognitive involvement on the part of the learners, depending on the content of the statements. Of course, the degree to which the language event makes cognitive demands on the learner is a complex factor within the clusters of factors involving the levels of skills and task complexity.

Concluding, besides the factors which can affect difficulty, mentioned in this chapter, it is relevant to point out the contribution of task components (goals, input, activities, roles and settings) to task complexity and cognitive load as stated by Brindley and reported by Nunan (1988a:68-73). Indeed, it is the additional cognitive effort expended by students on more complex tasks, together with the need for a communicative expansion in order to carry out tasks and complete them successfully, that will create the conditions for language development.

2.4. Grading tasks

We have now looked at what a language task is, what its different components are and what roles a task might imply for teachers and learners. Besides that, we have also looked at some factors which can influence task difficulty, which are closely related to the issue of sequencing and grading task difficulty.

Most language teaching methods are based on the assumption that learning is facilitated by grading grammatical constructions, so that there is a progression from easier to more complex structures provided by the input that the text or method offers to the learners. Indeed, the grading of content is an extremely complicated and difficult business, even for those who have a great deal of experience, as in the case of syllabus developers. In the days when content was largely restricted to grammar, decisions about teaching B after A were made according to linguistic notions of simplicity and complexity and according to a traditional view defined by linguistic terms and controlled by controlling the difficulty of linguistic input to the learners.

In order to illustrate this, Pieneman and Johnson (1987, cited in Nunan 1996:97), demonstrate that there are discrepancies between what is considered difficult in terms of grammar and what learners actually find difficult in terms of their Psycholinguistic capacity. If we take into consideration the "third person-s" morpheme, it is grammatically simple, but psycholinguistically complex.

At this stage, since language is highly complex and cannot be taught all at the same time, it is important to mention what is intended by grading. According to Richards et al (1986:125), grading is described in the following way "...the arrangement of the content of a language course or a text book so that is presented in a helpful way. Gradation would affect the order in which words, word meanings, tenses, structures, topics, functions, skills, etc. are presented. Gradation may be based on the complexity of an item, its frequency in written or spoken English, or its importance for the learner."

On the other hand, Long (1985:93) has contrasted difficulty as traditionally determined and difficulty as he has determined in his task-based syllabus design, by saying that "grading is determined (in a task-based syllabus) by the degree of difficulty of the pedagogical tasks themselves (from simple to complex), as well as such normal considerations as variety, pace, and duration".

According to Nunan (1991:74), "at present, there is little empirical evidence to guide our decision making on task difficulty. Such decisions will therefore be largely intuitive and subjective." Similarly, dealing with such a complicated issue, Long and Crookes (1992:46) comment that "little empirical support is yet available for the various proposed parameters of task classification and difficulty". Thus, the principle of grading from simple to complex is sometimes intuitively appealing. It has really been a crucial issue, since criteria for grading and sequencing tasks in a task based syllabus are to be based on more than speculation. However, the emergent debates and studies about task complexity have promised to be an important point for determining valid criteria for the relative difficulty, and, hence, grading and sequencing tasks, with an empirical basis. (Robson 1995:128)

It is generally assumed that difficulty is the key factor in determining the ordering of items in a syllabus. Skehan (1996:53-55) advocates that the appropriate difficulty of a task is the basic criteria for selecting a task. For him, the task can not be too difficult or too easy, otherwise the appropriate mental processing will be not used. He suggests some ways of manipulating the level of the attention required by the task.. For each feature of the syllabus - code complexity, cognitive complexity and communicative pressure - there are some proposals on how a teacher can change the difficulty of a task.

Similarly, Prabhu (1987:24) admits that the teacher is able to maintain control over the development of each activity, adjusting the level of difficulty where necessary and providing "parallel" activities to ensure that students at various proficiency levels receive the support

they need. Those suggestions are really relevant, since the teacher can adapt the level of difficulty of a task to the level of each group or even to the level of each student, because mental processing varies with different contexts and different students. Thus, the difficulty of a task based on simple input text can be increased by setting activities which require different learner responses. The same learner response can be made more or less difficult by selection of input, or by making demands on learner's background knowledge.

Skehan also tries to develop a framework which will help the teacher to better understand the tasks he/she is using in order to sequence and implement them more effectively. His presentation of the framework for the implementation of task-based approach starts with some consideration about sequencing tasks. He proposes that tasks should be sequenced according to the attentional resources they require. The system presented contrasts formal factors (code complexity) with content (cognitive complexity) and pressure to achieve communication (communicative stress).

Still according to Skehan's ideas about the features for task sequencing, the content of the task is defined by its level of cognitive complexity, which was also one of the criteria for the syllabus developed by Prabhu in the Bangalore Project (1987:87-89). Processing and familiarity are two important areas in "cognitive complexity". The first one relates to the amount of attention required for the task content and the second one is the ability to rely on previous experiences to solve problems.

Brown and Yule (1983:83-90), who devoted considerable attention to task difficulty, suggest that a task can be graded with reference to speaker, intended listener and content. They go on to state that in the case of listening to a tape, the fewer the speakers, the easier it will be to follow the text, since it is easier to follow one speaker than two, or three and so on. According to them, even native speakers have difficulty in following a tape where there are four or more people talking.

In the field of speaking, again Brown and Yule (1983:16), in their analyses of conversational English, make a simple distinction between 'short turns' and 'long turns': the first consists of only one or two utterances, while the second consists of a string of utterances an as a consequence, it is considered more demanding than short turns in comprehension as well as production. This suggests that in the early stages of language learning preference should be given to activities involving short turns in order to avoid making a heavy demand on the learner.

In 1985, Nunan (cited in Nunan 1996:142), in an attempt to grade tasks and analyze learners responses to activities, published his own list of criteria for determining task difficulty. As the first step, in a scale from easier to more difficult, he puts 'Comprehension' at the top followed by 'Production' which precedes 'Interaction'. Thus, it moves from comprehension based on activities to controlled production and finally to the ones which require the learner to engage in real communicative interaction. His possible teaching sequence shows that the demands on the learners gradually increase and also illustrates that the skills acquired or practiced in one step are then utilized and expanded in the following steps.

EASIER

Comprehension

Listen/read, no response
Listen/read, non-verbal response
Listen/read, verbal response

Production

Listen/read and repeat/copy
Listen/read, carry out drill
Listen/read, respond meaningfully

Interaction

Listen/read, rehearse
Listen/read, role-play
Listen/read, solve problem/come to conclusion

MORE DIFFICULT

In this area, Dubin and Olshtain (1981: 99) present a scale based on Bloom et al (1973) but with a slightly modified classification, which shows how a progression of "workouts" can be arranged from less to more cognitively demanding activities. In this cognitive domain scale, some types of exercises are cited such as problem-solving, making judgments, recognizing information and so forth. In their attempt to organize the activities according to the critical thinking involved, the authors really aimed at showing tasks which could be included in a course syllabus, citing just those activities which belong to the main categories of that taxonomy, without concerning themselves with the objectives included within each level.

As we can see, in spite of being largely intuitive and speculative, the hard task of grading has called researchers and syllabus developers to work seriously in order to change the idea of subjectiveness and speculation. In doing so, the consequences of research in this area will no doubt extend beyond such immediate pedagogic concerns.

2.5 BLOOM'S TAXONOMY OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Since the majority of tasks managing language learning involve more than just linguistic accuracy, engaging students to integrate their linguistic and cognitive competence, the taxonomy of Bloom and his colleagues (1973:16), which establishes as its main principle a hierarchy of complexity and abstraction taking into consideration the intellectual behavior of the students, will be reviewed and described in this section. Taking into account that in the cognitive domain "complexity" is the key word that guides the classification in Bloom's taxonomy, the educational objectives are also sequenced from the simplest level to the most complex one and each category also deserves to be defined and illustrated.

Bloom et al's (1973:16) taxonomy involves six main classes or categories of objectives, which are organized in order of difficulty as follows:

First Level: Knowledge
Second Level: Comprehension
Third Level: Application
Fourth Level: Analysis
Fifth Level: Synthesis
Sixth Level: Evaluation

The first category, also defined as "memorization" is related to the students' background knowledge - everything they have previously stored in their minds. In this sense, in selecting the appropriate information, the students use the first category, which represents the lowest level in the cognitive domain. To cite a practical example, if the teacher asks students to list the main parts of a vegetable, they will select information from their memories (what they have learnt about that). The main mental operations pointed out in this category are: Citing, Defining, Recognizing, Identifying and Deducing.[1]

The second category encapsulates the first one and is defined as the ability to learn the meaning of certain subjects transforming them in new subject matters. To illustrate this, when the teacher asks students to write the time in full, they first access memory and then transform their knowledge by writing the numbers in full. This learning goes a step further than memorization; even so, it represents the lowest level in the field of comprehension. The main mental operations listed in this category are: Translating, Interpreting, Exemplifying and Defining.

Application refers to the ability to apply acquired knowledge in new and concrete situations. In this sense, if the student selects the expression "good morning" to greet someone in the morning, (s)he is selecting the appropriate greeting for a concrete situation, among several different kinds of greeting taught. Among the mental operations mentioned are: Applying, Solving, Calculating and Operating. The learning results in this category demand a higher level of comprehension than the former level.

Analysis is defined as the ability to divide an entire subject into its parts (components) in such a way that its organizational structure can be understood. It could include the identification of those parts and identification of their interrelations and the organizational principles involved. A clause structure, analyzed into parts (subject, verb, object, adverb and so on), is an illustration of this category. The learning at this level represents a higher cognitive level if compared with the former ones, because it demands the comprehension of the content in a structural way. Some mental operations cited are: Analyzing, Selecting, Deducing and Ordering.

Synthesis refers to the ability to arrange some parts of a subject in order to form a new subject. To write an ending for a story is an attempt to mix ideas to make a "whole" which is different or new. In this category Narrating, Planning and Synthesizing are pointed out as the main mental operations. The learning in this area emphasizes creative thinking, leading learners to the production of original work.

Evaluation refers to the ability to judge the value of a subject (novels, poems, researches). The judgments should be based on a defined criterion, which can be determined either by the student or by the teacher. In spite of having a clearly defined criterion, the work produced in this category tends to be original, since the students can evaluate and/or judge by themselves. Illustrating this, if a student, after reading a short story, is asked to write about homeless people taking into consideration what the author wrote, (s)he has a criterion, but (s)he is free to give his/her opinion about the subject in question. The learning in this area is the highest in the cognitive hierarchy, because it encapsulates elements from all other categories. The main mental operations in this level are: Evaluating, Criticizing, Rejecting and Judging.

Bloom et al (1973::02) claim that the objectives lead teachers to (1) orient the learning direction, (2) organize exercises and tests and (3) to select evaluation procedures. According

[1] The words underlined in this section refer to the mental operations applied in this experiment.

to Bloom (1972, cited in Widdowson 1983:21), "this taxonomy is designed to be a classification of students' behaviors, which represent the intended outcome of the educational process..." , in other words, "the ways in which individuals are to act, think or feel as the result of participating in some unit of instruction".

At this point, it is necessary to review what theoreticians say about objectives. Tyler (1949 cited in Nunan 1985: 61) stresses the relevance of objectives by saying that they serve as a guide to the selection of elements in the curriculum. Commenting on this statement, Nunan (1985: 61) goes further, observing that "...objectives can be useful, not only to guide the selection of structure, functions, notions, tasks and so on, but also to provide a sharper focus for teachers, to give learners a clear idea of what they can expect from a language program, to help in developing means of assessment and evaluation, and so on."

Teachers' objectives referring to their expectations regarding learners' behavior are called "performance objectives" by Nunan (1985: 63) and are divided into three components: performance (what learners are able to do as a result of certain instruction), conditions (the conditions under which learners perform the task) and standards (how well the learner is to perform).

Still according to Nunan (1985: 65), when teachers specify the components of conditions and standards, the objectives become more precise and easier to grade. This is because the complexity of objectives can vary in difficulty according to the modifications made on conditions and standards.

However, in spite of the advantages, a good deal has been written against " objectives". Nunan (1985: 67) lists the arguments often given against the use of performance objectives, which can be summarized as follows: (1) it is an undemocratic view of education, when the teacher plans and specifies in advance explicit objectives in terms of students' behavior after the instruction; (2) unexpected opportunities which can occur within a classroom environment

are sometimes not taken into consideration, because of those pre-established objectives; (3) it is difficult to specify and identify measurable learner behavior, mainly in certain areas of study, such as humanities.

Nunan (1985: 69-70) also draws a distinction between process and product objectives. For him, the product objectives will describe what students will do during an activity as a result of certain instruction, while the process objectives describe activities which develop the necessary skills included in the product objectives and the experience the students are subjected to. Indeed, one is designed to specify the means (process objectives), while the other specifies the ends (product objectives).

On the other hand, while theorists such as Lier (1988:224) assert that "in terms of categorization, Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives is still the most widely used resource for cognitive question types", in the 1970s some language teaching researchers and educational philosophers opposed the idea of presenting a curriculum centered on "means" and "ends", "process" and "product" since, as suggested by Grittner (1977:60), the outcome of education could not and should not be directly specified as if it was a "system", particularly in areas such as the humanities.

In short, it is needless to say that, in the history of language teaching, because of divergencies among theorists, the issue of "objectives" has periodically changed. But, in spite of this, most current classifications focusing on cognitive work (see Dubin and Olshtain in the section "Grading Tasks") are based on or derived from Bloom's taxonomy, indicating that behavioral objectives have, undoubtedly, left their mark on curriculum development in language teaching. It is for this reason that Bloom's taxonomy was used as the basis for the preparation of the tasks in this study.

2.6 CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

Taking into account the models of integrated skills approaches, Content-based instruction (also known as content centered teaching) is also considered a communicative approach. According to Brinton et al (1989: vii), Content-based instruction is "the integration of content learning with language teaching aims. More specifically, it refers to the concurrent study of language and subject matter, with the form and sequence of language presentation dictated by content material". In other words, it integrates the learning of some specific subject-matter content with the learning of a second language.

As in Task-based instruction, the main point of this approach is that it advocates teaching a language with an emphasis on message/meaning, on content or on the activity itself, rather than on language aspects. It means that where language is emphasized, it is subordinated to the purpose of the message. According to Stern (1993: 12), while the students take care of the content, the language takes care of itself.

On the other hand, it differs from the Task-based Approach since the syllabus and the learning of language is through or in conjunction with a subject matter. The syllabus is usually derived from some fairly well-defined subject area, where the content may be school or work-related, for example, History, Economics, or Computer Technology, which were taught in the students' native language. Then, experiential content will provide a context for the linguistic content. The teacher of a content-based course may teach the subject matter directly or use the subject matter as the basis for language-learning lessons. If compared with a traditional language curriculum, it is dictated more by the nature of the subject matter than by the sequence of language forms, where "the task, the linguistic knowledge and topic knowledge that are built up through the unit are applied to the solving of a communication problem". Hutchinson and Waters (1983: 102)

According to Nunan (1996:125), the Content-based syllabus is not a new one. Content-based units were taken up during the 1970s by linguists involved in language teaching, and began to be reflected in syllabuses and course books. Indeed, according to Stern (1993:12), it was initiated in Canadian experiments in French immersion courses in 1965 for the first time, and during the 1970s and 1980s it "spread across Canada" in a large-scale attempt to incorporate this view of language teaching systematically into the language syllabus.

Still according to Stern (1993:12), the use of content from other subject areas has found its widest application in courses and materials for ESP and, as in the Task-based syllabus, "there is no sequencing according to grammatical or speech act categories". In other words, the syllabus is built and selected according to subject areas, taking as the point of departure the knowledge which syllabus designers and teachers feel is important and relevant for the learners, taking into account that the logic of the subject may provide the sequencing and grading by itself.

In this field, Finochiaro and Brumfit (1983:76) advise that "the units to be included in each level could be centered around a story or each could stand alone with respect to topic or theme". On the other hand, besides syllabus designers and teachers' "feelings", it is also of vital importance to negotiate the topics with learners and demonstrate the relationship between language and content.

Widdowson (1993:34), talking about the advantages and facilities of Content-based instruction, asserts that "...the advantage of a discipline-based approach to language teaching is that it shifts from a contextual to an intertextual perspective. In drawing attention to genre as a mediation between code and context, it facilitates the process of abstraction upon which language learning depends. Students can be induced to notice form because it plays a crucial part in realizing conventions of communication". Among those who advocate Content-based instruction, Morris and Stewart-Dore (1984:.21) affirm that

> Each area of specialization, science, geography, Home Economics, Physical Education, Music, Art and so on, has its own body of literature, which presents the content of that area in a language style of its own. Once we recognize that different bodies of knowledge have their own literature and language style, we can see that the learning implications extend beyond the school scene to the world of work and every day life.

Wesche (1993: 61) points out four characteristics she believes are shared by discipline-based approaches:

1. Content as the curriculum organizing principle;
2. Double objectives: content mastery and second language development;
3. Authentic language materials and tasks (i.e. created for other non-pedagogical purposes), with teacher adaptation as required;
4. Accommodation to the needs of second language learning (e.g. increased redundancy and exemplification, use of advanced organizers, initial emphasis on receptive skills).

One of the strongest arguments in favor of the use of projects (Content-based syllabus) in the language teaching field, is that it is intrinsically motivating. Touching upon this issue, Fried-Booth (1986: 5) argues that "It is this sense of personal involvement that gives impetus to project work. For the students, the motivation comes from within not from without. The project is theirs. They decide (in consultation with the teacher) what they will do and how they will do it, and this includes not only the content of the project, but also the language requirements". Bearing that in mind, the teacher can expect an increase in intrinsic motivation in Content-centered classrooms, which is so important to learning of any kind.

Taking into account the question of how one sequences and grades content, Leguthe and Thomas (1993:16) reinforce that they "have deliberately omitted here the question of how one defines areas of content of knowledge for the modern classroom and how one grades and sequences them in the units within the negotiated curriculum, as this is a major component of future work for the field". They were referring specially to their own text, but the same could be said for most other work in the area as well.

To sum up, as we have already seen, this approach is favored in terms of practicality - the experience which facilitates future performances - and motivation - the learner is more interested in language classes which consist of a vehicle for content relevant to his/her own interests. In this sense, learning is intrinsically linked to interest and motivation generated by the subject matter. Two of the tasks developed for this study are content-based, linked to a unit on health which the students had studied in science class.

2. 7. The reading skill

Bearing in mind that we are members of a literate society and that the written words surround us daily, and because of that we are dependent on letters and written symbols, it is important for the purpose and scope of this work to take a look at Grellet's typology of reading comprehension exercises (1981). In this section, only those points of Grellet's typology which are relevant to this study will be mentioned, such as 1) the techniques to facilitate understanding, 2) how the aim is conveyed by the text and 3) the responses learners give to the text in trying to understand meaning. Besides that, other authors who agree with Grellet's ideas and some aspects of the reading theory they mention are added when necessary, in order to corroborate the theoretical part of this research.

2.7.1 Reading techniques

First of all, it is important to emphasize what Grellet understands by 'reading comprehension': "understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible" (1981:3). He further considers reading to be an active and cognitive process in which the reader interacts with the text in order to get information. In Grellet's view, readers have two main reasons for reading: for pleasure and for information.

Taking into account the classroom context, Brown (1994:292) defends the idea that the teacher has to make sure the students know their purpose in reading something, in order for them to read efficiently.

Grellet suggests several reading techniques designed to develop basic reading skills and strategies. In her book Developing Reading Skills (1981), she provides 'Sensitizing' activities designed to help learners to cope with unfamiliar words and grammatical structures, such as inferring the meaning of unknown elements, understanding relations within the sentence and linking sentences and ideas. Grellet emphasizes that "students will never read efficiently unless they can adapt their reading speed and technique to their aim when reading" (p.17), and suggests activities for the development of flexible reading strategies such as predicting, previewing, anticipating, skimming for an overview of the text, and scanning for specific information.

2.7.2. Aim and function of the text

The second section of Grellet's typology (1981:20-25) deals with the importance of being aware of the aim and function of a text. She suggests that in some cases it is easy to identify the essential organization of a text, in terms of chronological sequence, description, analogy, contrast or simply by just analyzing its format. According to the author, "the way it is printed, laid out, or the place where it was found" facilitates text comprehension, and teachers and learners can take advantage of those non-linguistic clues to discover the function of a text.

On the other hand, in many cases it may be very difficult to determine the function of a text and, for this reason, it is necessary to design activities to facilitate this task, thus promoting an atmosphere of interaction between the student and the text. These activities, according to Grellet, may involve the use of linguistic and non-linguistic clues. **Linguistic responses** to the

text include inference of meaning by deduction, identification of unfamiliar lexical items by contextual clues, prediction, prevision and anticipation, analogy and contrast, classification, and logical organization. **Non-linguistic responses** include ordering a sequence of pictures, comparing texts and pictures, and matching.

2.7.3. Interaction of reader and text

A number of authors emphasize the active nature of reading comprehension. Silberstein (1994:12), for example, claims that the reader "is an active, problem solving individual who coordinates a number of skills and strategies to facilitate comprehension." Carrel (1995:1) points out that "reading is not a passive, but rather an active, and in fact an interactive process." According to Goodman (1985:12), the process involved in reading starts with the writer's presentation of a linguistic code and ends with the meaning constructed by the reader: "there is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought and the reader decodes language to thought".

Considering the interactional nature of reading, Grellet (21-24) classifies reader responses to the text into linguistic and non-linguistic responses, which can both be practiced in the classroom. Linguistic responses include recognizing the information in chronological order, filling in tables to note down the main points of a text, comparing several texts on the same subject and judging them by emphasizing the differences and contradictions between them. Non-linguistic responses often imply visualizing the information contained in the texts, by matching drawings and passages, matching articles and headlines, completing a diagram, tracing a route on map, and drawing a diagram.

Rivers (1988:72) presents the following suggestions, made by students, of strategies for reading comprehension:

- know the topic of the text.
- read around words you do not know.
- make use of all available information in the paragraph to comprehend unfamiliar words.
- take chances and predict meaning.
- guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context.
- remember that all words in a reading passage are not of equal importance.
- skip unfamiliar words that are inconsequential to the meaning of the total phrase or paragraph.
- try to find that part of the meaning that is determined by the syntax of the sentence.
- expect the text to make sense and be sequential.
- do not make constant translations.
- look for cognates.
- have confidence in yourself.
- if you are not sure of the meaning of the word, find it in the dictionary.

These suggestions made by the students can be considered a kind of mirror reflecting not only the student's needs, but also all the sections of Grellet's typology described in this section. Based on the ideas presented in this chapter, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that reading tasks can be graded in terms of a) the size and complexity of the text confronting the reader and b) what the learner is required to do with the text.

The reading skill was chosen for this research on tasks because: a) reading is stationary; b) a reading text moves at the speed of the reader, in other words, it is up to the reader to decide how fast he or she can read a text; and c) unlike a listening text, readers have the opportunity to be totally in contact with the written material while the exercise is being done (Willis 1996:8). So, this ability was considered the easiest one to be mastered by learners.

2.8. Conclusion

This long and varied chapter provided a general overview of four areas:

1) The first is the development of task-based instruction, which has the aim of involving the learner in acts of communication without emphasizing the structural or functional aspects of the code. The 'task' was introduced, defined and analyzed in terms of its goals, input data,

activities, settings and roles, in relation to the general field of language curriculum design. Some factors which can affect task difficulty and the complex issue of grading tasks were also discussed, with special attention devoted to the problem of sequencing. It was also pointed out that there still remains a great deal of empirical work to be done in terms of establishing difficulty levels for tasks, since there is little empirical evidence to guide decision making on task difficulty.

2) Second, the six main categories of Bloom's taxonomy were defined and illustrated. Objectives were described as goals to orient teacher directions (process objectives) on the one hand, and goals in terms of behavioral or psychological changes that the language course is intended to bring about in the learners, on the other.

3) The third area reviewed was Content-based instruction in the field of language teaching. Its history and characteristics were discussed and a comparison was made with Task-based instruction. Strong arguments in favor of the use of Content-based approaches to language teaching were also presented.

4) The last area reviewed was the reading skill, mainly in terms of reading techniques, aims and functions of the text, and the interaction between the printed text and the reader, all based principally on Grellet's typology of reading comprehension exercises.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The primary aim of this study was to investigate, through sets of tasks, four different kinds of mental operations within three categories of Bloom's taxonomy, with the sub-goals of (1) discovering the order of difficulty of these operations in the context of the foreign language teaching, (2) exploring what learners do when working through a task, and (3) evaluating their cognitive effort. Thus, based on these goals, the research questions were the following: (1) What is the order of difficulty of these operations in the context of the foreign language teaching? (2) What do learners do when working through a task? (3) Is it possible to evaluate the degree of cognitive effort required to complete the task independent of foreign language proficiency? This chapter will also describe the observation of classes before the data collection, the tasks themselves, the implementation conditions, the setting, the questionnaire, and the subjects and their reaction while performing tasks.

3.1. Class observation

This research was carried out in a normal seventh grade classroom with an enrollment of 28 subjects in a public primary/secondary school in the south of Brazil. Before starting the experiment, the researcher observed four classes given by the students' regular teacher, in order to become acquainted with the group. During this period, it was observed that in all classes the first procedure was to call the roll. While this was done, the students talked aloud, laughed and went from desk to desk, making considerable noise. When the teacher finished calling the roll, it was hard to get the student's attention.

The text used was the second volume - meant for the sixth grade - of the four -volume Steps Series (1995), by V. Keller, for the fifth to eighth grades. The teacher justified his choice of the sixth-grade volume in the seventh grade class by the fact that, in public schools, the teaching of English usually starts only in the seventh grade.

He did not do even a simple " warm-up" (even in Portuguese) to introduce a new lesson or exercise; he always went straight into the content, asking the students to open their books, which were followed step by step. He did not use any kind of teaching aides to start a new topic or lesson.

There was no way of negotiating comprehensibility and meaning in English. All new vocabulary was translated immediately after the students asked the meaning. All answers were given within a more traditional view of teaching and learning, which conceptualizes classroom instruction as the teacher having all the information and knowledge to transmit to passive learners. He did not encourage students to guess the meaning, even when the situation was pictured in their books.

Classroom management was somewhat chaotic. While their teacher was writing on the board or explaining some point of the lesson, the students were making paper airplanes to throw over the class. It was very common to see the students drawing on their books during the time provided to do the exercise. The teacher did not move around the class to check if the students were doing what he had asked. As a result, many of them, as the researcher confirmed, had not done their exercises since the beginning of the year.

The input generation (teacher talk) was always in Portuguese. The interaction was also carried out in Portuguese, and it was always teacher-student interaction. It could be observed that students had a very good interaction with each other, but the subject matter of this interaction was not related to the teaching content. They did not work in groups or in pairs and

the learners' production was always in Portuguese. The classes were teacher-centered and the teacher always dominated the classroom speech.

3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. Method

The data were collected in the second month of the 1996 school term. All the subjects were tested during their regularly scheduled class periods in their usual classroom. The researcher substituted the regular teacher in these classes, in order to direct the activities herself. Since this study was carried out in a normal and existing classroom, the ongoing syllabus was, of course, disturbed.

For this study, Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives was used. However, it is necessary to emphasize that the purpose of choosing this taxonomy was neither to check the validity of Bloom's work in terms of its applicability in the field of general pedagogy, nor to prove that this scheme of the cognitive domain has been satisfactory in the field of language teaching and learning. These mental operations were chosen to be applied in this experiment simply because it is common to see them included in ESL/EFL books designed for students at all levels; they are largely used nowadays in the instructions to orient learner activities. The following are examples of textbooks which use Bloom's mental operation categories in the instructions: Hover (1994: 11-12; 17-18; 23-24; 33-34; 43-44), Palim et al (1996: 30-33), Palim and Power (1996: 13, 21, 31-32), Read and Matthews (1995: 8, 14, 17, 40), Rivonlucri and Davis (1995; 6-7; 44-45; 168-172), Schultz and Fisher (1988: 11; 15; 20-22), Sion (1985: 18-19; 32, 37, 40, 42, 45), Wright et al (1996: 139, 149, 176).

Three categories of Bloom's educational objectives were chosen for this research: KNOWLEDGE, COMPREHENSION and ANALYSIS. Tasks involving four mental operations were worked on: **Identifying, Deducing, Defining and Reordering**. The mental operations **Identifying** and **Deducing** belong to the educational objectives category of KNOWLEDGE; **Defining** belongs to the category of COMPREHENSION and **Reordering** belongs to the category of ANALYSIS.

For each mental operation a set containing three tasks following a single framework was prepared: Pre- Task, Task I, and Task II. The Pre-Task and Task I were related to each other by topic, and Task II, while maintaining the same framework, dealt with a new topic. Each set of tasks was administered within a one-week period to ensure that the vocabulary and the linguistic and task structures would not be forgotten from one task to the next. The topics were ordered according to Bloom's taxonomy where the simplest comes first. During a four week period, 239 writing activity sheets were collected.

The Pre-Tasks were considered preliminary activities to introduce the framework, vocabulary, and content of Tasks I. They were carried out by the researcher and the students together. All the information, new vocabulary, grammar points and instructions were given and explained by the researcher, in Portuguese when necessary, in an attempt to give student some support and to equip them students with the necessary linguistic elements to do those tasks and the following ones -Tasks I. In the Pre-Task they received all necessary assistance from the researcher, who went from desk to desk whenever they required more help. She used, as much as possible, authentic and real resource material to illustrate each Pre-Task and to negotiate meaning. Body language was also employed. During the Pre-Task the students were expected to participate asking questions and giving answers.

Tasks I and II, however, were done in pairs by the students on their own, without help. No dictionaries were allowed and subjects were given no additional instructions apart from those already mentioned in the Pre-tasks. Questions addressed to the teacher were not allowed either. They only received instructions to carry out those tasks in the same manner as the Pre-Task, and to write down the time they finished in the blanks provided on their sheets. They were allowed to take as much time as they needed, and they were free to read the activity as many times as they wished. All tasks were carried out by subjects in dyads. As they worked in pairs, they helped and interacted with and helped each other. The researcher just handed out the sheets containing the activities and hung a clock on the wall for the students to time the duration of each activity, as this was one of the criteria used to evaluate difficulty. After the whole class finished the task, the researcher passed out questionnaires to obtain the students' assessment of the difficulty of the tasks, which they answered in class.

The students carried out the tasks in pairs for two main reasons: (1) since the Pre-Tasks were carried out by the whole group and the teacher together, it would have been contradictory if the students had to carry out the rest of the activities individually; (2) the work in pairs was an attempt to diminish the stress level, trying to promote an atmosphere of confidence. Apart from this, the authentic classroom setting was preserved, as far as possible, under relatively normal conditions, in order to minimize any effects or impacts that experiential conditions might have on subjects' performance.

The content of each exercise of the task set was organized in a logical sequence, with the exception of UNIT IV - REORDERING, where the content presented was out of order. In all sets of tasks, the Pre-Task always involved fewer steps and was shorter than the following ones. So, the students faced sets of tasks moving from short manageable tasks to longer and more complex ones. Tasks I were considered less demanding than Tasks II, because the

topics, structures and key words of the Pre-Task were preserved. Tasks II, on the other hand, besides having longer texts containing much more information and involving a different topic, contained very few "clues" (theme and vocabulary) through translation .

The questionnaire distributed after the completion of Tasks I and II, written in Portuguese to avoid misunderstanding, was also filled out in dyads, and in Portuguese. The purpose of the questionnaire was to elicit students' opinions about sources of difficulty, other than the mental operations involved: (1) students' perception of overall exercise difficulty, (2) students' prior familiarity/experience with the topic, (3) students' perception of difficulty caused by vocabulary, (4) the degree to which they used the Pre-Task as an aid to do Tasks I and II, and (5) whether difficulties perceived were due more to the English language or to the task itself. Students answered the questions referring to these items by marking a number from 1 to 5, to express the degree of difficulty caused by each item. (See appendix for the form of the questionnaire)

The questionnaire also contained a sixth item, which asked students to put four items in order of their importance in affecting the degree of difficulty of the task: Words, Grammar, Lack of Information, and Unclear Instructions. However, since many of the students interpreted these questions as simply rating the difficulty from 1 to 4 as in the previous five questions, this item had to be disconsidered in the analysis. Finally they were asked to write freely about the strategies (macetes) they employed to do each task. The data, including the time spent on each exercise, and the average grade (from 0 to 10) obtained for each activity were computed and transformed into statistical data in order to verify the correlation between these variables. Besides statistical analysis of questionnaires and tasks results, a subjective analysis was carried out to explain the statistical results.

The following are the procedures used to carry out the four pre-tasks. Students were expected to use similar procedures to carry out tasks I and II.

3.2.3. Task description.

Unit I - Identifying: This unit was designed to fit into the first category of Bloom's educational objectives - KNOWLEDGE, the simplest among the six categories proposed. **Identifying** was the mental operation which was expected to orient the tasks in this set.

In the **Pre-Task - Identifying People -** the students had to identify, according to the written descriptions given, two different people among four shown in a picture. All of them received a sheet of paper containing the whole exercise including the pictures (see appendix). Students were pointed out to illustrate vocabulary words related to height, build, hair, eyes, clothes and objects people in the pictures were carrying . During the explanation the teacher wrote down the new vocabulary on the blackboard and the students were advised to do the same on their sheets of paper. They were also advised to ask questions when they did not understand the illustrations given. After that they tried to identify the people described in the texts by writing down their names in the blanks provided. Then the teacher and the students checked the students' answers together.

The following exercise of this set - Task I - had the same framework and instructions and similar vocabulary and sentence structures. The only differences were in the number of people to identify - two in the Pre-Task and three in Task I - and in the number of people to choose from- four in the Pre-Task and six in Task I. Task II, on the other hand, had the same framework and instructions, but a totally different topic. Instead of identifying people, the students had to identify animals. Besides that, one more item to identify was added in this

task. Indeed, the number of items in this set of activities increased gradually from Pre-Task to Task II: two, three, and four, respectively.

Unit II - Identifying and Deducing: This unit was also designed to fit into the first category of Bloom's taxonomy of educations objectives and **Deducing**, as well as **Identifying** are included among the simplest mental operations encapsulated in the first category - KNOWLEDGE. In this unit, indeed, the students first had to deduce and then to identify.

In the **- Pre-Task - Identifying the murderer -** the students had to identify the murderer among five suspects in a chart which showed, in English, where and with whom each suspect had been at two different times during the day. The researcher explained the situation in Portuguese since the background information about the murder was written in that language. Then she fixed a larger version of the English chart on the blackboard and read each frame with the students, teaching the meaning of each unknown word, the majority of the words being cognates. The researcher and the students worked through the chart, considering suspect by suspect, and checking to see if each suspect's story was coherent. In the following step, the same procedure was employed: students were advised to write down on their sheets the meaning of each unknown word and then the researcher asked them to find out who the murderer was. At the end she asked them for the answer in order to check if they had deduced the most likely person involved in the murder finally she and asked them how they had come to that conclusion. Then, she wrote the murderer's name on the blackboard.

Task I of this set had the same basic framework as the Pre-Task, and the instructions and final question were very similar. The differences were that there were twelve suspects and only one time of day, and their alibis were written in complete sentences. Some different words were introduced, but much of the vocabulary from the Pre-Task was maintained in order to

facilitate the exercise. See appendix in Task II a similar framework was maintained, but the task involved choosing the most appropriate present for each of six friends, based on their interests. Two alternatives were given for each person. Different sentence structure and, of course, new vocabulary related to this topic were introduced.

Unit III - Defining: This unit was designed to fit into the second category of Bloom's taxonomy - COMPREHENSION, which is ranked as more complex than KNOWLEDGE and simpler than ANALYSIS. **Defining** was the mental operation worked on by the students.

In this **Pre-Task - Defining diseases** - the students received a sheet with two parallel columns. The first column presented the names of six different diseases, which the students had to match with their appropriate definitions in the second column. In order to illustrate this subject, the teacher brought a drawing of the human body to show the organs related to the six diseases involved. First, she mentioned the organs, showed their places in the human body, and mentioned the respective diseases which they had on their sheets. Then she asked the students to write down the name of each organ mentioned. She read the definitions and gave the meaning of the unknown words, advising the students to put the translation on their sheets. Then the researcher and the students read through the definitions together and the students identified the name of the disease which fit each definition. This activity involved a lot of cognate words.

In all activities of this set, the framework, the instructions and the number of items were exactly the same. Task I involved matching definitions of parts of the body with the appropriate vocabulary words, all of them cognates and/or presented in the Pre-Task. Very little new vocabulary was introduced. Task II involved matching famous people with short

biographical sketches, and thus contained a totally different vocabulary from that in the previous tasks.

Unit IV - Ordering: This set of tasks was designed to fit into the fourth category of Bloom's educational objectives - ANALYSIS, which was the most complex category worked on, and would build upon the categories that precede it.

In this **Pre-Task - Ordering the steps to a Recipe -** the students had to determine the order of an omelet recipe, step by step. Before handing out the sheets containing eight pictures with the steps, explained in English, out of order, the teacher explored in Portuguese the steps for making an omelet. At the same time that the students tried to organize orally the steps to make an omelet, she wrote on the blackboard, translating into English, the main words, such as the principal ingredients and the verbs in the imperative form. Then, she illustrated each step bringing all the ingredients and making a real omelet with the students. After that she handed out the sheets with the exercise and asked them to put the steps in order. At the end, the researcher and the students together checked the order of the recipe.

The same procedure was employed in Task I and II, since both had the same framework and instructions. The difference found in Task I was related to the number of pictures - while the Pre-Task had just eight pictures, Task I had ten pictures. In Task II, instead of ordering a recipe, the students had to order a story containing twelve pictures. The vocabulary of the story was totally different from that of the previous tasks. In both, the students were given non-linguistic clues (drawings), which aided them in discovering the meaning.

This set of activities included an extra exercise - Task III. Its framework was totally different from the previous ones in the sense that it did not present any picture to facilitate the exercise itself. The main objective of this procedure was to verify, through the results,

whether the students depended on the pictures to do the previous tasks, or whether they could do the task just as well without them. This extra exercise had basically the same vocabulary and sentence structure as in Pre-Task and Task I.

3.3. Students' reaction while performing tasks

Unit I - Identifying

Pre-Task: The students were waiting for the researcher in the classroom and were very talkative. They found it funny that the researcher had brought a suitcase. In the midst of laughing and shouting, several different questions were asked such as: "Você vai viajar professora?" "Para quê esta mala?" "O que você traz aí dentro?" "Tudo isso é dinheiro para nós?" Indeed they were curious to see what there was in that suitcase, but their curiosity was not sufficient to keep them interested in trying to discover the content. The students walked from one desk to another, probably because it was really a new kind of class for them in terms of both method and teaching aides.

The researcher started the class asking for silence. She first presented each type of clothing, describing it by illustrating the vocabulary which would be necessary to perform the tasks. She wrote the new words on the blackboard. But even all the material brought to the classroom was not sufficient to keep them from making noise. They continued laughing and talking during the entire clothes presentation . From their reaction, it was easy to perceive that they were not interested in learning. Rather, the presentation of those materials appeared to be a signal that it was the appropriate moment to make jokes, to laugh and to talk. Again, it was necessary to ask them to be quiet in order to go ahead with the explanation.

Now, when the researcher chose some students to illustrate physical details such as height, build and features, they suddenly became very interested, but this interest appeared to

be mostly in making fun rather than in paying attention to the researcher's explanation. On the other hand, they participated actively in the negotiation of meaning when students were chosen to be compared, because this provided the ideal setting for a torrent of nicknames involving the whole class. But, in spite of the commotion, their interest in making fun of each other led them to an effective participation. They learned the antonym pairs *tall/short, fat/slim, long/short*, very quickly, while inventing nicknames and provoking colleagues. The pair *dark/fair* took longer than the rest, requiring many more students to illustrate the difference, because they were so interested in laughing at their classmates that they did not catch the meaning. At this point the researcher had to stop the explanation and chastise them. Then, a review of the whole vocabulary was done, which unfortunately showed that they had not really paid enough attention, since they did not remember the meaning negotiated minutes before. It must be remembered that they were not accustomed to this procedure, since their regular teacher always translates new words on the blackboard. Doing the exercise together with the researcher, however, they showed that they understood, doing it quite quickly and getting the right answers.

Task I: Students were advised to consult their pre-tasks, but even so they asked for translation, complaining that they did not know how to go on without knowing some words. Questions and complaining came as an avalanche. Unknown words which were not key words for the text were great obstacles for them, since they were accustomed to asking for the translation of each new word and to consulting a glossary at the end of their English books. Since the exercise this time was similar to the Pre-Task, with basically the same words related to clothes and physical appearance, the researcher explained that they had to try to do the exercise with just those words that had been explored and written on the board. They looked a little bit perplexed with the new situation, but as they did not have any alternative, they tried to do the exercise with their partners, whispering the whole time.

Task II: Now the students knew that translation was not allowed, so they did not ask any questions, limiting themselves to whispering with their partners, trying to solve the exercise.

This time, the key words were totally different, since the content was related to animal descriptions. During the performance of the exercise, they were really involved, but at the end of the class, they became very talkative and the researcher stopped and talked with them in a very severe tone. She advised them that the principal of the school would be called if they insisted in maintaining the indiscipline and turbulent atmosphere. In spite of that, they were very successful in this task.

Unit II - Deducing

Pre-Task: The students were calmer in this class, whether because of their interest in the chart on the board and in the class itself, or because if their fear of being chastised again. The content now was about a crime and they had to discover who the murderer was. During the explanation, which was given in English, the silence was mortal. Finally a girl said that she could not understand what the researcher was saying or doing. In fact, they were all insecure because the researcher went through the whole big chart in English. In spite of the English language used being simple and presented very slowly, this procedure astounded them in such a way that they did not understand even the meaning of cognate words such as "university" and "restaurant". The researcher had to go through the whole chart three times after making clear the meaning of "alibi". After the third time, she decided to talk in Portuguese in order to ask them why they were so astounded. They complained that they could not understand what was happening. This reaction was not surprising, since their regular teacher does not speak in English during the class and always translates every word, even cognates. Another important point is that they had never done an exercise like that, which demanded much cognitive effort to perform. So, the researcher took each particular word asking, "what is this in Portuguese?"

and they were able to answer the teacher's questions. Then, they asked questions about their doubts and found it very easy to understand the meaning of words and the chart itself. As a consequence, they discovered the murderer very quickly.

Task I: In this class, students became quite involved in trying to discover the murderer. The task was similar to the Pre- Task. As they knew that translation was not allowed, they whispered all the time with their partner to solve the problem, using the Pre-Task without asking for the researcher's help. They appeared to enjoy doing this kind of exercise and asked for more similar exercises.

Task II: This task was a puzzle where they had to find the most appropriate present for each of the six friends mentioned. During their performance, the students did not show any interest in trying to solve the problem. Pairs spent time talking about things which were not related to the exercise content. Besides that, most of them did not concentrate on the exercise, giving the impression that they were doing a boring activity. At the end, their facial expressions seemed to declare that they had filled in the exercise blanks only to be polite, or just to avoid disappointing the researcher. In spite of the apparent similarity between Task II and the two previous tasks, the students' grades in Task II were the worst of the whole experiment; just one pair of them got the final result correct.

Unit III - Defining

Pre-Task: For this task the students became less talkative and more interested in the explanation. This time, participation was total and the negotiation of meaning was successful. The topic, involving parts of the body and some diseases related to them had been taught by the science teacher before, since the researcher had asked him to do so in advance. To illustrate this activity, a big drawing of the human body was hung on the wall and the students

went through the whole drawing without any difficulty. Unknown words were written on the blackboard and they found the exercise very easy.

Task I: In this activity, where parts of the body were involved, the background knowledge of the subject helped them to do the exercise and the students got a very high grade. According to their reactions, they appreciated doing this exercise. Success was certain, since they followed attentively while the researcher pointed out, each part of the body on the drawing hung on the wall, and wrote the meanings on their sheets.

Task II: This was the most successful exercise of the whole experiment. All the pairs got the maximum grade, which resulted in the highest average among the tasks. Again, the background knowledge of the world influenced the final result since the content of the exercise was a description of famous people who appear on the television screen every day, playing football, performing , making programs, acting in films, etc. They were motivated and quite exeted in trying to match the columns. They really loved performing this task and , at the end, they suggested a topic involving football and sports in general.

Unit IV - Reordering

Pre-task: This exercise involved the steps of making an omelet. The students became interested and excited at seeing the ingredients on the table and the researcher making an omelet. This class was a success. They laughed and joked, but in a more constructive way. This time they were very interested in learning/discovering the meaning of the words and in paying attention to what the researcher was going to do. They participated in all steps of the class, helping first to remember, in Portuguese, the ingredients and the steps for making an omelet, and then, following carefully each action performed by the researcher. From their expressions, they did not seem to believe that those eggs were going to be broken. The time spent for the explanation was shorter than in the first unit, although there were many materials

on the table and several different actions for students to perform. The interest and participation of the students made the difference; the exercise was done in very few minutes.

Task I: In spite of paying attention during the whole explanation, the students again appeared not to be interested in doing the exercise carefully. They received a spinach pie recipe and spent very few minutes doing the exercise. It was the shortest time spent among all exercise of the experiment.

Task II: Putting the story in order, perhaps because it brought a little bit of suspense, was found by the students to be a more interesting exercise than the previous one and, this time, they wanted to do it alone, without consulting their partners. The final grade was very good.

Task III: The students received a recipe again, but this recipe did not present any picture to give them clues. They complained that it was very difficult and did not show interest in putting it in order.

By the end of this unit, the students were accustomed to the method. Questions and doubts became less frequent and their attention increased, little by little. But the impression left by the students was that the whole experiment, so important to the researcher, was simply a break for them, as their daily routine, something "light" to relax in the classroom. In fact, they did not give the importence the researcher expected to those classes. They seemed to think that the researcher was someone who was able to bring some fun and help the time pass quickly. In the last class they expressed themselves saying "Que pena que já acabou, professora".

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The object of this chapter is to report and discuss the results of the study. First, the statistical data regarding the students' answers to the questionnaire, their results on the tasks themselves, and the time spent completing the task will be presented. Second, the interrelationship among these variables will be discussed, first task by task, and then regarding the experiment as a whole. Third, given the low correlation in the statistical analysis and the apparent incoherence among both the questions and task results, a subjective analysis is carried out of other factors which appeared to influence the results.

At this point, it is important to remind the readers that the results of the questionnaire were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing least difficulty and 5 the most difficulty. Tables 1 to 5 are organized as follows: The first column identifies the Tasks applied in this experiment. **Difficulty** is defined as the average general level of difficulty of the tasks as perceived by the students. **Familiarity** refers to the students' previous "real world" knowledge and familiarity with the topic of the task. **Vocabulary** refers to the degree to which the unknown words made the task difficulty, in the opinion of the students. The variable **Pre-Task** is defined as the level of importance given to the Pre-Tasks for carrying out Task I. The variable Portuguese portrays students' opinions about the difficulty of doing **the same exercises in Portuguese. Grade** refers to the average scores obtained by the students on Tasks I and II. Finally, **Time** refers to the average time, in minutes, students spent carrying out the task.

4.1. Task-by-task statistical analysis

Unit I: Identifying

Table 1: Mean scores for Difficulty, Familiarity, Vocabulary, Pre-Task, Portuguese, Grade and Time obtained in Tasks 1.1 and 1.2

TASK	DIFFICUL	FAMILI	VOCABUL	P-TASK	PORTUG	GRADE	TIME
1.1	2.76	2.96	2.23	3.23	2.53	7.69	4:10
1.2	2.66	3.08	2.50	2.41	1.29	8.75	2:29

Task I - Identifying people: According to the questionnaire results displayed in Table 1, the students on the average considered this task to be of medium level of difficulty (2.76). They found that the new vocabulary made it a little difficult (2.23) and, in the item related to the subject familiarity, the results (2.96) revealed that they did not have a lot of prior knowledge about the subject matter presented. The average task score (7.69) is not excellent, but if we consider that the average rating for the imagined difficulty of the task if it had been in Portuguese was 2.53, the task score was reasonably good. This was the highest rating for difficulty in Portuguese of all the tasks, demonstrating that the method itself was new to them and they still felt insecure. The Pre-Task done in the previous class was pointed out as an important support for the students (3.26), and the time spent on this exercise was 4.1, the longest time of the whole experiment, another indication of their lack of experience with the method. In the space reserved for comments about strategies, the main strategy mentioned was attention to the Pre-Task.

Analyzing the survey results in this task, some factors can be taken into consideration: 1) It was the first time they had done an entire exercise in the English language, without any translation. Thus, their evaluation of the difficult of vocabulary must be analyzed taking into account that their teacher always translated new words introduced. It is important to emphasize that the key words necessary to do the activity were illustrated and written on the board. Even so, they became confused with the unimportant words of the text. 2) It was also

the first time they answered a questionnaire. The contradictory points found during the analysis indicate that perhaps they did not know how to deal with a questionnaire.

Task II - Identifying animals: This activity was also considered by the students to be of medium level difficulty (2.66), slightly difficult than the first. The subject was rated as slightly less familiar, and the vocabulary was considered the second most difficult of all the tasks (2.50). The Pre-Task was considered less important for this task (2.41). Then, for Task I and the group, on the average, affirmed that if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt the lack of any information or skill necessary to complete it (1.29). But, in spite of these difficulties, the time spent in this activity was 2:29 minutes (two minutes and 29 seconds), the shortest time of the whole experiment. The strategies used by the students were: a) context and inference, b) cognate words and c) the last class (Pre-Task) explanation.

Unit II: Deducing

Table 2: Mean scores for Difficulty, Familiarity Vocabulary, Pre-Task, Portuguese, Grade and Time obtained in Tasks 2.1 and 2.2

TASK	DIFFICULT	FAMILY	VOCABUL	P-TASK	PORTUG	GRADE	TIME
2.1	2.80	3.53	2.03	3.00	1.23	8.84	3:60
2.2	3.10	3.81	2.59	2.85	1.18	2.34	4:00

Task I - Identifying the murderer: Again the students considered this exercise to be of medium level difficulty (2.80), but slightly more difficult than those of Unit 1. The fourth highest score on familiarity (3.53) was observed, which meant that the students were less familiar with the subject about the crime and the suspects of the murder. The degree of difficulty related to vocabulary was the third lowest rating of all tasks (2.03). The Pre-Task in this exercise was considered quite important (3.00) - the second highest rating of all tasks. Again, the students felt that if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt any lack of information or skill necessary to complete it (1.23).

In spite of the difficulties pointed out, their average grade was very high (8.84). This can perhaps be understood if the exercise itself is analyzed carefully. This activity involved a crime with some suspects. The atmosphere of suspense and the guessing game implied in this task maybe had developed their interest in trying to discover who committed the crime. So, they had enough motivation to get to the right answer. The time spent on this activity was 3.6 and, as the main strategies applied, they pointed out a) use of cognate words, b) consulting the Pre-task, and c) the use of known words.

Task II - Discovering preferences : This exercise was considered by the second most difficult among the tasks performed (3.10). The students judged the subject to be relatively familiar (3.81), and they considered the vocabulary to be the most difficult of all tasks (2.59). In spite of the lack of familiarity, the students, in general agreed that, if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt the lack of any information or skill necessary to complete it (1.18), which is an apparent contradiction to the lack of familiarity expressed in the second question. Thus, as they rated this exercise as the second most difficult, and the vocabulary as the most difficult, and the subject the third least familiar, a low grade was expected. It was, indeed, the worst average grade of the whole experiment (2.34); only one pair got the final result correct, in spite of the apparent similarity between Task II and the previous two tasks.

The time spent on this task was 4.00 - the second longest time of the whole experiment. The Pre-Task importance was rated in 2.85 - the third highest rating in this study. Besides the Pre-Task, in the last item of the questionnaire designed to get information about the strategies the students employed to do each task, they affirmed that they used the known words as the main support to do this activity.

Unit III: Defining

Table 3: Mean scores for Difficulty, Familiarity, Vocabulary, Pre-Task, Portuguese, Grade and Time in Tasks 3.1 and 3.2

TASK	DIFFICUL	FAMILI	VOCABUL	P-TASK	PORTUG	GRADE	TIME
3.1	2.88	3.90	2.03	2.55	1.29	8.00	4:00
3.2	2.78	3.00	2.32	2.35	1.35	10.00	3:70

Task - Defining diseases : Similarly to the previous exercise, the students considered this task to be the third most difficult (2.88), and to be the second least familiar subject presented (3.90). As for the unknown words, they said were not rated as being very difficult (2.03). They also affirmed that if they had not come to the last class and done the Pre-Task, they would have managed the exercise, but not all of it (2.55). The survey showed that, in general, students thought that if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt the lack of any information or skill necessary to do the exercise (1.29). This time the students got a very high grade (8.0). The average time spent on this task was 3.7 - the fourth longest the whole experiment. The main strategies pointed out were: a) use of previous knowledge, b) consulting the Pre-Task, c) use of cognates and d) new words learned during the Pre-Task.

Task II : The students got the maximum grade in this task. Everybody completed the exercise with correct answers. The final average was 10.00, but in spite of that, they did not consider it an easy exercise. As had happened before, they considered this activity to be of medium level difficulty (2.78), with a more or less familiar subject (3.00). As for the unknown words, they were rated as the third most difficult (2.32). Again, they pointed out the words and the information they did not know as their greatest difficulties. It is interesting to observe that even though they completed the exercise successfully, there was a tendency to mark always the same answers (alternatives) when doing the questionnaire.

Unit IV: Ordering

TABLE 4: Mean scores for Difficulty, Familiarity, Vocabulary, Pre-Task, Portuguese, Grade and Time in Tasks 4.1,4.2 and 4.3

TASK	DIFFICUL	FAMILI	VOCABUL	P-TASK	PORTUG	GRADE	TIME
4.1	2.32	4.03	1.92	2.03	1.17	4.60	2:60
4.2	2.07	2.80	1.69	1.57	1.34	8.50	3:50
4.3	3.14	3.11	2.29	2.44	1.22	4.40	3:10

Task I - Ordering a recipe : In spite of having enjoyed the explanation about how to organize a recipe step by step and having found the Pre-Task very easy and interesting, the average grade on this exercise was very low (4.6). They also did not spend much time doing the activity; the average time spent in this exercise was the lowest of the whole experiment (2.6). Besides that, they did not consider the exercise difficult (2.32) - second lowest difficult rating - and found it a totally unfamiliar subject (4.03) - the least familiar among all the tasks done. In their opinion, the unknown words did not make the exercise difficult (1.92). Besides that, they thought that even if they had not come to the last class and done the Pre-Task, they would have managed to complete the exercise (2.03). In addition they considered that even if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt the lack of any information or skill necessary to complete it. It was the lowest rating of the whole experiment related to the difficulty with the same activity in their mother language. In other words, this means that it was the English language which made the exercise difficult.

Again, their answers on the questionnaire did not match the final result of their exercise - they did not consider it difficult, but the average grade was low. In order to complete the exercise, they pointed out in the questionnaire that they used their background knowledge and the illustrations as the main strategies.

Task II - Ordering a story: For the third time the students got higher grades in the second task of the unit (8.50). It contradicts the idea that those tasks which are not related to the Pre-

Task tend to be more difficult. In this specific case, they had to organize a story in a logical order. In contrast to the experience with the recipe, the students spent more time trying to organize the story (3.5), and the result was much better (8.50) than that of Task I. The story also carried a bit of suspense and, as seen in Task II of Unit II, it had elements to attract their attention in a special way. They considered it the easiest exercise (2.07), but with the least familiar subject (2.80). As for the unknown words, the group thought that they did not make the exercise difficult (1.69) - the lowest rating among the nine tasks performed. The students did not consider the Pre-Task important for success in this task, obtaining the lowest rating (1.57). The students on the average (1.34) also agreed that if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt the lack of any information or skill to complete it. The time spent on this activity was 3:5 - just above mean of 3:43 - and, again, they used the illustrations as their main strategy.

Task III - Ordering a recipe (with no illustrations): This last exercise of the whole experiment obtained as bad results as expected. It was predictable that the lack of drawings to illustrate this recipe could bring difficulties at the time of ordering it. Therefore, it was considered by the students to be the most difficult exercise (3.14). At this point, it is important to observe that every word of the recipe was known, the instructions were given in Portuguese as in the recipes worked before, all the information given was presented in the previous recipes of the unit, but even so, the students found the exercise difficult and, in the questionnaire, they complained about the unknown words. The students rated (2.44), slightly lower than mean (2.50), that if they had come to the last class and done the Pre-Task, they would have managed to complete the exercise, but with difficulty: However they thought (1.22) that if the exercise were in Portuguese, they would not have felt the lack of any information or skill necessary to complete it; It was the third lowest rating indicating that their difficulties were related to the linguistic field.

Here, in this specific exercise, the reasons for the low grade can be understood if we look carefully at the exercise and consider that it does not present any illustrations and that it does not have the same framework as the recipes given before. Added to that, as seen before, the students did not show interest in tasks involving cooking. Strong support for this argument comes from their questionnaire answers. Almost the whole group confirmed that they did not try any strategy to complete this exercise. In spite of presenting a known vocabulary and a known subject, the students got a low grade, in contrast to Task II of Unit IV, where the majority of the vocabulary was totally unknown. A preliminary conclusion, in this case, is: It does not matter if the words are known - what is important is if the exercise is really interesting.

To sum up, taking into account the mean scores presented in Table I, six among the nine tasks obtained a final grade above the mean score, suggesting that only three tasks were specially difficult for the students and responsible for the fairly low mean. In a general sense, the students considered that: a) the tasks were all of medium level difficulty, b) the topics were, in most cases, reasonably familiar, c) their difficulties were not related only to the vocabulary, which was not rated as being very difficult, d) lack of previous knowledge (familiarity) was rated as being more serious than lack of vocabulary; and e) Pre-tasks were helpful, being a tool to facilitate tasks I.

4.2. Correlation among variables

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was applied to investigate the nature and strength of functional relationships among the variables in **Table VI,** and to see whether or not it was possible to answer the original research questions, which generated this experiment. The question of whether there is a systematic relationship among the degree of general difficulty (DIFFIC), the degree of familiarity (FAMIL), vocabulary difficulty (VOCAB), Pre-

Task importance (PRE-TASK), the level of difficulty if the exercise were in Portuguese (PORTUGU), average (GRADE) and time spent in carrying out exercises will be analyzed in this section.

Table V: General mean scores for Difficulty, Familiarity, Vocabulary, Pre-Tasks, Portuguese, Grade and Time obtained in all tasks

TASK	DIFFICUL	FAMILI	VOCABUL	P-TASK	PORTUG	GRADE	TIME
1.1	2.76	2.96	2.23	3.23	2.53	7.69	4:10
1.2	2.66	3.08	2.50	2.41	1.29	8.75	2:29
2.1	2.80	3.53	2.03	3.00	1.23	8.84	3:60
2.2	3.10	3.81	2.59	2.85	1.18	2.34	4:00
3.1	2.88	3.90	2.03	2.55	1.29	8.00	4:00
3.2	2.78	3.00	2.32	2.35	1.35	10.00	3:70
4.1	2.32	4.03	1.92	2.03	1.17	4.60	2:60
4.2	2.07	2.80	1.69	1.57	1.34	8.50	3:50
4.3	3.14	3.11	2.29	2.44	1.22	4.40	3:10
MEAN	2.72	3.36	2.18	2.50	1.40	6.50	3:43

Table VI: Correlations coefficients among Difficulty, Familiarity, Vocabulary, Pre-Task, Portuguese, Grade and Time

	DIFFIC	FAMIL	VOCAB	PRE-TASK	PORTUG	GRADE	TIME
DIFFIC	1.000	0.190	**0.736	*0.697	-0.009	-0.348	0.329
FAMIL		1.000	-0.009	0.141	-0.419	-0.511	0.014
VOCAB			1.000	0.531	0.036	-0.290	-0.017
PRE-TASK				1.000	0.506	0.081	0.470
PORTUG					1.000	0.222	0.408
GRADE						1.000	0.034
TIME							1.000

*Significant at the level of 0.05
**Significant at the level of 0.01

The results of this correlational study revealed a significant relationship only between Difficulty and Vocabulary (0.736) and between Difficulty and Pre-Task (0.697); thus the correlation of these two pairs of variables will be emphasized. The most obvious implications of these two correlations are (1) that the unknown words were felt by students to be the biggest cause of difficulty of the tasks, and (2) that there is a strong relationship between

students' perception of difficulty and the importance they gave to the Pre-Task in helping them to complete Task I.

Indeed, it is interesting to point out the interrelationship of these three variables in this study since, in the students' perception, Difficulty is always associated with Vocabulary and Pre-Task. The questionnaire revealed that the students perceived the as vocabulary difficult, even when: a) they had sufficient context to infer meaning, b) the Pre-Task contained the main words to support comprehension, and c) they obtained the maximum grade (Task 3.2). This behavior was clearly observable throughout the whole experiment, when ever students had to interact with new words. They always showed a great lack of confidence, not only when the situation seemed difficult (they had to deduce meaning, make inferences, read unfamiliar lexical items and deal with the size and complexity of an utterance), but even under favorable conditions, when adequate context to suggest meaning was provided.

In such circumstances, it is perfectly understandable that they should give so much importance to the use of the Pre-Task to help them do the exercise and to diminish their level of stress and anxiety. The Pre-tasks in this study served as an encouraging helpful tool in performing Tasks I and thus, it makes sense to speculate that the more difficult the vocabulary, the more important the Pre-Task became. In fact, the correlation coefficient for these two variables was the third highest of the experiment (0.531) and very close to significance at the level of 0.05.

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that the students obtained high grades in Tasks 1.2, 3.2, and 4.2 (Tasks II), which were totally different from Tasks I, presenting a new topic and consequently an unknown vocabulary, and an increase in text length and complexity. This leads us to the conclusion that vocabulary was not the only the "vital organ" of this study. It is possible that the participants' lack of success in some exercises can be attributed to far more

complex factors than vocabulary itself and that knowing the words may not be the answer to successful completion of the task.

The only variable that correlated close to significance with **Grade** was **Familiarity** (-0.511), the fourth highest coefficient in the experiment. This correlation is negative because the rating scale was from 1(very familiar) to 5 (totally unfamiliar), so the most familiar task topics, which scored *lower* ratings, obtained *higher* grades. Thus, while this coefficient did not quite reach significance, and the correlation coefficient does not permit us to draw conclusions about cause and effect, it does appear that the tasks whose topics were perceived by the students to be familiar were generally more successfully completed.

Student's perceptions about other aspects of the tasks, however, were not shown by the correlation coefficients to be good indicators of their success on the tasks. Overall task **Difficulty,** difficulty related to **Vocabulary**, importance of the **Pre-Task**, and difficulty if the task had been in **Portuguese** all obtained correlation coefficients with **Grade** of less than 0.35. The highest of these coefficients - that of **Difficulty** with **Grade** - was in the opposite direction of expectations. The rating scale was such that the lower numbers indicated greater perceived difficulty, meaning that lower difficulty ratings were expected to be associated with lower grades and higher difficulty ratings with higher grades. In other words, if students' perception of difficulty were accurate, the correlation coefficient should be a positive number, rather than the -0.346 obtained. The conclusion here is that students' perception of difficulty was not accurate and that, with the possible exception of familiarity, their perception of other aspects of the task was not related in any way to their successful completion of the tasks.

The coefficients of Difficulty with the other three variables - Familiarity, Portuguese, and Time - were also quite low - 0.190, -0.009, and 0.329 respectively. This means that the students found the tasks difficult independent of being familiar with the topic or not,

independent of whether they thought the task would be difficult in Portuguese or not, and independent of how long they took to finish the task.

With respect to the relationship between Familiarity and Vocabulary (-0.009), Familiarity and "Pre-Task Importance" (0.141), Familiarity and "If the tasks were in Portuguese" (-0.419) and Familiarity and Time (0.014), the results show no significant main effect for these factors. In other words, it can be said that: a) in spite of being, in most cases, familiar with the topic presented, the students still found difficulties related to vocabulary, b) Pre-Task was helpful and used even when the students were familiar with the topic, c) Familiarity did not make students feel the task would be easy in Portuguese, and d) Familiarity did not diminish the time spent on tasks.

In comparisons of Vocabulary and "If the exercises were in Portuguese" (0.036), and Vocabulary with Time (-0.017), low correlation coefficients were also found. This simply tell us that there was no correlation between how difficult students perceived vocabulary to be and how difficult the exercises would be in Portuguese and no relation between perceived vocabulary difficulty and time spent on task.

Regarding the Time spent and the Grade obtained (0.034),the result revealed that the time on tasks was not related to the final grade either. This indicates that the time might be affected by difficulty and/or students' interest and motivation. In other words, it could be that: a) sometimes, when the task was difficult, they took a long time because they were trying hard to carry tasks out, and b) sometimes, when the task was difficult, they lost their motivation and turned it in as quickly as possible, just to get it over with.

The insignificant correlation obtained between Pre-Task and Time (0.470) indicates that the time spent on task was not dependent on the importance given to the Pre-task. The only coefficient involving Pre-task importance (besides difficulty) which was close to significance was with the variable 'If the exercises were in (0.506). If this correlation were just a bit higher,

we could say that the Pre-task was important where students attributed difficulty to the English language.

Finally, the low correlation obtained between "If the exercises were in Portuguese" and Time (0.408) indicates that the time spent on tasks was not related to whether difficulties were language difficulties of not.

Summarizing, the only significant correlations found were between Difficulty and Vocabulary (0.736) and between Difficulty and Pre-Task (0.697). Besides that, three other correlations were considered to be close to significance: Vocabulary and Pre-task (0.531), Pre-task and Portuguese (0.506), and Familiarity and Grade (-0511). Thus, an important issue arose from this correlational analysis: Why were the majority of correlations so low and why did were only two reach statistical significance? This pivotal question leads to three more questions: 1) Were participants able to evaluate Difficulty, Familiarity, Vocabulary, Pre-Task importance and perceive whether their difficulties were due to the English language or to the task itself? 2) Did task grades give an accurate account of difficulty? and 3) Did the tasks simply take longer because of the quantity of work involved rather than difficulty?

It is important to point out the probable reasons why there were no significant correlations with grades and, at the same time, try to answer the questions under consideration. Thus, some considerations can be drawn: a) regarding the fact that it was the first time that this group of students dealt with a questionnaire like that, the contradictory answers found in the questionnaire and the failure to reach significant correlations, indicate that the students were not able to evaluate the difficulty of the tasks regarding the factors included in the questionnaire; b) it is very difficult to assure that a 1-10 score on one task corresponds to a 1-10 score on another, and c) it is also very difficult to know for sure if the time spent on tasks is due to the amount of work or difficulty involved. Besides that, it has to be taken into account that: a) the students had never dealt with a similar kind of questionnaire and, for this

reason, some answers were not coherent with the task grades and were sometimes contradictory; and b) in many situations the students were not inclined to answer the questionnaire and thus, it did not reflect their real beliefs and feelings, producing less effective results.

Following this train of thought, the results of this experiment seemed to be affected by the problems of validity. The greatest problem is centered on the questionnaire treatment given by the participants, students who had never dealt with a similar evaluation system before. Maybe that is the reason for the instability and incoherence of answers and results, which frequently did not truly match and really reduced the power of this experiment.

4.3 First evaluation of the research questions

The aim of this section has been to direct attention to the three research questions which generated this study: 1) What is the order of difficulty of these mental operations - **Identifying, Deducing, Defining, and Ordering** - in the context of the foreign language teaching?; 2) Is it possible to evaluate the degree of cognitive effort required to complete the task independent of foreign language proficiency?; 3) What do learners do when working through a task? All these questions will be reviewed and evaluated in an attempt to make a contribution to our understanding of tasks and task teaching and learning.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to establish, through this study, the order of difficulty of the mental operations. Indeed it is necessary to point out that the tasks were expected to gradually increase in difficulty from Task 1.1 to 4.3 because of the mental operations involved. However, Table I shows that the grades did not confirm that expectation, as exemplified by the low average grade on Task 2.2 (2.34) and the high grade on Task 3.2 (10,00). One of the reason for the unexpected results is the overlapping nature of the operations. Although each task was designed with one mental operation in mind, it became clear during analysis of the

results that there is not just one specific mental operation acting at the time of performing a task. Rather, what really occurs is that several different mental operations are activated at the same time. To illustrate this, in the case of Task 2.1, which was designed to involve the operations Deducing and Identifying, the participants were required to: a) read the text, b) understand the text and its context - Predicting and Reflecting, c) take in specific pieces of information in a number of thinking process - Selecting Hypothesis and Verifying, d) consider suspect by suspect - Analyzing, e) relate suspects' alibi - Relating, and finally f) write the murderer's name on their task sheets.

As we can see, taking into account: a) the number of different questions asked by each subject, and b) the number of confirmation checks made by each participant in trying to find who committed the crime (see section 3.3), it is evident that this task involved and demanded a greater number of cognitive operations from the students, as well as deep level of comprehension; more than just Deciding and Identifying - the mental operations designed for this tasks.

To conclude, if some language professionals were of the opinion that difficulty can be predicted and tasks can be sequenced in a progression from easier to more difficult items, based on mental operations, this experiment has not been able to empirically verify such hierarchies of difficulty. What we can deduce through the results is that teachers should work with a more balanced view of sequencing tasks, where the question should shift more to whether or not there is an adequate functional sequence, taking into account the factors which can affect a task's complexity, discussed in chapter two (section 2.3).

In regard to the second research question, it became obvious through the analysis that it is difficult to measure, in a precise way, the cognitive load imposed by the tasks in this study, especially because different types of tasks were carried out. Again the main reason for this is the different elements that contributed to task difficulty, many of them overlapping and

influencing each other. To illustrate that, Task 2.2 (average grade 2.34) probably demanded a high cognitive load from the students, who were involved in processing language while: a) forming hypotheses related to persons and gifts, b) trying out these hypotheses to see if they worked, c) testing themselves to see if they remembered words, d) guessing/inferring the meaning of unknown words, e) relating this task to previous works and f) making sense of the task/problem which they were faced with.

Added to that, the evaluation of degree of cognitive effort cannot be based solely on average grades or average perceived difficulty, because of the other factors which influence success such as feelings and social and communicative skills. In the case of Task 2.2, if it were in Portuguese it should be less demanding; even so students would need to have previous experience and knowledge about choosing and buying presents to help them to complete it successfully.

In these circumstances, the issue of what is easier or more difficult remains problematic since complexity, in a general sense, varies from person to person and from one situation to another. As mentioned in chapter two, task difficulty can be affected and determined by a series of factors, and the more salient contributing factors in these study appeared to be: a) task relevance, b) complexity in terms of numbers of steps involved, quantity of information and cognitive demands, c) amount of text provided and text length, d) background knowledge and familiarity with the purpose and constraints of the task and familiarity with the topic, e) linguistic complexity, and f) assistance given (Pre-Task).

Added to that, when learners carried out these tasks, they a) employed a range of cognitive and social processes to make sense of them and attempt to complete them, b) were involved by tasks which arouse a range of feelings and emotions which possibly affected the ways in which they made sense of and carried out the activities, c) were directly affected by the nature of the context, the modality in which tasks were presented and by the different kinds cognitive

operations required to perform those tasks. However, it is so difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate tasks in isolation from other important and uncontrolled variables within the teaching-learning process, and the only way to evaluate cognitive load imposed by tasks is in a limited and speculative subjective manner, as was done in this study.

On the other hand, if it is difficult to evaluate the number of cognitive operations required to carry out these tasks, it is evident that the greater the reasoning demands of tasks, the greater the cognitive load they impose on the learner.

The last research question under consideration has to do with what learners did when working through a task, in other words, what kind of strategies (macetes) they used to carry out the tasks. According to what they declared in their questionnaires, participants used various strategies, some of them observable and some not. The strategies mentioned were: 1) making hypotheses 2) using information from the context and from their background knowledge, 3) guessing meaning, 4) using Pre-Task sheets and 5) using the surrounding text where possible and the visual stimuli provided.

Besides that, a point worth emphasizing in this research is the link between the affective and the cognitive dimensions, since students' feelings were possibly affected their use of cognitive process. Thus, we come to the conclusion that the use of cognitive strategies can be affected by anxiety and that increased motivation and self-esteem can lead students to more effective use of appropriate strategies.

Another point that is worth emphasizing here is that the simpler tasks are, the more control students have over how they are solved; the more complex tasks are, the more they require learners to select several different strategies to achieve the goals. Thus, in a classroom context, teachers must be aware of and reflect on the processes used in carrying out a task, as well as on the feelings and emotions involved. Finally, teachers, by watching the various ways in which

learners process texts, can encourage the use of those strategies which are observed to be most effective.

Finally, because of the failure to find, in the analysis of the questionnaire results and of the students' performance on the tasks an explanation for the varying difficulty of the tasks, there is now room for suggesting a new research question: If it is not possible to evaluate the difficulty of foreign language tasks based on the mental operations for which they were designed, how can we evaluate this difficulty? The next three sections will be an attempt to answer this question by evaluating, in section 4.4, additional mental operations involved in each task; in section 4.5, inherent task factors of each task; and in section 4.5, affective factors involved in each task.

4.4. Task-by-task analysis according to Bloom's categories

The aim of this section is to evaluate task difficulty or, at least, to provide reasons to justify the failure to offer any criterion for grading and sequencing tasks according to the mental operations applied in this experiment. Thus, in an attempt to do that, all tasks will be analyzed and discussed in this section, according to the various mental operations involved in this study.

Taking into account that it was very difficult to give adequate answers to the research questions only through the statistical results, because of the lack of statistically significant correlations, a task-by-task analysis according to Bloom's categories was necessary to help make sense of the results presented. Taking also into account the overlapping nature of the mental operations, this analysis will attempt to show the difficulty of attributing only one mental operation to each task.

Thus, besides the mental operations proposed - Identifying (Set I), Deducing (Set II), Defining (Set III), and Reordering (Set IV), in all tasks students had to: a) read and decode the text, b)understand the text and its context, and c) activate previous knowledge about the

topic, d) take in specific pieces of information in a number of thinking process, at the same time they activate the mental operation asked in the instruction - the mental operations proposed by Bloom's taxonomy, and e) hold knew vocabulary in short-term memory. Added to that, a probable number of overlapping operations involved in this study will be focused, and tasks will be analyzed individually.

1) Set I - Identifying: The students, besides the mental operation planned, had to: a) compare pictures, b) match drawings and passages, c) make analysis and contrasts among the pictures presented and finally d) identify three different people among six (Task 1.1) and identify four animals among eight shown in the exercise (Task 1.2).

2) Set II - Deducing: In Task 2.1, besides deducing, the students had to identify a murderer among twelve suspects. Thus, they probably had to: a) consider, at the same time, places, names and alibis, b) go through the puzzle of considering suspect by suspect, c) check if each suspect's story was coherent, d) match the alibi given by each person with the alibis given by the others, e) deduce the most likely person involved in the murder, and f) write down the murderer's name on their sheets of paper. In Task 2.2, the participant had to choose the most appropriate present for each of six friends, based on their interests. Then, similarly to Task 2.1, the participant had to: consider the salesman's suggestions, b) consider the two alternatives given for each person (people's needs), c) match suggestions and needs, d) deduce the appropriate gifts for the two different persons and e) write down, on their sheets of paper, what gifts each person were supposed to earn.

3) Set III - Defining: the probable mental operations activated in this set were: a) comparing texts, and b) defining, by matching, parts of the body with their definitions (Task 3.1) and famous people with aspects of their lives (Task 3.2).

4) Set IV - Reordering: In Tasks 4.1 and 4.2, students had to: a) compare texts and pictures, b) match texts and pictures, c) consider the logical steps to determine the order of a

spinach pie recipe (Task 4.1) and to determine the order of a story in a logical sequence (Task 4.2), and c) put the recipe and the story in order. Task 4.3 involved the items C and D, since it was a cake recipe with no illustrations.

As we can see, taking into consideration the number of the probable mental operations involved in each task - Task 1.1 (9), Task 1.2 (9), Task 2.1 (11), Task 2.2 (10), Task 3.1 (7), Task 3.2 (7), Task 4.1 (9), Task 4.2 (9), Task 4.3 (7), it does make sense to say that the most difficult set should be Set II and the most difficult task should be Task 2.1, the second least difficult set and task, according to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives; the easier set and tasks should be Set III and Tasks 3.1, 3.2 and 4.3, the second most difficult in Bloom's hierarchy.

Summing up, as we have already seen in chapter two, Bloom's taxonomy in the cognitive domain can be used to determine which levels to aim at and, according to this hierarchical taxonomy, it is not possible to perform a high level task before being able to perform tasks at a lower level. Thus, taking into account that a considerable number of mental operations were activated at the same time of doing a task, and that most of them overlap and influence each other, that is, perhaps, the reason why the mental operations, which I had in mind when I designed the tasks for this experiment were not sufficient to evaluate task difficulty.

4.5. Inherent task factors affecting task difficulty

Up to this point, taking into consideration that the questionnaire was not effective in determining the relative difficulty of the nine tasks, mostly because the participants were not able to adequately evaluate the difficulty of the various aspects of the task, it was also necessary to analyze some factors, those mentioned in chapter two, which are considered to be inherent to the tasks themselves and affected task difficulty.

Size, Density and Format: The lowest average grade obtained in the whole experiment (2.32)was for Task 2.2, which did not present the same framework found in the Pre-Task and Task I of the same unit. Analyzing Task 2.2, it is easy to perceive the following aspects: a) for the first time in this experiment, participants faced a new task framework differing from the previous two, b) it involved more characters and consequently a larger number of choices than the previous tasks, c) the number of words in this task was larger than those presented in Task I. In spite of that, they spent considerable time (4:00 minutes) in trying to do the exercise, if the average time spent (3:04) is taken into account. These factors are likely to have been of greater importance in determining difficulty than the vocabulary, which, although the students rated it as the second most difficult appeared with Portuguese translations.

Therefore, at this point, it is relevant to analyze similarities and differences between Tasks I and II, in order to find some variables to justify this failure. The main common point was that they presented a simple story inside their context to contextualize the topic. Both activities involved names of people and a problem to be solved. Besides that, in terms of construction, Tasks I and II presented the content inside big squares (tables).

Related to the linguistic aspect, Task I has, as its main support, the Pre-Task, which illustrated the most difficult words. In Task II, all the new key words considered relevant to the students' comprehension were translated on the left hand side of each word.

On the other hand, if they are analyzed carefully, Task II is not as similar to Task I as it appears. Taking into consideration the distribution of the content on the sheets of paper, in Task I the table is divided into two columns with several boxes, separating people's names in the first column and what they were doing in the second column; each person and each action has their proper box. In Task II, instead of two columns, there are two big boxes without any division.

In the grammatical aspect, Task I uses the verb "To Be" in the past tense and the following verb in the present participle (past continuous). Yet, Task II presents in its first column just nouns, while the second box contains several different verbs in the present tense and also a verb in the past tense.

In cognitive terms, to do Task I and discover who committed the crime, the students had to read the exercise and match the "alibi" given by each person with the alibis given by the others. Task II, is more complicated: students had to match suggestions given by the salesman with the preferences of their friends. So, while in Task I they had to match similar items, in Task II they had to match quite different items. Furthermore, while task I is more objective, Task II, is much more subjective, since suggestions, in general, are subjective and people's satisfaction is very difficult to measure. Summing up, Task II analyzed under these aspects, demanded much more from the students in terms of cognitive processing.

To conclude, the lack of success on Task 2.2 could be due to the fact that the exercise did not present the same size, density and format as Task 2.1. Since it was different and longer, these characteristics could be of key importance; thus, the perceived differences between the two tasks may have generated feelings of avoidance, conveying a negative message about the students' ability. Perhaps those were reasons for finding the tasks boring and difficult and, as a consequence, they did not complete it. Their procedure undoubtedly led to a disappointing result.

Text Content and Contextual Clues: It is not new that reading is a process by which meanings are not simply extracted from the text, but mediated by the linguistic and schematic knowledge readers bring to it. Thus, the reading tasks in this experiment take advantage of these characteristics by presenting the following: 1) prereading activities (Pre-Tasks) which were designed to previously explore the topic language and actually involve all learners, giving

them exposure, stimulating interest in doing the task and, above all, anticipating language difficulties, 2) cognate words, which served as special clues to meaning, 3) background knowledge of the world (Task 3.2), which enabled participants to reach a satisfactory interpretation of the task, 4) specific background knowledge (content-teaching - Task 3.1), where participants had the opportunity to relate lexical items from the text to their science schematic framework, and 5) illustrations, which combined with the other four, helped them to predict the content and, with the help of some key words, to make sense of complex tasks such as 1.2 and 4.2.

At this point, it is needless to say that if participants take advantage of the clues offered by the content and the context, they will be less dependent on the words on the page and will thus be able to minimize the disadvantage of not having proficiency in the language. On the other hand, in spite of the clues mentioned above, the grades obtained in Tasks 2.2 (2,3), 4.1 (4,6) and 4.3 (4,4) clearly show that participants were not interested - principally in the case of Task 4.3, where two recipes were previously worked on - in moving from the known to the unknown and in using the hints offered by the content and the context to succeed in those tasks. In this sense, these results reveal that learners are more likely to read and re-read with care and reflection a text they judge as being interesting and relevant.

Added to that, two reading motives deserve to be mentioned here. People may read a text because they think it will interest them, or because they think it will be useful, i.e. it will tell them something they want or need to know. In this case, taking into account the content of Tasks 2.2 (choosing the most appropriate present), 4.1 (ordering a recipe - with illustration), and 4.3 (ordering a recipe - with no illustrations), and the students' reaction while performing them, participants left the impression that they read these texts without finding them interesting and/or without finding them useful.

Task Relevance: Relevance is another factor which seemed to affect task difficulty in this experiment. Tasks which involved: a) elements of surprise (Tasks 2.1 and 4.2), b) a story serving as a context (Tasks 1.2 and 2.1) and c) famous people (Task 3.2) were the most successful ones. The reasons why these kind of tasks engaged the students' interest and why the students obtained the highest grades on them, could be possibly attributed to task relevance. The evidence to support this conclusion is based on: 1) students' grades (Task 2.1- 8.84, Task 4.2 - 8.50, Task 1.2 - 8.75, Task 2.1 - 8.84 and Task 3.2 - 10.00), 2) students' reaction while performing these tasks - see section 3.3, and 4) their answers to the questionnaire - see also section 3.3.

Thus, it is quite likely that this factor had a powerful influence on students' attention, interest and involvement. In other words, the students' successful performance in these tasks indicates that task relevance is a kind of stimuli which is effective in gaining students' attention, interest and involvement. Taking into account that the learning experience should be permanently stimulating and interesting, these tasks seem to have a good mixture - subject matter taught and relevance - involving, stimulating and attracting participants' attention, which, of course, was important for the students, since it seems to have helped them to cope with the difficult level of the tasks (not just of the language, but also the content).

Indeed, relevance seems to be the most prominent factor in this study. As we have already seen, no other factor had the same vital importance and power as relevance. The problem-solving activity presented in Task 2.2 and the visual stimuli presented in Task 4.1 were not sufficient by themselves to involve students and lead to a final good result. Thus, it leads us to a the conclusion that Task Relevance, at least in this experiment, is the most important factor to success in reading and learning.

Help Available (Pre-Tasks): First of all, it is important to emphasize that pre-task activities, in a general sense, were always used to contextualize and explore the topic, to teach the

unknown vocabulary, building a bridge between what learners already knew and what they needed to know, and to familiarize students with the task framework to be used in each set of activities. Besides that, the Pre-Tasks aimed at actively involving all students, giving them relevant exposure and, above all, creating student interest in doing the following tasks of the set. In each set of activities, the Pre-Tasks were pointed out on the questionnaires as being students' 'helpers', tending to focus on preparing the readers for likely linguistic difficulties found in the texts. It is relevant to emphasize that the Pre-Tasks also played an important role as prereading activities, pre-teaching in advance the main words to be used in Tasks I. Since participants were at a low level of proficiency with limited vocabularies in the second language, the Pre-Tasks were of particular relevance for participants, for whom meaning tended to break down at the word level.

At this point, it is interesting to point out that the Pre-Tasks really fulfilled the purposes they were addressed to. However, an interesting and surprising exception deserves to be mentioned here. As said before, in Tasks 4.1 and 4.3 (recipes), the students did not sustain the same motivation shown in the Pre-task, where an omelet recipe was prepared, step by step, in the school kitchen, which at that special moment was transformed into a classroom.

Here some variables have to be taken into consideration. First there is a significant difference between Pre- Task and Task I related to the number of verbs, nouns and adjectives involved in each step. In Task I the recipe presented an average of 3,8 words per step, in contrast to 2,5 in the Pre-Task. Could the new words presented in each step, in spite of being secondary words to support the main ones, have confused them and contributed to their failure? Second, the questionnaire did not check whether they liked to cook or if they were familiar with cooking; if these conjectures were true, they would be not interested in spending much time trying to complete the exercise correctly. However: if their lack of background

knowledge in cooking caused their lack of interest in trying to organize the recipe, why did their lack of interest not cause problems with the Pre-Task?

In trying to understand the students' lack of interest in performing these activities, it is important to bear in mind that the researcher, during the pre-task explanation, tried to re-create a natural learning condition and, of course, the students found motivating and interesting the way of introducing vocabulary, bringing all the ingredients and objects to class (a similar situation occurred in the first Pre-Task -set I- when the researcher brought a suitcase full of clothes to equip them with words related to description). Thus, taking this into consideration, the following conjectures can be made: 1) one reason for their failure in these tasks may be the fact that a highly motivating Pre-Task involving realia was followed by tasks where they had to use just pens and sheets of paper, which they must have found boring in comparison, thus becoming de-motivated and frustrated, 2) students at this level and age perhaps enjoy making things such as preparing recipes and doing simple science experiments, for example; 3) for learners who are studying English in a non-English speaking setting, it is very important to experience real situations in which they feel they are taken seriously as people; thus, the students may have found the exercise interesting, but the subject (recipes and cooking) useless; 5) in the specific case of Task 4.1, maybe the recipes and the pictures did not correspond to their reality and, as a result, they did not react in spontaneous, creative ways to do the task put before them, with an understanding of the message presented by the words and pictures that were offered.

Vocabulary: A characteristic of the tasks in this study was that very often some of the words were easy for the participants to guess because of being "cognate words", which facilitated text comprehension. On the other hand, questionnaire answers indicated that the students often found vocabulary the most difficult part of text comprehension. Indeed, it was really difficult to convince the participants that those texts in English could be understood even though they

included vocabulary items and structures they had never seen before. During the experiment students did not have to understand all the words, but only the information which enabled them to complete the task successfully. Thus, their reaction may be due to the fact that their regular teacher always translated all new vocabulary including cognates and unimportant words.

The new vocabulary was introduced in the context of reading texts and each set of tasks had a vocabulary focus related to the theme of the set, except Tasks II, which had a different theme and, as a consequence, new vocabulary. The students were given the opportunity to work with the new items in order to gain an understanding of their meaning and use. In this process of learning, the meaning of words could be deduced in a variety of ways: a) by understanding meaning from context, b) by relating to prior knowledge to predict meaning , c) by reordering in a logical organization, d) by relating texts to pictures, e) by deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues, and f) by understanding relations between parts of a text and so forth.

Surprisingly, three of the best grades were obtained in those tasks which had a totally different topic from the Pre-Task and Task I. The reasons for this may be related to the following factors: a) background knowledge, b) cognate words, c) the illustrations provided, and d) text relevance. The high grade obtained in Task 3.2 (100) was undoubtedly due to their knowledge of the world and about famous people and text relevance; Task 1.2 (8,7) presented illustrations and cognate words; Task 4.2 (8,5), besides presenting illustrations, also presented a story running side by side with the linguistic content. Thus, based on these results, some aspects of language teaching can be pointed out here: 1) since it is assumed that the students have a Latin-based mother tongue, the issue of cognates can be a great advantage in this area, if properly exploited; 2) the content of stories is amusing and relevant to students interests involving them emotionally and supplying linguistic needs; 3) since human beings learn by using all their senses, pictures serve to focus the students' attention on something besides

themselves and the difficulties of English - actually, it can be said that pictures are really worth a thousand words.

To sum up, these results have shown that it is important, but not essential, that the students be familiar with the main vocabulary before doing the activity. In the case of Tasks II, the main vocabulary was not pre-taught in advance to prepare them for the activity they were about to do. Even though, for the reasons mentioned above, they could overcome difficulties and reach good grades.

To conclude, as seen in this final analysis, there is a considerable evidence suggesting that when students mobilize their views of the world, their personal values and their experience, these factors play a crucial role in their achievements; the state of being motivated and energized for action, their previous learning experiences, their views on learning and personal values were important in determining the final learning result. Students learn best when they are motivated: a) by being interested in the activity, b) by seeing an end result which gives them a feeling of achievement and c) by being involved in activities which are relevant to them. Students really experience the language when they find it motivating, relevant and useful for dealing with their experiences. Besides that, students learn a language better if their experiences using it are as full of meaning and rich in images as possible. Thus, as a consequence, the greater the connection, the better the learning. In other words, meaning and mental images come up when connections are made with learners' world experience.

Visual Stimuli: Task 1.2 presented a situation where there was a strong possibility of failure, if the following factors are taken into consideration: a) it presented a new topic, b) there were a great number of unknown words, and c) the Pre-Task was not designed to equip participants to carry out Tasks II. On the other hand, this task presented pictures which had to be related to the text. Thus, the visual stimuli could be a strong reason to provide the motivated atmosphere

for success and to justify their grades in this task. It is the first case in this study that Task II was more successful than Task I.

Following this train of thought, Set IV included an extra activity - Task 4.3. First, the students worked on recipes with visual stimuli (Pre-Task and Task I); second, they worked on a story (Task II), and finally, another recipe (Task 4.3) was designed for the purpose of checking students' reaction while dealing with a recipe, but this time with no visual stimuli. The lack of illustration in this final task was expected to lead to a worse result, and it really did (4,4). But the reasons for participants' failure, were not limited to the absence of illustrations, if we take into account their bad performance in Task 4.1, which: a) was pre-taught in advance and, as a consequence, they had the Pre-task to consult, and b) presented illustrations and hints to facilitate comprehension.

Thus, comparing the grade averages obtained in Tasks 4.1 (4,6) and 4.3 (4,4), it is not a surprise that students only got 4,4 in the final activity. If they did not enjoy recipes, a recipe with no visual clues would not be attractive and definitely would not contribute towards the maintenance of motivation to do the activity. So, given how well subjects performed on Task 4.2 (8,5), it is tempting to conclude that visual aids are really of vital importance for focusing the students' attention, conveying the meaning and providing clues for guessing meaning and content. Indeed, visual stimuli are important for both motivation and as an aid to cognitive processing. On the other hand, as the results have shown, the visual stimuli are not, by themselves, the unique requirement to classify an interesting and involving task; it has also to be tied to the relevance of the text. In other words, the results demonstrated that students lost their interest in illustrations when they judged the text to be irrelevant. This was the third time in this experiment, that a better result was obtained with Task II.

Time Spent: As mentioned in chapter three, the researcher did not give a time limit for the activities in this study. Since some activities were shorter and others longer, participants were

allowed to continue until they had finished. Thus, taking into account that, in a general sense, students who are rushed along too fast can have a range of negative responses becoming distressed, angry or depressed, the low grades obtained in this experiment can not be attributed to the time spent on the tasks, since the students did not do the activities under time pressure. In other words, if they became bored, lost motivation and tuned out of tasks, it was not due to a rigid time limit imposed on students.

Regarding the time spent and the average got, we can see that the participants spent more time on those exercises where they had more difficulties (Task 2.2 - grade: 2,3; time: 4) and with those where they were more involved (Task 3.1 - grade: 8,0; time: 4.0) and (Task 3.2 - grade: 100; time: 3.7). All these tasks are above the average time (3.43), which means that, individually speaking, the more difficult and/or more interesting a task was, more time participants spent in trying to carry it out. However, the time spent did not appear to affect the grade obtained on each task.

4.6. Affective Factors

Taking as the point of departure the tasks in which the students achieved the best grades - Task 3.2 (100), Task 2.1 (8,84), Task 1.2 (8,75), Task 4.2 (8,50) Task 3.1 (8,0), it will be argued in this sub-section that motivation for performing these particular tasks was of key importance, making the difference between success and failure. In other words, it can be said that the greater the value they attached to the accomplishment of or involvement in these activities, the more highly motivated they were, since from the moment they engaged in them initially, more effort was put into succeeding in these tasks.

Thus, taking into consideration that their performance in these particular learning tasks appeared to be influenced by their interest and that their success was due to the high level of motivation, some factors affecting motivation deserve to be considered. Compared with the

other tasks carried out in this experiment, these five tasks appeared to be motivated by the following factors: 1) background knowledge, 2) curiosity and mystery/excitement, 3) stories and 4) content-teaching, which raised and sustained learners' interest. Besides that, the students invested time and energy in putting in the necessary effort to achieve the final task goals.

Background Knowledge: As we have already seen in chapter two (section 2.3.1.1.), the comprehended meaning of a message is fundamentally dependent upon a reader's background knowledge of the world, in addition to his/her use of local linguistic characteristics of the message.

In this experiment, the importance of background knowledge is illustrated by the fact that the highest grade average (100) was obtained in Task 3.2 - Task II of Unit 3 - which required background knowledge about famous people. The high grade average and the positive reactions of the students to this activity leads us to the conclusion that their interest and background knowledge enabled them to comprehend the text at a reasonable rate, keeping them involved in the material in spite of its linguistic and syntactic difficulties. This result simply shows that the background knowledge the students brought to the text was far more important than its structures.

Thus, pre-existing knowledge provided students with information that was implicit in the text. What they really had to do was to apply their previous knowledge and draw inferences based on previous experience with star magazines and TV programs, in order to complete the exercise. In other words, they used the appropriate schemata to process their reading and perform the task - background knowledge, in this case, it was important not only for motivation, but also for cognitive processing.

Content-teaching: Still under the rubric of background knowledge, motivation by content-teaching also deserves to be mentioned and discussed, since the fifth highest grade (8.0)

obtained in this experiment was related to a science topic, which had been previously taught by the students' science teacher. Thus, their familiarity with the school curriculum topic minimized possible comprehension problems related to the text. As being less proficient readers, this specific kind of background knowledge they possessed was particularly important, as shown by their grades.

Taking into account that students were perhaps not motivated to engage in some tasks because sometimes they lack involvement and familiarity with the topic, it could be said, as the results have shown, that topic familiarity affects comprehensibility; in other words, the more familiar the topic the easier its comprehension will be and the clearer the text will become, greatly facilitating the interpretation of the entire content. Besides that, a class focused on a science lesson could have motivated them because of their continuos work on the subject. Being related to background knowledge, content-teaching is as important to motivation as to cognitive processing.

Curiosity and Mystery/Excitement: Two strong factors to be observed and recognized in this research are the great importance of "Curiosity" and "Excitement". Dealing with the former factor, the first point to be made is that human beings are naturally curious and, as in life in general, curiosity and challenge seem to be highly pertinent to language teaching. In this particular experiment, these two factors are strongly attached to story context. In Task 2.1, which presented a problem to be solved, the students had to act as detectives, since the exercise involved a crime and, in trying to find the murderer, they were actively involved in predicting, guessing and reaching the solution to the problem. During this activity, the students used their awareness to analyze from the beginning to the end. In this case, students managed to solve the problem by breaking it down, gathering and assessing information, processing information and expressing the result in a logical way. With such absorbed and engaged learners, acting actively as problem-solvers emotionally, socially and cognitively, deciding that

a solution was possible, it was quite impossible to fail, in spite of their linguistic difficulties. It appears that their involvement in this activity had a positive effect on motivation, resulting in increased productivity and an average grade of 8.84.

On the other hand, the same did not apply to Task 2.2, which also involved problem-solving. In this exercise, where the students had to choose adequate gifts for six different people, they got the worst grades in the whole experiment. This task, in spite of being a problem-solving activity, evidently did not provide the same "ingredients" of curiosity, mystery and excitement as Task 2.1. This perhaps constituted a factor of de-motivation and provoked students' lack of interest; it was, perhaps the main reason why they did not make a big investment of effort to complete this activity. One probable explanation is that after doing an exciting exercise about a murder (Task 2.1), they considered the following one very dull and lost their interest in doing it. Besides that, the participants were not asked about: how often they buy presents for people, b) if they have money to buy presents, and c) if they find interesting/exciting to buy presents for people. Then, at any rate, it does make sense to say that, in most circumstances, it is more interesting and less expensive to watch a mystery film on television than to buy presents. Thus, given how the subjects performed on this set of tasks, it is tempting to conclude that tasks, besides being classified as problem-solving activities, need also to involve learners in an atmosphere of curiosity and excitement.

Finally, "motivation" is an important factor to be taken into account in analyzing this set of tasks. After all, a topic involving a crime attracts in a special way, those who enjoy adventure films or mystery books of the Agatha Christie style, while discovering preferences is not so exciting.

Stories: Stories in the native language are known to exert a powerful influence on children and young adolescents, and it is reasonable to expect the same effect in foreign language learning. In this particular experiment, there is also a reasonable indication that there has been a strong

involvement of the students in the tasks which had a story, which could stimulate a lot of speculation and prediction. The results also reveal an apparent link between motivation promoted by curiosity and the story encapsulated in these tasks, keeping up a high level of student involvement. Through these stories and their related activities, learners could develop their own ability to explore the text by hypothesizing, comparing, grouping and sequencing. Task 2.1 presented a crime story encapsulated in a murder mystery and Task 4.2 also presented a story where the students had to sequence the actions in a logical order. Those activities led them to feelings of success and confidence and, as a consequence, their enthusiasm was activated.

Comparing Tasks 4.1 and 4.2 (both with visual stimuli), two main consideration can be drawn, in order to point out the effect of the story in motivating students: a) they found the recipe to have a more familiar topic; nevertheless, they found this task and the vocabulary presented, in spite of being pre taught in the Pre-Task, more difficult and, as a consequence they had to consult the Pre-Task with more frequency, and b) in spite of being less familiar and because of that, being expected to increase in difficulty, the task final grade was 8.50, the fourth highest of the whole experiment. Thus it lead us to the conclusion that the story exerted a strong influence on Task 4.2 by: a) maintaining students involved during a longer time (3.5), b) giving the impression that the task and vocabulary were easier (2.07 - 1.66), and c) making students more confident - low manipulation of Pre- Task (1,18), the lowest mean score of the whole experiment.

Summing up, this section has suggested different factors that may affect the students' motivation. As seen, the affective factors play a vital part in the motivational drive of the students since learners need to be aroused and sustain their arousal.

4.7 Reevaluation of the research questions

As it was already mentioned in this study (chapter two), languages evokes associations with various emotions and these feelings, which are manifested in the student behavior, are parallel to the cognitive effort expended. Thus, since Bloom's scheme was not found satisfactory to provide an ordered classification for tasks in this study, this section is addressed to reevaluate the issue of task complexity according to the results of this experiment, and the subjective analyses done, which brought the addition of some intervening variables considered important in influencing task difficulty.

Thus, although it is extremely difficult to offer standard criteria for assessing difficulty, taking into account the tasks and task factors dealt with in this study, some considerations can be drawn: 1) Since task relevance was found to be the most prominent factor in this study, the more relevant the task, the higher the grades will be - Tasks 3.2 (10.00), 2.1 (8.84), 1.2 (8.75), 4.2 (8.50), 3.1 (8.00) and 1.1 (7.69). 2) A certain degree of familiarity of the student with the topic appears to result in a better performance if compared with an unfamiliar tasks - Tasks 3.1 (8.00) and 3.2 (10.00) and Tasks 4.1 (4.03) and 2.2 (3.81). Thus, relevance and content familiarity are more significant than grammatical complexity in determining the difficulty of reading texts. 3) The abstractness/subjectiveness of the situation the students are required to handle was showed also to influence difficulty - Task 3.2 (10.00) and Task 2.2 (3.34) - it is surely less subjective to read articles about famous people and watch television programs, which very often focus famous people lives, than to choose and buy gifts for people, mainly if these gifts have to be adequate to people's necessity. 4) The number of items and alternatives involved in a task (size, density and format) may cause difficulty to process the context - Task 2.1 (8.84) presented twelve persons and twelve alibis, while Task 2.2 (2.34) presented six persons, a salesman making twelve suggestions and, besides that, the text also presented twelve alternatives based on people's interest - It means that following few speakers and

alternatives will be easier than following a text which involves more participants and alternatives. 5) Mystery/excitement (Task 2.1), illustrations (Tasks 1.2 and 4.2) and story (Tasks 2.1 and 4.2) have proved to be good ingredients to attract students' attention. 6) since one of the main functions of Pre-tasks was to teach in advance the more important words of the texts, they were shown to be tools to help comprehension, principally when the text lacked cognates and the students were not familiar with the topic presented.

Thus, taking into account the factors which influenced task difficulty in this experiment and the results in terms of grades obtained, it does make sense to say that tasks which involve content relevance, content-teaching, story, visual stimuli, content familiarity and mystery excitement, according to this study, should be on the top of the list at the time of organizing a syllabus based on tasks. However, it is important to point out that this study is exploratory in nature and, for this reason, it only provides a small step toward focusing a research agenda that promises to support progress in this field, leaving much room for addition of new research related to this area.

Regarding the evaluation of cognitive effort required to complete the tasks independent of foreign language proficiency, the students affirmed in the questionnaire that if the exercises were in Portuguese they would not have felt any lack of information or skill necessary to complete them (mean of 1.40), which means that the lack of some information or skill would not have caused participants much difficulty.

On the other hand, as we have already seen, the difficulties found in this experiment can not be attributed only to the linguistic part of the tasks. Thus, taking into account the number of steps involved in the reasoning process, it does make sense to say that the greater the number of mental operations involved the more difficult the task. However, this affirmative will not necessarily reflect the results in terms of grades, which means that a task can be difficult and, even so the students can obtain a good grade. As analyzed in this chapter, (sub-section 4.4.1),

on the basis of the number of probable mental operations involved, the most difficult task is task 2.1 (8.84 - nine mental operations) and the easiest tasks were Tasks 3.1(8.00), 3.2 (10.00) and 4.3 (4.40) with five mental operations involved, which means that the task can be less cognitively demanding and the students can obtain bad grades.

To conclude, as said before, the different processes involved in thinking should not be analyzed separately from feelings and emotions, which will affect the ways in which learners carry out the tasks. Again the issue of grading, even in Portuguese is problematic, since besides the cognitive operations involved, other key variables must be considered within the teaching learning process

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Through the I have discussion has identified a number of limitations of the present study that should be summarized now. First, this was a small-scale study with only 28 participants. Second, only nine tasks were carried out - a larger-scale study and a larger number of participants might have permitted clearer conclusions. Besides that, this study was also limited by the fact that it was difficult to isolate mental operations in tasks. Finally, a great obstacle, which has influenced the findings of this research, is that the students were not able to adequately answer the questionnaire handed out after each task. Clearly, these limitations suggest the need for further studies in order to get a better picture of the complex issue of grading and sequencing tasks. Thus, given the exploratory nature of this study and the limitations mentioned here, any teaching implications based on these preliminary findings should be treated with caution. Still, the results suggest some general implications for the classroom.

5.1 Pedagogical implications

As teachers, we sometimes tend to think that our learners really have nothing better to do with their lives than to be our students. On the other hand, what has become increasingly clear to us is the fundamental importance of an understanding of what is involved in the process of learning to inform and underpin our teaching of language because, in a general sense, what affects learning will influence everything that students do in the classroom. Thus, from the subjective but important findings of this research, some practical pedagogical implications for second language teaching will be discussed here. In spite of this discussion being, at this point,

rather more speculative, I hope it will be thought-provoking in terms of how it may relate to foreign language teaching and learning.

Curiosity and Mystery/Excitement: According to the preliminary results of this research, "motivation" is a factor which seems to have a strong effect on a student's success or failure and, as a consequence, it could be stressed that a strongly motivated student is in a far better position as a learner than a student who is not motivated. As we have already seen, the results suggest that it is important to present tasks which motivate learners at the initial stage of the activity and sustain motivation through the whole performance. This could include a consideration of challenge, curiosity and interest. meaningful activities on a personal level can be a step towards an identification (students and tasks) which improves performance and generates interest. And, of course, doing something which affects them personally is eminently motivating for students. If teachers are able to identify those activities that learners consider important to them personally, it may be possible to use this information to increase students' motivation towards other activities.

On a more practical level, the findings also indicates that students need activities which will excite and stimulate their curiosity. In other words, their learning experiences should be permanently stimulating and interesting; so, by presenting students with a variety of activities of this sort, teachers can ensure learners continuing interest and involvement in the language program. This, thus, has led to a suggestion that curiosity can be provoked by making task surprising, which will turn students' initial interest into a decision to engage in the tasks. The students' curiosity can also be aroused by texts and/or pictures and this curiosity will lead them to the wish to find out, to put right or to complete the exercise. In this sense, motivation can be developed by a careful selection of learning tasks with the main purpose of achieving the right level of complexity to create opportunities and to encourage learners' intrinsic interests.

On the other hand, the teacher must be careful to give students appropriately challenging activities. If a task is too challenging and complex it is likely to induce confusion and avoidance response rather than prove appealing. It is the teacher's task, too, to put language teaching into an interesting context for students. The development of positive feelings about activities in which learners are being trained, the creation of linguistic awareness or the response to the natural curiosity of language students, under appropriate circumstances, will constitute a worthwhile objective.

Background Knowledge: Another aspect that I thought quite important for classroom teachers is background knowledge. The constant attempt to connect new content and procedures to those which students are already familiar with will avoid mechanical learning; students will learn meaningfully through the integration of new knowledge into background knowledge networks. Teachers should take into account that students bring a lot with them; besides their interests, they bring their native language and culture to the classroom. They all have their own ideas, opinions, experiences and sometimes their area of expertise, since in a classroom students often come from different learning backgrounds. Based on that, a good principle to be followed, as seen from the results of this study, is that class activities could be done using information that learners themselves bring to the class, e.g. Tasks 3.1 and 3.2. These two tasks, which presupposed topic knowledge on the part of the subjects, were easier than those which did not - these texts contextualized tasks and facilitated optimum performance. Thus, teachers must know in advance the extent to which relevant topical knowledge and areas of language knowledge are available and, if available, which ones might be utilized for successfully completing the task; this aspect of assessment considers the learners' schemata for coping with the demands of the task. The engagement of topical knowledge is therefore an important determinant of the relative interactiveness of tasks.

This is, indeed, a humanistic procedure, accepting that some language input be based on experience. Knowledge and expertise of students is the same as to accept their feelings and ideas, which can be the focal point of these exercises, around which all of their foreign language activity revolves. When teachers present students with texts they cannot understand, the effect is demoralizing, but when teachers choose the right kind of material and the students are successful, the barriers to reading are slightly lowered. If teachers try a frequent diet of successful reading, it will make learners more confident at the time of reading.

Although we have always known that it is the teacher's job to interest students in a reading passage, it will surely be more motivating to give them a text that they will find interesting with or without the teacher. Teachers who know who their students are and what they bring to class will be in a much better position to choose subject and content than a teacher who does not know them, since one of language's main functions is to communicate interests and ideas. This knowledge is of vital importance. The teacher's procedure will really facilitate connections with students existing schema, since all of this is important to them. In most cases, what they need from the English language classroom is the language to express all this, and thereby themselves in English.

Visual Stimuli: Visual aids, in this study, revealed themselves of vital importance, particularly because of the subjects' age, for focusing teenagers' attention and conveying meaning. Another factor had to do with the subjects who could not sustain concentration for a longer period. In this situation, a good combination of "realia" and "learning by doing" was observed during the explanation of Pre-Tasks I and IV, when "realia" was used to illustrate language (a suitcase full of clothes - Pre-Task I - and all the ingredients for preparing an omelet - Pre-Task IV) .

If it is true that a picture is worth a thousand words, then the real object is priceless. In the case of the clothes and ingredients (concrete nouns) which students could look at and touch, these objects became the basis for learning. In the case of verbs (actions used for making an

omelet), it can be said that students show more interest when they can manipulate the ingredients and perform actions. The experiential and ongoing interaction between the active participants and the classroom are really of fundamental importance and should not be divorced from the teaching practice. Besides that, considering the affective aspects of learning a language, creating a learning environment minimizes anxiety and enhances personal security, both of which promote learning. It is worth noting that the context in which the learning takes place will play an important part in shaping what happens within it.

On the other hand, where "realia" would be impractical for teachers to find or bring, the students should be invited to bring things into class. Generally speaking, everyone enjoys helping the teachers, Thus, there is no reason why only teachers should be responsible for hunting up the "realia", since this responsibility should be shared. Teachers should remember that students will learn language which interests them. So, let them show where their interests lie.

Familiarity and Content-teaching: Everyone knows that the success of each activity depends on how well it is introduced and explained. In this sense, it is essential that the students be familiar with the necessary vocabulary before doing the activity. To avoid interrupting the activity once it has started, it is a good idea to pre-teach any words which will be new to students. That is the reason why familiarity with the content or topic is so important. It avoids the explanation of the text beforehand and ensures "pre-comprehension" of what is going to be taught.

In the specific case of content-teaching, this kind of school curriculum background information facilitates previewing, guessing the meaning and it is particularly important for less proficient language students, who need familiar content selections and/or content preview. Students who can not come up with the appropriate background information tend to face difficulties with the tasks they carry out. Thus, teachers must work hard in order to achieve a

balance between the background knowledge presupposed by the tasks the students carry out and the background knowledge the students possess. In the case of the reading skill, both teachers and readers must be aware that it is a highly interactive process between students and their prior knowledge, on the one hand, and the text itself on the other. It is important to take advantage of all opportunities to link English to other subjects of the school curriculum such as math, science, art, and so on. Students are therefore asked to count and measure, make science experiments, mime, act and sing.

On the other hand, teachers have to bear in mind that students do not want to discuss trivia; if the information content is already over-familiar to students, it will probably be of little or no interest to them. Thus, teachers must be careful in trying to select topic areas since the interest which is aroused by the structure of the activity may be reduced or increased by the topic. A course which makes the students feel good and important is more likely to be motivating than one which makes them feel small and foolish.

Vocabulary: Teaching vocabulary is clearly more than just presenting new words. Thus, as experiments on vocabulary seem to suggest that students remember best when they have actually done something with the words they are learning, it seems that teachers should get them to learn words that they like and want to use. In other words, the involvement with words is likely to help students to learn. To reinforce this, if teachers provide the right kind of exposure for the students, there is a good chance that the learners will learn and remember some or all of them; it is really important that the language they are exposed to and that they use reflects the kind of language they want to learn.

In order to illustrate the importance of vocabulary in this study, the words encapsulated in stories can be classified as "magic" words since they opened the door into new worlds, where anything was possible because the normal rules of logic did not apply; the students could create worlds where they could let their imagination loose in a framework of safe familiarity. Thus, in

the field of language pedagogy, once those words have been provided, there must be few students who can resist the fascination as they are drawn deeper into the net of the story. Since some words are more likely to be taught at lower levels, at beginner and elementary levels (the level worked on in this experiment), it certainly seems a good idea to provide sets of vocabulary which students can learn; indeed, they need to learn what words mean and how they are used.

One way of presenting words is to bring the things they represent into the classroom (realia), such as pictures, drawings, wall pictures, charts, and flashcards. When it is not possible to explain the meaning of words through realia and pictures, actions in particular are probably better explained by mime and gesture. In order to illustrate this, in this experiment, words were introduced by: a) presenting a suitcase full of clothes (Pre-Task I), b) presenting a wall chart with a human body and its organs (Pre-Task III), c) showing the ingredients to make an omelet (Pre-Task IV) and d) making an omelet - verbs of action (Pre-Task IV). In all of these activities the students showed interest.

Besides that, the body language (mime, gesture and change of voice) was also used to introduce concepts like *tall/short* and *thin/fat* (Pre-Task I); gestures mime and visuals are excellent tools to accompany the teacher's talk in order to make the input comprehensible. It is important to remember that, dealing with vocabulary, translation must be avoided as much as possible, in order to encourage students to interact with words.

Stories: Stories are not only an ideal way to introduce English, but they also contribute to the students' whole development and can be the starting point for a wide range of activities. Stories and activities based on them are an excellent means of linking English with other subjects and of making learning more attractive and interesting. Besides that, they develop students' creativity; which means that students who read stories become more creative and imaginative than those who are not familiar with stories.

In other words, stories can provide the basis for effective communicative activities in an English language class. They not only motivate the learners to participate in various activities that promote language learning, but they also stir the learners' imagination. Indeed, stories help students to link fantasy and imagination to real life. Thus, the teachers who believe in the enormous importance of stories in the daily lives of their students will make them central to his/her teaching. Stories have proven to be motivating, they are rich in language experience perhaps because they present language in a context that is easier to understand. In addition, story bookx are inexpensive.

Size, Density and Format: Since format has to do with the way in which the input is presented to the learner, teachers must be aware of this in order to avoid problematic formats for reading activities. Besides that, language and non-language forms, if they are combined in the same text, they should be relevant to learners. Single words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and so forth, have a strong impact on the reader; this impact could be positive when it affects learners positively by giving them the opportunity to increase their language noficiency by promoting relevance, appropriateness, and fairness. In this experiment, the more problematic tasks (Tasks 2.2 and 4.2) showed that students were not necessarily interested in or familiar with the topic, in spite of having had the pre-task motivation.

Regarding to the length of a text, it also influences the amount of interpretation required. Sometimes students give up reading and lose interest because of the text length, mainly when they are at the beginning levels with less proficient language. For those students it is advisable, besides relevance, familiarity and so on, to choose short texts, in order to maintain class motivation. However, teachers must remember that activities are never perfect when first applied in the classroom. Almost always, the initial attempts require testing and refinement.

Pre-Task: Teachers have to bear in mind that the pre-tasks phase will usually be the shortest stage in the framework, depending on the learners' degree of familiarity with the topic and the

type of task. In other words, it will depend partly on "familiarity" and partly on the cognitive demands of the task. To illustrate this, a problem-solving task would be more demanding for most students than an experience-sharing one. Thus, the more complex the task and the more unfamiliar the topic, the longer time the teacher should allow.

The pre-task phase is also to ensure that all learners understand what the teacher is going to do and get the learner/readers interested in the content of the text before reading it. Actually, when teaching beginners, teachers need to give them a lot of exposure to the new language, and make that exposure comprehensible. In this phase, as far as possible, the target language must be kept, spoken as naturally as possible, and a lot of miming and demonstration must also be used.

Indeed, the specific aim of this phase of the teacher talk is to get learners to tune in to the language, create a context for the main language to be pre-taught, and pre-teach in advance the most important words to be used in the next exercise, linking one part to the following part. Thus, it is advisable to start each unit and/or session with a short activity that focuses the students' attention on English and creates a positive attitude towards the following tasks at the same time.

In conclusion, using pre-tasks, students can make associations on a topic before reading, which facilitates comprehension. Teachers can use this phase when learners need instruction on a topic and ways to help them to recall useful words and learn vital ones that will help them to cope with the task and the text. Besides that, in this phase, teachers have the opportunity to show, in advance, what is involved in the task to be performed, what its goals are and what outcome is expected.

Text and Contextual Clues: Bearing in mind how difficult it is to teach students to perform the complex operation of reading texts in a foreign language, teachers must be aware of the

importance of contextual clues. Thus, it must be emphasized here the enormous sense of achievement students can get from the contextual clues provided in texts.

Besides the hints offered by pre-tasks, a built-in protection against boredom is the use of text illustrations. They often can display ideas which sometimes require thousands of words before they are understood. Illustrations are really important clues, which often make tasks more attractive and interesting and, as a consequence, stimulate reading.

The amount of cognate words found in a text, besides being excellent clues, are also important for the students' growing confidence in handling reading tasks and getting a general idea about the content. Given attention to cognates first (avoiding the trap of "false friends"), as well as attempting to guess the meaning of words through inference, must be the teachers business at the time of conducting a reading class. For this reason, it is recommended that the texts used should take into account the learners interests and, specially at the beginning level, the vocabulary should not contain too many unknown words. As far as possible, the teachers should make use of cognate words, which are easier for the learners to understand because of their similarity with Portuguese words. Besides that, another important point to bear in mind is that less proficient readers need familiar content selections and content previewing as important strategies to deal with a reading text.

Task Relevance: Taking as the starting point the best grades in this experiment, there is a perceived link between them and task relevance. Thus, beginning with the premise that human beings have a natural potential for learning, teachers have to bear in mind that learning better takes place when a) the subject matter was perceived to be of personal relevance to the learner and b) the subject matter involves active participation of the learner.

Because in the field of language teaching many language tasks have little personal interest or relevance to the learners, teachers must make the activities they set valuable to students. In other words, the teacher's role is to help learners to perceive how the activity is of value to

them. If learners do not find personal significance in a task, then it lacks the necessary vitality and relevance.

Problem-solving activities: Taking into account that the aim of the problem-solving activities is to get the students to practice the main language in a motivating and enjoyable way. Teachers can take advantage of this activity modality since it is actually one of the best ways for students to use language in a real way. Problem-solving activities hold students' interest and motivate them to read, since they make the language more meaningful by providing a stimulating context. As long as problem-solving activities are suitable in terms of level and interests, students will benefit from cooperating with each other and from encouraging learners to find a solution to problems or tasks.

Besides being enjoyable and relatively stress free, they provide extensive and varied opportunities for language practice; they generate a high degree of students involvement, which results in retention of the language practiced. That is the reason why task-based approaches to language teaching involve tasks which foster thinking and problem-solving, and avoid information to be ingested and reproduced. Problem-solving tasks also create useful contexts permitting the teacher to employ meaningful language; futhermore they require gestures, handling of objects, touching and many other forms of nonverbal communication. Generally, as the students solve the problem, they stop thinking about language and begin using it in a spontaneous and natural manner within the classroom.

To conclude, since in life people are often confronted with problems, and they always have to make decisions, it is the teacher's role to encourage in learners a firm belief that there is always a solution to any problem, so that they learn to be persistent rather than to give up.

5.2 A final word

As seen in chapter one, generally speaking, the system of teaching English in public and private schools in Brazil is seriously antiquated and, most of the time, the subject matter of instruction is alien to the students. Thus, taking into account the school problems mentioned, the enormous obstacle to reading in a foreign language is also an antiquated pedagogical model of language teaching applied by the majority of Brazilian teachers, where teaching is routine-based, without any variation, and the learning is to happen by repetition, by memorization, and by heart. For those reasons, it is expected that these problems will cause boredom and saturation and, as a consequence, students will reject English classes.

In this crucial context, trying to minimize these aspects of language teaching and difficulties found at the time of choosing tasks to be worked on, this study has tried to shed some light on some aspects (factors) a task developer can encounter when preparing a reading comprehension task or course for non-English speaking students. As seen, a variety of factors can make texts more difficult or easier, including length, topic, vocabulary, the reader's previous experience and so forth. Besides that, it was also seen that texts generally work best if they are somewhat challenging, but no more than that, where activities lead to feelings of success, not failure.

In this area, tasks were not seen simply from a cognitive point of view, and the cognitive processes involved in carrying them out were not the only factors considered, but the importance of some variables such as motivation and interest, which include aspects of individual disposition, were also discussed at length.

Summing up, taking into account the classroom context, the more it is researched, the more it is realized that every day classroom life is enormously complex, and so is the teacher's job. The fact is that grading tasks seems to be extremely complicated and, at the moment, there are no straightforward answers to the issue of task complexity. Thus, extensive research is needed

to identify how language can be organized best and presented to the learner in an instructional setting. In other words, much remains to be done to improve curriculum planning, in terms of grading tasks in language pedagogy.

To be effective, this study will require future investigations and the design include, might the issue of grading and sequencing tasks. However, I hope this study will serve as a resource for future work in the area. Ultimately, I hope the ideas related to the pedagogical implications I have offered here will directly benefit students and teachers by helping them to feel increasingly positive about task-based learning and teaching.

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APPENDICES

1. Lessons Plans and Tasks

1.1. Unit I: Lesson Plan 1 – Pre-Task – Task I and Task II

LESSON PLAN 1

SCHOOL: Colégio Estadual Professor Henrique da Silva Fontes
GRADE: Seventh
TEACHER: Idonézia Collodel Benetti
SUBJECT: English
UNIT NUMBER: I
CLASS NUMBER: 01

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. UNIT TITLE: Identifying
1.2. PRE-TASK: Identifying People

2. OBJECTIVES: To teach vocabulary related to height, build, eyes, clothes, and some objects.

3. PROCEDURE AND STRATEGIES

3.1. Hand out the sheets with the exercises.
3.2. Explain, in Portuguese, the instruction for the activity.
3.3. Choose some students to illustrate words related to height, build, eyes colors, and features, using the English language.
3.4. Show real types of clothes, bags and objects that people carry and wear.
3.5. Write down on the blackboard these new words, while illustrating them.
3.6. Advise students to write down the new words.
3.7. Ask them to do the activity in pairs.
3.8. Help with their doubts during the performance of the task going from desk to desk.
3.9. Ask for the right answers.
3.10. Write the right answer on the blackboard.

4. DIDACTIC RESOURCES: Blackboard
Chalk
People (students themselves)
Clothes
Bags
Other objects

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY: Adapted from: MATHEWS A. and READ C., 1981. TANDEM, Evan Brothers Limited, London.

UNIDADE I: IDENTIFICANDO PESSOAS

PRE-TASK

1. IDENTIFIQUE AS PESSOAS MENCIONADAS NA DESCRIÇÃO ABAIXO:

a) _____ is tall and slim. She has short dark hair and glasses. She is wearing a skirt and a striped jacket. She is carrying a suitcase and an umbrella.

b) _____ is not very tall. He has short fair hair and beard. He is wearing a suit and a tie. He is carrying a briefcase.

Susan Jean Sheila John

Adapted from: MATHEWS A. and READ C. 1981, Tandem, Evan Brothers Limited, London.

UNIDADE I: IDENTIFICANDO PESSOAS

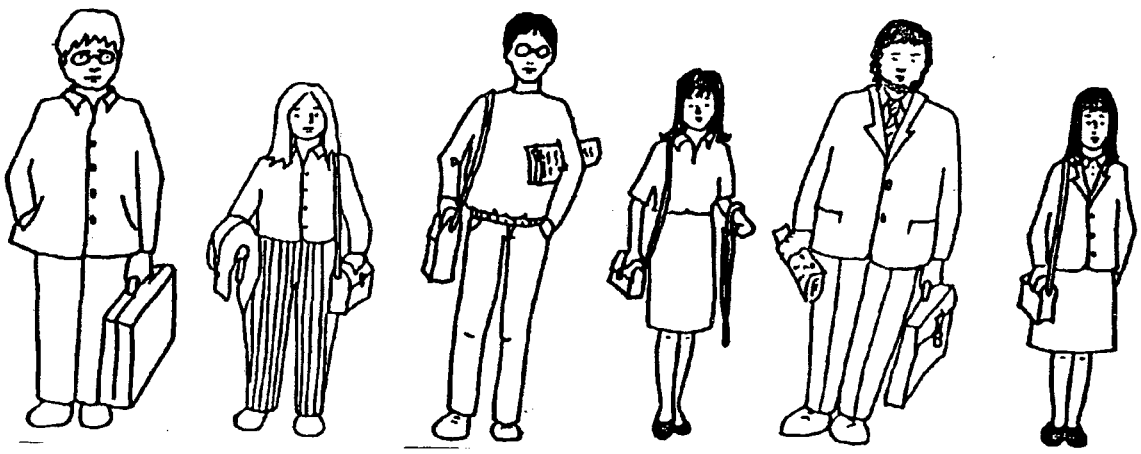
TASK I

1. IDENTIFIQUE AS PESSOAS MENCIONADAS NA DESCRIÇÃO ABAIXO.

a) _____ is tall and slim. He has short dark hair and glasses. He is wearing jeans and a sweater. He is carrying a bag and a newspaper.

b) _____ is short and slim. She has long dark hair. She is wearing a dress and a jacket. She is carrying a handbag.

c) _____ is tall and fat. He has short fair hair and glasses. He is wearing a jacket and trousers. He is carrying a suitcase.



Steve Mary David Jane Joseph Helen

Término_____

Adapted from: MATHEWS A. and READ C. 1981, Tandem, Evan Brothers Limited, London.

UNIDADE I: IDENTIFICANDO ANIMAIS

TASK II

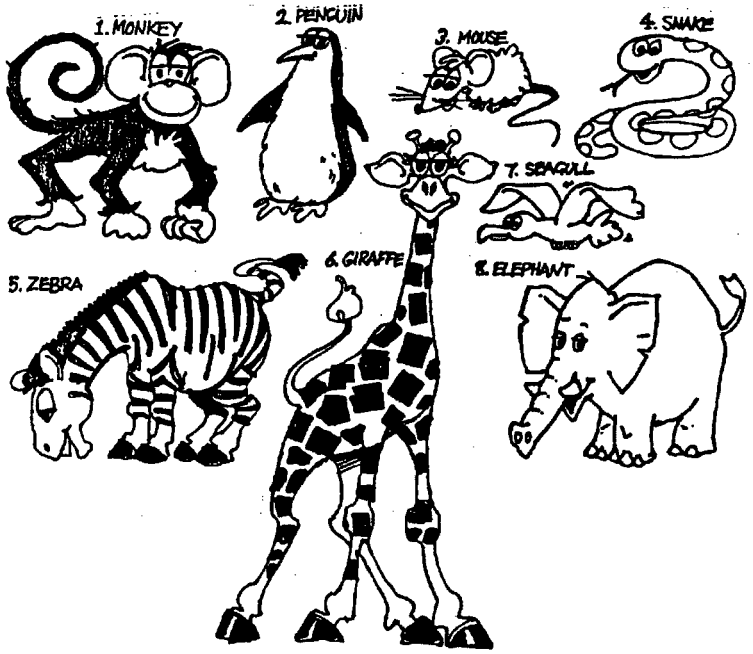
1. IDENTIFIQUE OS ANIMAIS MENCIONADOS NA DESCRIÇÃO ABAIXO:

a) A_____ looks like a horse. It lives in Africa. It eats grass (grama). It has got black and white stripes. We have this animal at the Zoo.

b) A_____ is a very long animal. It has not got any legs (pernas). It eats small (pequenos) animals. It is sometimes dangerous (perigosa). We have this animal in Brazilian forests (florestas).

c) A_____ can run very fast. It has got a very long neck (pescoço). It eats leaves (folhas). It has got four legs. We have this animal at the Zoo.

d) A_____ has got fingers (dedos). It can climb trees. It is usually brown and lives on nuts and fruit. It lives in Africa and Asia. We have this animal in Brazilian forests.



Término_____

Adapted from: GRANGER C. 1987, *Play Games With English*, Heinemann Educational Books, London p. 36.

1.2. Unit II: Lesson Plan 2 – Pre-Task – Task I and Task II

LESSON PLAN 2

SCHOOL: Colégio Estadual Professor Henrique da Silva Fontes
GRADE: Seventh
TEACHER: Idonézia Collodel Benetti
SUBJECT: English
UNIT NUMBER: II
CLASS NUMBER: 04

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. UNIT TITLE: Deducting
1.2. PRE-TASK: Identifying a Murder

2. OBJECTIVES: To teach names of places.

3. PROCEDURE AND STRATEGIES

3.1. Hand out the sheets with the activities
3.2. Explain in Portuguese the instructions for the activity.
3.3. Fix a large version of the students' charts on the blackboard.
3.4. Read and explain, in English each block from the chart.
3.5. Write on the blackboard each new word from the explanation.
3.6. Advise the students to write down the new words on their sheets.
3.7. Ask them to do the activaty in pairs.
3.8. Help with their doubts during the performance of the task going from desk to desk.
3.9. Ask for the right answer.
3.10. Write the right answer on the blackboard.

4. DIDACTIC RESOURCES: Blackboard
Chalk
Big chart

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY: Adapted from: MATHEWS A. and READ C., 1981. TANDEM, Evan Brothers Limited, London.

UNIDADE II: IDENTIFICANDO ASSASSINOS

PRE-TASK

A) Ontem às 11 horas da noite aconteceu um crime. Cinco pessoas são suspeitas: Paul, Mary, John, Laura and Tom. De acordo com as informações do quadro, diga quem é o assassino._____

SUSPECTS	Yesterday at 10 o'clock they were:	They were with:	Yesterday at 11 o'clock they were:	They were with:
Paul	at a bar	John	at a disco	Laura and Tom
Mary	At the university	Tom	at a bar	Tom
John	At a bar	Paul	at home	His family
Laura	at home	her family	at a disco	Paul and Tom
Tom	At the university	Mary	at a disco	Paul and Laura

B) Por que você identificou essa pessoa?

_____

UNIDADE II: IDENTIFICANDO ASSASSINOS

TASK I

A) As pessoas abaixo relacionadas são suspeitas de terem cometido um crime. Identifique o assassino pelas pistas abaixo. Seu nome é _____.

Helen	Was studying at Mike's house.
Steve	Was having dinner at home with Pam.
Joy	Was visiting my friend Jenny.
Robin	Was having a drink in a bar with Harry.
Dan	Was having dinner in a restaurant with his girlfriend.
Sheila	Was watching a film on T.V. alone.
Pam	Was having dinner at Steve's house.
Mike	Was studying at home.
Jane	Was having dinner with Dan.
Jenny	Was talking to Joy.
George	Was visiting my girlfriend Sheila.
Harry	Was having a drink in a bar.

B) Por que você concluiu que foi essa pessoa?

_____

Término_____

Adapted from: Adapted from: MATHEWS A and READ C. 1981, Tandem, Evan Brothers Limited London.

UNIDADE II: IDENTIFICANDO AMIGOS

TASK II

John gostaria de presentear seus amigos Tom, Rita, Sally, Joanna, Joseph e Mary. No Shopping o vendedor lhe forneceu algumas sugestões sem, naturalmente, conhecer a preferência e as necessidades de cada um. Identifique os dois amigos de John que ficariam mais satisfeitos com as sugestões dadas.

SUGESTÕES DO VENDEDOR	PREFERÊNCIAS DEMONSTRADAS PELOS AMIGOS DE JOHN
Tom: → a box of chocolates → a pen	Tom: → has a stationery store (papelaria) in the shopping center → does not like sweets
Rita: → a bracelet → some flowers	Rita: → has a lovely garden full (cheio) of flowers → is allergic to jewelry (jóias)
Sally: → a Rolling Stones record → a book	Sally: → has no time to read → does not like rock music
Joanna: → some perfume → a tennis racket	Joanna: → broke (quebrou) her tennis racket last week → does not like cosmetics
Joseph: → a bottle of wine → a tape of classical music	Joseph: → does not like Mozart, Beethoven, etc. He is not fond of classical music → is not fond of alcoholic drinks
Mary: → a puppy → a bottle of French perfume	Mary: → loves expensive perfumes → has cats

Os dois amigos mais satisfeitos seriam_____e_____, porque _____.

Término_____

Adapted from: MATHEWS A. and READ C. 1981, Tandem, Evan Brothers Limited, London.

1.3. Unit III: Lesson Plan 3 – Pre-Task – Task I and Task II

LESSON PLAN 3

SCHOOL: Colégio Estadual Professor Henrique da Silva Fontes
GRADE: Seventh
TEACHER: Idonézia Collodel Benetti
SUBJECT: English
UNIT NUMBER: III
CLASS NUMBER: 07

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. UNIT TITLE: Defining
1.2. PRE-TASK: Defining Diseases

2. OBJECTIVES: To teach vocabulary related to six different diseases.

3. PROCEDURE AND STRATEGIES

3.1. Fix a drawing of the human body on the blackboard.
3.2. Show the students the six organs related to the six diseases involved.
3.3. Fix slips of paper on the blackboard containing the names of the organs and also the name of the diseases..
3.4. Hand out the sheets with the tasks.
3.5. Review the explanation asking the students to write down on their sheets the words from the blackboard.
3.6. Ask them to do the activity in pairs.
3.7. Help with their doubts during the performance of the task.
3.8. Ask for the right answer.
3.9. Write the right answer on the blackboard.

4. DIDACTIC RESOURCES: Blackboard
Chalk
Drawing of the Human Body
Slips of paper

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY: From and adapted from:
1. Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, 1990. University of Birmingham.
2. Concise English Dictionary,1985. Longman House.
3. Lexicon of Contemporary English, 1981. Longman House.

UNIDADE III : DEFININDO DOENÇAS

PRE-TASK

LEIA AS DEFINIÇÕES ABAIXO:

Hepatitis is a serious disease that causes the inflamation of the liver.

Tuberculosis is a serious disease that affects the lungs and occasionally other parts of the body.

Relacione as colunas observando as doenças e suas definições.

DISEASES	DEFINITIONS
1. Pneumonia	( ) is a venereal disease causing infection and burning in the reproductive organs.
2. Cirrhosis	( ) is a disease which causes abnormal frequent intestinal evacuations with more or less fluid faeces.
3. Neurosis	( ) is a disease caused by the inflamation of the urinary bladder.
4. Diarrhea	( ) is a serious disease which affects the lungs and makes it difficult to breathe.
5. Gonorrhea	( ) is a disease often caused by drinking too much alcohol, which destroys the liver.
6. Cystitis	( ) is a disease caused by disorders of the nervous system.

FROM and adapted from:

1. Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary,1990 The University of Birminghan.
2. Concise English Dictionary,1985 Longman House.
3. Lexicon of Contemporary English, 1981. Longman House, Longman.

UNIDADE III : DEFININDO ÓRGÃOS DO CORPO

TASK I

ENUMERE A SEGUNDA COLUNA DE ACORDO COM A PRIMEIRA.

1. Liver	( ) the tubular part of the alimentary canal that extends from the stomach to the anus.
2. Lungs	( ) the part of the body, shaped like a hollow bag, where urine is held until it leaves the body.
3. Ovary	( ) the part of the body which includes the brain, spinal cord, and other nerves and nervous tissue together forming a system which interprets stimuli from the sense organs and transmits impulses to muscles, glands, etc.
4. Intestine	( ) the part of the body which secretes bile, processes blood and helps to clean unwanted substances.
5. Urinary bladder	( ) the part of the body that produces reproductive cells in the body of a woman, female, animal, bird or fish.
6. Nervous system	( ) the two parts of the body which constitute the basic respiratory organ of air – breathing vertebrates.

Término_____

FROM and adapted from:

1. Collins CoBuild English Language Dictionary 1990 The University of Birminghan.
2. Concise English Dictionary 1985 Longman House.
3. Lexicon of Contemporary English 1981. Longman House, Longman.

UNIDADE III: IDENTIFICANDO PESSOAS

TASK II

COMBINE AS DUAS COLUNAS.

1. Kevin Costner	( ) is na Yugoslavian missionary. She is well Known for her missionary work in India. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.
2. Zico	( ) is the Youngest winner of the men's singles at wimbledon to date. He is a famous tennis player and was born in Germany.
3. Steven Spielberg	( ) is a very famous interviewer and has a very good program on T.V. He presented special programs during the world cup.
4. Mother Tereza (of Calcutta)	( ) is a famous movie actor. He was born in Texas in 1955 and has three children: Lily, Annie an Joe. He is always ambitious and enjoys being the center of attraction. ("I have a lot of ambition"). He received U$ 8 million dollars for his work in "Prince of Thieves".
5. Jô Soares	( ) is an American movie director. "E.T." and "Jurassic Park" are two of his most famous films.
6. Boris Becker	( ) is a famous personality not only in Brazil, but in many countries of the world. He lived in Japan and his soccer goals were so fantastic that Japanese people enjoyed seeing his performance. He does not play soccer professionally anymore.

Término_____

Adapted from: BERTOLIN and SIQUEIRA. 1994 New Dynamic English, Book 4, IBEP.

1.4. Unit IV: Lesson Plan 4 – Pre-Task – Task I and Task II – Task III and Task IV

LESSON PLAN 4

SCHOOL: Colégio Estadual Henrique da Silva Fontes
GRADE: Seventh
TEACHER: Idonézia Collodel Benetti
SUBJECT: English
UNIT NUMBER: IV
CLASS NUMBER: 10

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. UNIT TITLE: Ordering
1.2. PRE-TASK: Ordering a Recipe

2. OBJECTIVES: To teach vocabulary related to an omelet recipe.

3. PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES

3.1. Explore, orally, in Portuguese, the steps for making an omelet, translating into English and writing on the blackboard, the main words from The oral explanation.
3.2. Hand out the sheets with the exercises.
3.3. Illustrate each step bringing the ingredients and making a real omelet.
3.4. Advise the students to write down the new words.
3.5. Ask them to do the activity in pairs.
3.6. Help with their doubts during the performance of the task going from desk to desk.
3.7. Ask for the right answer.
3.8. Write the right answer on the blackboard.

4. DIDACTIC RESOURCES: Blackboard
Chalk
Ingredients
Pan
Stove
Bowl
Fork
Spatula

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY: From: GRANGER C., 1987. Play Games With English, Heinemann Educational Books, London, p. 36.

UNIDADE IV: ORDENANDO UMA RECEITA CULINÁRIA

PRE-TASK

Esta é uma receita de omelete. Os passos abaixo estão fora de ordem. Coloque-os na ordem correta.

Heat the oil

Put the mixture into the pan

Break three eggs into a bowl

Beat the eggs

Stir in salt and pepper

Fry the omelette

Put a little oil into the pan

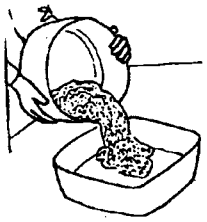
Serve the omelette

FROM GRANGER C., 1987. **Play Games With English**, Heinemann Educational Books, London, p. 36.

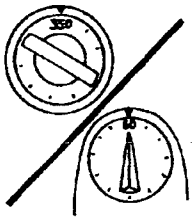
UNIDADE IV: ORDENANDO UMA RECEITA CULINÁRIA

TASK I

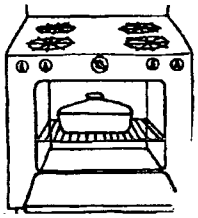
ORDENE ESTA RECEITA E TENHA UMA TORTA DE ESPINAFRE



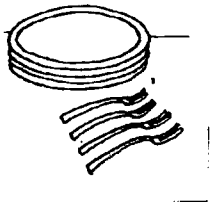
Put the mixture into the dish



Bake the spinach pie for 1 hour at 30°

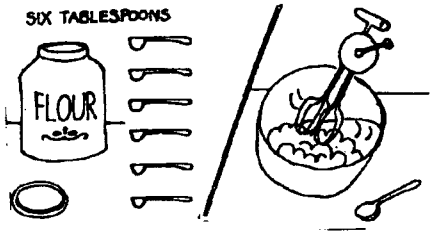


Put the dish into the oven

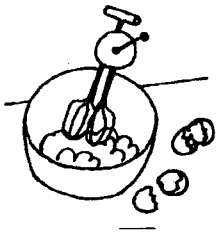


The pie will serve 4 people

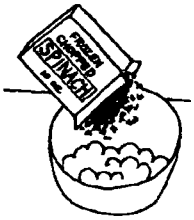
Stir the mixture



Add 6 tablespoons of flour

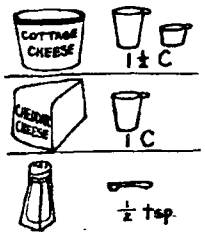


Beat two eggs



Add frozen spinach

Mix well



Add 1/2 cup of cottage chesse, 1 cup of grated cheddar chesse, and 1/2 teaspoon of salt.

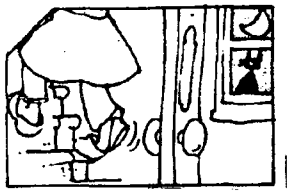
Término_____

Adapted from BLANTON L.L., 1979 **Elementary Composition Practice**, Book 2 Rowley, Massachusetts, p. 60,61

UNIDADE IV: ORGANIZANDO UMA HISTÓRIA

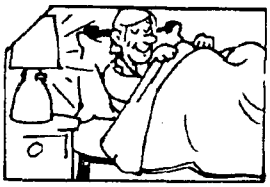
TASK II

COLOQUE AS FIGURAS NUMA ORDEM ADEQUADA PARA CONTAR UMA HISTÓRIA LÓGICA.

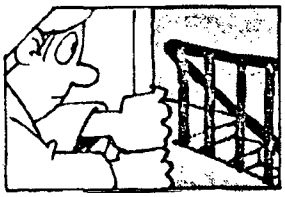


He goes upstairs

He switches off the light

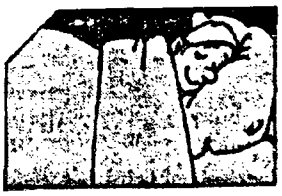


He gets into bed

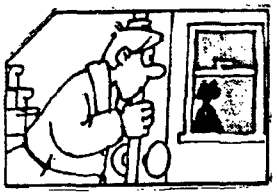


He opens the bedroom door

He hears a noise

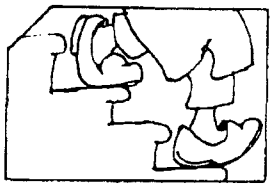


He goes to sleep



He opens the door and sees a cat outside the window

Frank wakes up



He goes downstairs

He gets out of bed

He switches on the light

He listens at the door

Término_____

Adapted from GRANGER C., 1988 **Play Games With English**, Book 2, Heinemann Educational Books, London, p. 9.

TASK III

ORDENE ESTA RECEITA DE BOLO

Add 2 cups of flour.

Put the mixture into the dish.

Stir in the baking powder (fermento).

Beat the eggs with 2 cups of sugar (açúcar).

Serves 6 people.

Break three eggs.

Bake the cake.

Add a cup of milk (leite).

Término_____

2. QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONÁRIO

1. VOCÊ ACHOU QUE ESTE EXERCÍCIO FOI:
( ) muito fácil
( ) fácil
( ) médio
( ) difícil
( ) muito difícil

2. O ASSUNTO DESTE EXERCÍCIO ERA:
( ) muito bem conhecido
( ) bem conhecido
( ) mais ou menos conhecido
( ) pouco conhecido
( ) totalmente desconhecido

3. QUANTO ÀS PALAVRAS DESCONHECIDAS VOCÊ ACHA QUE:
( ) não dificultaram o exercício
( ) dificultaram um pouco
( ) dificultaram bastante
( ) não conseguiu fazer quase nada do exercício por causa delas
( ) não conseguiu fazer nada por causa delas

4. SE NÃO TIVESSE ASSISTIDO A ÚLTIMA AULA DE INGLÊS E FEITO O PRE-TASK VOCÊ:
( ) teria conseguido completar o exercício com facilidade
( ) teria conseguido completar o exercício, mas com dificuldade
( ) teria conseguido fazer uma boa parte do exercício mas não tudo
( ) teria conseguido fazer apenas um pouco do exercício
( ) não teria conseguido fazer nada do exercício

5. MESMO QUE ESTE EXERCÍCIO FOSSE EM PORTUGUÊS, VOCÊ ACHA QUE:
( ) não lhe faltaria nenhuma informação ou habilidade necessária para fazê-lo.
( ) a falta de alguma informação ou habilidade teria lhe atrapalhado um pouco
( ) a falta de informação ou habilidade teria lhe atrapalhado bastante
( ) não teria conseguido fazer quase nada
( ) não teria conseguido fazer nada

6. NUMERE DE 1 A 4 POR ORDEM DE IMPORTÂNCIA (1 para a mais importante e 4 para a menos importante)
AS SUAS MAIORES DIFICULDADES FORAM CAUSADAS
( ) pelas palavras
( ) pela gramática
( ) pelas informações que você não tinha
( ) pelas instruções que não foram claras.

Você usou algum macete ou jeitinho próprio para fazer a tarefa? _____. Qual? (Quais)?_____
_____
_____
_____

Results of the questionnaire survey: number of students who marked each level of the rating scale for each question

Task	Exercise Difficulty						Subject Familiarity						Vocabulary					
	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
		Less →			More			Less →			More			Less →			More	
1.1	___	6	20	___	___	2.76	___	1	13	11	1	2.96	4	14	6	2	___	2.23
1.2	1	9	11	3	___	2.66	1	5	10	7	1	3.08	2	19	2	1	___	2.50
2.1	___	7	17	2	___	2.80	___	___	14	10	2	3.53	2	21	3	___	___	2.03
2.2	1	___	22	3	1	3.10	1	2	2	18	4	3.81	2	9	15	___	1	2.59
3.1	3	5	13	4	2	2.88	2	3	11	4	7	3.90	8	12	5	2	___	2.03
3.2	4	3	17	3	1	2.78	3	3	15	5	2	3.00	2	15	11	___	___	2.32
4.1	7	5	16	___	___	2.32	7	5	16	___	___	4.03	7	16	5	___	___	1.92
4.2	6	13	6	1	1	2.07	5	6	8	3	4	2.80	13	9	3	1	___	1.69
4.3	2	4	9	12	___	3.14	___	5	16	4	2	3.11	5	11	9	2	___	2.29

Task	Pre-Task						Portuguese						Average Grade	Average Time
	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	Mean		
		Less →			More			Less →			More			
1.1	2	4	9	7	4	**3.26**	16	___	___	___	10	**2.53**	**7.69**	**4:10**
1.2	4	9	8	3	___	**2.41**	21	5	___	___	___	**1.29**	**8.75**	**2:29**
2.1	2	7	9	5	3	**3.00**	21	4	1	___	___	**1.23**	**8.84**	**3:60**
2.2	6	4	8	6	3	**2.85**	21	4	1	___	___	**1.18**	**2.34**	**4:00**
3.1	7	5	10	3	2	**2.55**	21	5	___	1	___	**1.29**	**8.0**	**4:00**
3.2	7	11	4	5	1	**2.35**	21	6	___	___	1	**1.35**	**10**	**3:70**
4.1	11	7	8	2	___	**2.03**	24	3	1	___	___	**1.17**	**4.6**	**2:60**
4.2	13	7	2	2	___	**1.57**	17	9	___	___	___	**1.34**	**8.5**	**3:50**
4.3	7	10	2	2	5	**2.44**	19	7	___	___	___	**1.22**	**4.4**	**3:10**