

TAKING TEXT TO TASK: ISSUES AND CHOICES IN CURRICULUM CONSTRUCTION¹

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the construct of task can provide a principled and effective foundation for the development of extended, multi-year curricula and pedagogies for second/foreign language learning of adults. That assertion is made with an important condition: “task” must be expanded, both theoretically and empirically, toward issues that arise in conjunction with textuality and literacy rather than being grounded primarily in psycholinguistic, sentence-oriented processing considerations, as original proposals by Long and Crookes (1992) had suggested.

The article presents that overall theoretical argument and then describes how genre-based tasks have been used (1) for selection and sequencing decisions within an existing content-oriented collegiate curriculum in the German Department at Georgetown University; (2) as a way to inform pedagogical choices that target advanced levels of L2 ability, particularly the crucial area of vocabulary development; and (3) to devise genre-based tasks that assess L2 learners’ language abilities and content knowledge across the curriculum and also help to further specify learning objectives and curricular choices.

¹ This paper is a revised version of a symposium the authors presented at the first International Conference on Task-based Language Teaching. We would like to thank the organizers of that event, particularly Kris Van Den Branden, for the opportunity to learn from participants about the many ways in which task-based instruction can be conceptualized and practiced.

Introduction

A glance at the recent literature on tasks would seem to make the focus of this paper on the potential of task for curriculum construction an unusual choice. As Ellis' extensive treatment of the topic (2003) demonstrates, task has primarily been elaborated in pedagogical rather than in curricular terms. Likewise, in the introduction to their volume on pedagogic tasks, Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) do not consider curricular issues but characterize tasks as aiding teachers in determining pedagogic activities, guiding researchers as they investigate acquisitional processes, and enabling assessment specialists to provide teachers and program administrators with diagnostic information about learners' progress during instruction. And yet, linking task to curriculum is by no means novel. Indeed, seminal papers by Long and Crookes (1992, 1993) and Long (1994) had argued for the shift from a grammar to a task orientation within communicative language teaching by precisely emphasizing a link between task and curriculum and, by implication, between task and long-term learning.

As we propose to revisit the connection between task and curricular thinking we do not advocate a simple return to those earlier motivations. Instead, reflecting the contemporary scene of second/foreign language (L2) teaching and learning, particularly collegiate L2 teaching in the United States, our focus on a nexus between task and curriculum aims to address three broad challenges facing the language teaching field today. First, the profession is challenged to develop proposals that acknowledge that language acquisition in any setting, but particularly in instructed settings, is a long-term project that spans many years and therefore requires a multi-year trajectory. Second, to be viable such long-range proposals must present plans for educational action that, at a minimum, spell out what it means to be able to handle a language at advanced levels of performance in academic disciplines, institutions, professions, and in public life. Third, they must specify their approach to supporting learners and teachers through well-motivated curricular and supportive pedagogical actions, so that learners can reasonably be expected to attain such competent levels of non-native use in an L2 (see Byrnes, 2004; Maxim, 2004).²

To anticipate the thrust of our argument, the demand for longitudinalness and advancedness appears realizable only if we "take text to task," in other words, if we imagine task not primarily, much less exclusively, as transactional, interactive, oral communicative exchanges of daily life, but as oriented toward textuality and literacy in a range of areas of public language use. As such, our proposal builds on several research fields. It draws on genre theory as explicated by Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) in order to create carefully considered text-based tasks that include all modalities from the beginning of instruction to upper levels of ability. It draws on socio-culturally oriented analyses of language and literacy (for an early statement, see Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). It draws on the potential of metalinguistic awareness of textuality modeled in reading and writing as a way in which literate adult learners can approach second language learning. Finally, it draws on task-based assessment of learning outcomes. It also builds on our own educational experience with a four-year integrated content-oriented collegiate FL

curriculum that has been in effect in the German Department at Georgetown University (GUGD) since 1997. Entitled “Developing Multiple Literacies,” it aims to enable its students to function in professional and academic contexts of language use.³

Our focus is on reconsidering the construct ‘task’ so that it might serve as a central design principle for curriculum construction. Given the intimate relation between curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, a reconsidered notion of task can also be expected to demand reconsideration of the pedagogical notions and uses of task that have deeply influenced the way the profession imagines L2 learning and of a range of assessment practices, from classroom assessment to program assessment to assessment in SLA research. Finally, we suggest that both directions for reimagining task might provide the kind of ethical lens for conducting SLA research and practice that Ortega (2005) has advocated.

Accordingly, the paper begins by exploring major features of a theory of language that can enable such an expanded orientation for task. Specifically, it explores how task, when grounded in a principled understanding of textuality and the construct genre, can motivate curricular selection and sequencing within a collegiate FL program. It then traces the use of genre-based tasks through a multi-year collegiate curricular sequence toward advanced-level L2 abilities, with particular emphasis on writing tasks. Moving from the text-organizational level to local, more pedagogical considerations, it explores how a genre-based approach might affect the teaching of vocabulary at all levels through literacy- and theme-oriented tasks that are arranged in task sequences. The paper concludes by explicating how the complementary frameworks of task and genre that have facilitated the creation of genre-based tasks can also help specify learning objectives and assess L2 learners’ language abilities and content knowledge across the curriculum.

Taking task to text: Theoretical framing for curriculum development

It is commonplace to observe that an approach to teaching language depends on its underlying conception of the phenomenon of language. This would seem to be particularly critical within an educational context, where the driving force for curriculum construction is that “time is of the essence.” For that reason it is intriguing to trace how researchers who worked at the beginning of the major curricular rethinking in language instruction in the late 70s and early 80s grappled with both theoretical and practical issues. For example, in a measured and wide-ranging discussion, Johnson (1982) concludes that extensive deliberations about functional, notional, semantically driven, situational, or thematic ways of selecting and sequencing curricular content were unable to arrive at a meaning orientation that would be both transparent toward curriculum construction and pedagogies and insightful for and conducive to processes of learning in a meaning- and usage-based fashion. For Johnson those desirable characteristics appeared possible only if “systematic form/function relationships account for the way languages develop ... but also that language learning proceeds through the perception of those relationships” (p. 130).

³ For extensive documentation of the curriculum, please see the departmental website at <http://www3.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/curriculum/>.

Johnson made that observation in light of a just emerging Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) as it was being developed by Halliday. Indeed, regarding curriculum construction, he surmised that “in practical terms, it would entail a syllabus linking structures to interpersonal, textual and ideational categories” (p. 133), thereby highlighting three central notions in SFL. Already in the early seventies, Halliday had extended a mostly psychological or ethnographic functionalism by combining it, first, with the British linguist Firth’s emphasis on a notion of system as “a set of options in a stated environment; in other words, a choice, together with a condition of entry” (Halliday, 1974: 45), and, second, with the underlying tenets of Prague School linguistics and its emphasis on texts as related to language, culture, and cognition. The result is an understanding of language as a social semiotic that both derives from social contexts and actively construes them. Rather than seeing language as a system of arbitrary signs as Saussure had done or as a code (the preferred metaphor of behaviorists and generativists), SFL focuses on the meaning potentialities of language in use. In Halliday’s words, language is functional “in its interpretation (1) of texts, (2) of the system, and (3) of the elements of linguistic structures”. Language has evolved in order “to satisfy human needs It is not arbitrary” (1994: xiii). Its metafunctions refer to two kinds of meanings that underlie language: “(i) to understand the environment (ideational), and (ii) to act on the others in it (interpersonal). Combined with these is a third metafunctional component, the ‘textual’, which breathes relevance into the other two” (ibid.). While a focus on syntax privileges forms to which meanings are subsequently attached, “in a functional grammar ... language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized” (xiv). The aim is to construct a grammar “for purposes of text analysis” (xv), since language consists of oral and written text or discourse in various contexts.

Just how the language system and the processes of using and acquiring it are related to each other is, of course, fundamental to syllabus construction. Coming from the theoretical side, Hasan explicates that, for systemic functionalism, language and the performance of activities exist in a symbiotic relationship such that “the very existence of one is the condition for the existence of the other” (1995: 184). SFL explores the interrelationships through constructs such as context of situation, register, text, and text structure. Coming from an educational orientation, Matthiessen (2006) observes that

“**structural** syllabi focus on **wording** ... but view it ‘from below’ as an **inventory** of items... and structures rather than ‘from above’ as a **resource** for making meaning in wording.” By comparison, “**notional and functional** syllabi ... focus on **meaning** – that is, on the semantic stratum [but] the realizations of notions and functions in lexicogrammar tend not to be specified explicitly and systematically, so meaning is in a sense disconnected from wording...” [Finally, in] the **task-based** approach ... tasks are located within context, they have the effect of coordinating the use of language with other processes in pursuit of the goal of the task. However, the challenge is to develop systematic and principled links between contextual tasks and the semantic and lexicogrammatical resources needed to address the tasks” (2006: 66–68, emphasis in original).

Reconceptualizing task for curriculum construction

How, then, does the challenge and the opportunity for capturing both the necessary fixities and the desired dynamism, variation, and choice translate into curriculum? As a first step, we propose the construct of 'genre' as a suitable framework for curriculum development. Understood as a "staged, goal-oriented purposeful activity with its own schematic structures" (Martin, 1985: 251), genre offers a recognizable and yet dynamic textual form that is "characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which they regularly occur" (Bhatia, 2002: 23). Because of this situatedness in a goal-oriented context of communication, genres can be analyzed in terms of certain schematic structures. But at the same time situated choice or flexibility exists. At the macro-level of genres, there are obligatory and optional, recursive or non-recursive stages or moves of the genre (cf. Martin, 1985). The lexicogrammatical level, what we typically think of as the 'vocabulary level', offers many more such framed choices.

As a second step, we reinterpret tasks from communicative activities into genre-based tasks. This provides a two-fold benefit: for the entire curricular progression, bundles of thematically related, genre-based tasks assure continued development toward advanced levels of L2 ability. For pedagogy, genre-based tasks can make textually oriented meaning-making at all levels of the language system transparent for both teachers and learners. Below, we will present four perspectives on task to elaborate both of these points.

Embedding task in curriculum

While the previous characterization presented genre-based tasks as a suitable curricular unit of analysis, it is important to understand that genre-based tasks that are embedded within a curriculum have an entirely different educational value than do 'tasks as activities.' In other words, beyond representing valued educational practice, genre-based tasks become critical markers in what Stenhouse (1975: 4) provides as the definition of curriculum:

"an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice."

Curriculum development, then, is a critical act of establishing what the subject is and who the learner is, and how that relationship would be negotiated in an extended curricular sequence, in instructional materials, and in methodologies (see also Byrnes, 1998). We propose genre-based tasks for that defining role.

Viewing task from a discourse and semiotic perspective

The second perspective more closely addresses the suitability of genre-based tasks for serving in the selection and sequencing of curricular units within an extended sequence toward advanced abilities. Two complementary notions, a discourse and a semiotic orientation, are available for imagining the shift toward textuality and literacy that is critical for capturing central aspects of advanced levels of ability and, therefore, central for the kinds of curricular and pedagogical foci that would seem to be necessary to enable learners to develop them.

The first is the distinction Gee makes between primary and secondary discourses (see, e.g., 1998, 2002), a distinction that highlights the fact that the origin of language use lies in particular interactional patterns and activity types that construe those settings themselves. It can be conceptualized as beginning with the oral language use of familiar interactions and gradually moving into public, institutional, and professional settings. In these different contexts, as speakers are exposed to the public fora that shape a society's political, social, and cultural realities, they learn a range of genres central to participation in constructing these realities. For Gee, control of secondary discourses of public life is one way to define literacy and, by implication, advanced levels of language ability.

A second approach that can enable curriculum developers and educational practitioners to imagine a new trajectory for curriculum and task draws on Halliday's (1993) distinction between two semiotic practices: one associated with highly situated and often interactive oral activities of daily life; the other associated with written and public language. The first, referred to as a congruent form of semiosis, conceptualizes reality in terms of actors and actions and, being verb-based, emphasizes function, process, and flow. The second, a non-congruent or synoptic form of semiosis, construes human experiences as objectified knowledge. Heavily based on nominal patterns, it emphasizes stasis, structure, and 'thinginess'. Literate adults strategically use both types of semiosis as they engage in various genres of private and public life, which themselves can be thought of as forming a continuum between the two types of semiotic practices.

It is on the lexicogrammatical and, even more so, on the clause level that these two forms of semiosis manifest themselves through various strategies that SFL collectively refers to as grammatical metaphor. Among the most important are forms of clause reduction, the possibility of expressing various conjunctive relationships as processes and circumstances, ways of establishing logical relations within rather than across clauses, and, as already mentioned, nominalizations. With regard to L2 acquisition, this shift describes particularly aptly the transition from intermediate to advanced language abilities, which is characterized by and requires the cognitive move of restructuring the iconic, interactively-driven, experiential expression into a metaphorical and objective one.

Building on the dialogicality of tasks: from overt to textual to systemic dialogicality

A third perspective affirms one of the original attractions of task, namely its dialogic nature and its genius of recognizing the interactive nature of communicative competence as Hymes (1972) presented it. But in limiting itself to an overt form of dialogicality 'task', it seriously understated more covert, though equally powerful forms of dialogicality that manifest themselves in all language use, synchronically as well as diachronically. Particularly insightful treatments of this phenomenon are found in the work of the Russian philologist Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986). Bakhtin notes a dynamic dialogicality between centrifugal, dispersing forces and centripetal, centering forces. The former drive towards change because the particularities of each instance of language use, the utterance, are in fact creations of the individual user under different and non-replicable circumstances. The latter, centering forces move toward what Wertsch (2006) calls generalized collective dialogue, because they reference previous language use in a stabilizing fashion that enables language to continue to function as language in the first place.

But on a deeper level of dialogicality, Bakhtin emphasizes that a defining property of all utterances is that they exist in constant dialogic contact with other utterances: they are "filled with dialogic overtones" (1986: 102) to such an extent that we do not really own language, but, to follow Holquist's (1981) characterization of Bakhtin's position, rent it. If that is so, then the simple dialogicality of interactive tasks must be linked to the complex dialogicality of texts, because it is in texts that the potentiality of the code - its 'resource-full-ness' - resides, and it is within texts that the kind of multivoicedness and heteroglossia that Bakhtin foregrounds can be found.

Reframing tasks: from activity-oriented to genre-based tasks

For the fourth perspective in support of reconceptualizing task with the construct genre we turn once more to Halliday (1994), who refers to the "functional" character of language along three dimensions:

- (1) in terms of how language is used (because everything said or written occurs in some context of use);
- (2) in terms of its functional components that he identifies as the ideational (how we understand our environment), the interpersonal (how we act on others) and the textual (the way the two other metafunctions are instantiated in a particular spoken or written text);
- (3) in terms of each element of the language functioning with respect to the whole language system.

Schleppegrell (2004: 32) summarizes that stance like this:

“Systemic-functional linguistics highlights the ways linguistic choices contribute to the realization of social contexts. It connects the linguistic and the social by offering descriptions of language form that show the meanings those forms realize and by offering descriptions of the meanings construed by language in relation to social context.”

In such an approach, registers become constellations of lexical and grammatical features that construe a particular situational context as they express field (what is going on in terms of socio-semiotic processes and experiences), tenor (who is taking part in terms of socio-semiotic roles and relations of the interactants), and mode (the role played by language and other semiotic systems in context in relation to field, tenor, each other, and other social processes; cf. Matthiessen, 1993 and his discussion of metafunctions, 2006). As stated, the crucial translation of these relatively abstract notions into curriculum and pedagogy occurs through the construct of genre.

Linking task and language acquisition: A proposal for a curricular progression

The German Department at Georgetown University (GUGD) has found this way of viewing language and, by extension, language teaching and learning to be particularly relevant to its undergraduate curriculum. Transferring notions that were originally developed for understanding L1 acquisition into the context of instructed L2 learning for the purposes of conceptualizing the long-term process of developing advanced-level L2 abilities, it has developed a five-level curriculum.

Its first three levels consist of sequenced courses that each last either one semester or one academic year, depending on whether they are taken intensively or non-intensively, respectively. They are followed by a group of six courses at Level IV that have similar acquisitional and pedagogical goals yet differing content foci. Upon completing at least one Level IV course, students are eligible to take any of an open-ended number of courses at Level V that reflect broad student and faculty content and research interests. Expressing this sequence in terms of goals, we can say that the Level I course “Contemporary Germany” develops students’ basic knowledge about the German-speaking world and introduces them to cultural notions of time and space as these play themselves out in such topics as talking about oneself and others (family and friends), referring to activities and events (in present and past story-telling), occupations and pastimes (school, work, and free time), and the world around us (environment, residence, etc.). The Level II course, “Experiencing the German-speaking World,” further develops students’ knowledge of and self-expression about various culturally and politically significant topics, such as national identity, the environment, or art. The themes and topics

expand on those in Level I, in terms of complexity and variety; in terms of length; in terms of processing focus; and in terms of presumed cultural knowledge that invites a number of perspectives on a given issue. These content and language challenges lay the groundwork for the Level III course, “German Stories, German Histories,” with its focus on the period 1945 to the present as reflected in personal and public stories. All Level IV courses focus on prominent characteristics of a range of genres in the secondary discourses of public life (both monologic and interactive), textual organization according to underlying cognitive structures, the relationship of author stance and intentionality to language use, expanded lexicogrammatical patterns, and differentiated thematic vocabulary, including, as appropriate, special characteristics of literary language. Level V courses explore topics in 18th to 20th century German literature, culture, and linguistics with an explicit emphasis on developing and connecting three areas: (1) elaborated content-knowledge about the German-speaking cultural area; (2) a high level of sensitivity and nuanced perspective toward other and self in a cultural context; and (3) the ability to function in the German language with academic level proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity.

Genre in the curriculum

The texts that deliver this content follow the primary-secondary discourse continuum across the five curricular levels. Table 1, the result of an early internal analysis of the genres used at four instructional levels, confirms this progression.

The majority of texts that represent Level I belong to the sphere of primary discourses characterized by informal communication between intimates on topics of common knowledge like personal information, food, housing, and travel. The most prominent and frequent genres on this level are casual conversations, picture stories involving narration about aspects of personal life, cartoons, and personal narratives. Nevertheless, already at this level, students are familiarized with genres that stand in the middle of the continuum of primary to secondary discourses and are introduced to secondary genres used in the discourses of public life, such as ads for housing and travel found in newspapers, various service encounters, newspaper feature articles, and statistics on health care. The Level II course features a mix of primary and secondary discourse materials. While Level III is still rooted in the primary discourse genres such as personal narratives, it expands this focus to narratives placed into a larger institutional or historical context. At this level, individual narratives about major historical events, such as World War II or German unification, are juxtaposed with secondary genres focusing on the same events, such as historical accounts, chronicles, political speeches, and documentaries. Level IV completes the shift into the secondary uses of language by focusing on public genres beyond narratives, such as political speeches, academic articles, or editorials.

Table 1: Genres across the GUGD curriculum: From primary to secondary discourses

	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Primary discourses	casual conversations (14) picture story (15) cartoon strip personal narrative (2) recipe	personal narrative journal entry	journal entry (4) personal narrative (4)	
“Blurred” discourses, including literary works and other forms of artistic expression	personal ads (many in one newspaper section) culinary show information enquiry (3) short descriptive text song rhyme (2) poem (7)	TV drama personal essay (3) autobiographical portrait short novel poem (5) song literary fairy tale (4) autobiographical account	short story (2) poem song (2) novel dramatic film (2) short story/personal narrative autobiographical account	novel poem short story (within it: formal letter/phone conversation)
Secondary discourses	service encounters (4) weather report report card information text (2) housing ads (2) traveling ads (many in 1 newspaper section) TV report statistical report (3) detective story/police report pros and cons newspaper feature article (2)	biographical chronicle artistic manifestos newspaper article (2) statistical report descriptive texts documentary film short film (intro to the city) interview magazine feature article TV report documentary (3) statistical report (5) chronicle (2) argumentative essay short opinion poll answers short lecture information text brochure encyclopedia article	film review documentary film descriptive essay historical essay interview/personal narrative historical recount historical chronicle interview (3) political appeal (3) graphs/charts slogans newspaper article news report (2) political caricature journalistic essay/report political cartoon (2) political pamphlet (2) biographical chronicle chronicle	surveys and questionnaires chronicle political speech (2) historical narrative reflective essay/personal narrative information text information text/instructions/glossary academic comparative article editorial (3) editorial/study report formal interview information text/book introduction essay (Feuilleton)

Genre-based tasks

Explicitly tied to particular texts and genres, and thus the primary-secondary discourse continuum, are the speaking and writing tasks within the curriculum. For each task, regardless of curricular level, textual genres used in instructional units serve either as models or as topical bases for students’ performance. For example, the task of writing a political appeal for the Level III course is based on the model of a German political appeal introduced and thoroughly

analyzed in instruction. The writing task of *précis*, implemented in Level IV, is tied to the teacher model of a *précis*, and is topically based on and written about texts that represent the genre of a journalistic essay.

The following two tables, Table 2 and Table 3, illustrate how tasks establish a progression across the curriculum in order to support students' acquisition of advanced L2 abilities. Tasks are presented in the order in which they are introduced in the courses across the four instructional levels.

Table 2: Writing tasks across the GUGD curriculum, Levels I – IV

Level I	Level II	Level III	Text in Context (Level IV)
informal personal introduction	feature article for newspaper	thank-you letter	personal letter
invitation	feature article for newspaper	story	semi-personal letter
personal letter	political appeal	story	letter to a journal editor
personal letter	letter of introduction for internship	political appeal	journalistic report
postcard	fairy-tale	newspaper article	<i>précis</i>
letter to police investigator	ending to a novel	journalistic portrait	formal speech
narrative			
horoscope			
personal letter			

As expected, writing tasks from levels I - IV reveal a progression from primary and personal genres at Level I (e.g., personal letters, invitations) to more formal and public genres that develop student abilities to construct discourse that expands into the public sphere. At Level II the focus on presenting personal information from Level I continues but shifts to more formal and public contexts (e.g., personal introduction in a job application). While Level III students continue to work with the genre of personal narratives, they learn how to contextualize these narratives mainly through comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and presentation of alternative perspectives within major historical events, thus preparing them for the Level IV courses that deliberately extend personal discourses into a more abstract and public realm, and require dramatically different framing (for the importance of framing for language acquisition, see Bygate & Samuda, 2005).

A similar trajectory is found in the speaking tasks across levels I through IV.

Table 3: Speaking tasks across the GUGD curriculum, Levels I - IV

Level I	Level II	Level III	Text in Context (Level IV)
monologic presentation to classmates	poetry performance	talk show	panel discussion
monologic presentation to classmates	talk show	courtroom trial	formal lecture
informal conversation with friend	description of painting as part of a museum tour	talk show	formal lecture
monologic presentation to classmates	conversation in travel agency	talk show	panel discussion
monologic presentation to classmates	re-telling of a fairy tale	courtroom trial	
informal conversation with friend	personal narrative	talk show	

Speaking tasks at Level I reflect both the level's focus on interactive, dialogic language use and the monologic flavor of beginning students' language processing; the context remains informal and interactive. Level II speaking events engage the learners in telling primarily personal, informal stories but in more public settings (e.g., talk show, museum tour, travel agency, story hour). Level III continues to emphasize the personal narrative, but, by instituting the panel discussion/talk show as the predominant speaking event, it situates spoken language in a public setting that requires monologic language use. Level IV represents a further shift toward public, monologic language use in a formal, academic setting.

Linking genre-based tasks to pedagogy: Developing vocabulary knowledge

While the previous section focused on how a textual grounding of task would enable task to support curriculum construction, in this section we argue that a textual grounding of task also has favorable pedagogical implications. We have chosen the development of vocabulary knowledge as a way of showing that a literacy orientation and the curricular embeddedness of tasks are particularly well suited to what is increasingly being understood as a central feature of vocabulary learning, namely its long-term developmental trajectory. All four features that we have previously highlighted as a way of reconsidering the notion of task apply to tasks that are focused on vocabulary development, arguably one of the crucial areas at advanced levels of L2 abilities.

With regard to the curricular embeddedness of tasks, such a reconceptualization allows us to recognize that L2 vocabulary development is not captured in terms of on or off, right or

wrong, acquired or not acquired. This is in line with Henriksen's (1999) findings that highlight a trajectory from partial to precise knowledge and a second dimension of depth of word knowledge that moves from intensional to extensional links (respectively from members of a word family to semantic relationships among words) and from receptive to productive knowledge. Nor is vocabulary knowledge well described as fixed word knowledge. Instead it must be considered as more or less appropriate within a larger discursive context that is itself specified through the construct of register and genre (cf. Schwanenflugel & Akin, 1994). Finally, the ability to acquire vocabulary is intimately related to the imitation and mimesis that are part of the dialogicality of language. Melka's findings (1997) regarding L1 development in children seem to apply as well to adults: fixed usage in a particular context gradually gives way to comprehended production that is strongly linked to the original context in which the vocabulary was initially learned, and finally develops into fully productive vocabulary use in novel contexts (see also Joe, 1998). In sum, vocabulary knowledge needs to be developmentally conceptualized and pedagogically instantiated over longer curricular spans and a suitable pedagogy needs to be found that respects the fact that it is functionally differentiated and contextualized knowledge that is accrued over time.

In a thematically and generically oriented, task-based curriculum such as the GUGD suitable pedagogical approaches for vocabulary development include:

- (1) considerable amounts of extensive and intensive reading in a thematically organized environment;
- (2) work with those texts to create semantic webs by mining a text for semantically related words that express a given concept (for the notion of mining texts, see also Greene, 1992);
- (3) incorporation of recurring, scaffolded, and generically categorized tasks that have very high probabilities of use for phrases that are appropriate, for example, to expressing an opinion in a debate, analyzing a text in an oral presentation on authorial intention, or retelling a story.

All three approaches allow and require students to continuously use and expand vocabulary in order to acquire the differentiation and depth necessary for advanced forms of literacy. The following table shows how such vocabulary development occurs across three curricular levels in one particular area, that of the expression of opinions:

Table 4: Scaffolding learners' ability to EXPRESS AN OPINION across the curriculum:
 Sentence stems and semi-fixed expressions

Level II	
REDEMittel Nationalstolz ist/bedeutet/heißt für mich....	Expressions for talking Pride in one's country means for me...
Stolz auf etwas sein bedeutet für mich, dass ...	To be proud of something means for me that ...
Ich bin stolz auf (+ Akk.)...	I am proud of ...
Ich halte die Meinung von ____ für _____	I consider the opinion of (person) to be (characteristic – adjective)
Eigentlich denke ich, dass...	Actually I think that...
Meiner Meinung nach ist sein Kommentar sehr polemisch/abwägend/ambivalent.	In my opinion his comment is (characteristic – adj. – some choices given)
eine Meinung begründen	to lay a foundation for an opinion
Level III	
Meinungsausdrücke (partial listing)	Expressions for stating one's opinion
<i>Wie kann man eine persönliche Meinung äußern?</i>	<i>How can one express a personal opinion?</i>
Ich bin der Meinung/Ansicht, dass ...	I am of the opinion/view, that ...
Meiner Meinung nach ist ...	In my opinion, (verb) ...
Ich sehe die Sache so: ...	I see the situation in this way: ...
Es kommt darauf an, ob ...	It depends on whether ...
Auf der einen Seite, auf der anderen Seite ...	On the one hand ... on the other hand ...
Was ist denn Ihre Meinung?	Well, what is your opinion?
Level IV	
Meinungen austauschen – eine Diskussion führen (partial listing)	Exchanging opinions – leading a discussion/debate
Mit einer Aussage/einer Meinung übereinstimmen	agree with a statement/opinion
eine Meinung teilen	share an opinion
einen Standpunkt vertreten/verteidigen	represent/defend a position
jemandem zustimmen	agree with someone (dative)
eine Behauptung aufstellen, ohne sie zu begründen ohne sie zu stützen unbegründete Behauptungen aufstellen	present a claim/opinion, without laying a foundation without supporting it present unsupported claims/opinions
ein Argument/vorbringen/formulieren/neu formulieren/ umformulieren	bring up/formulate/reformulate/reword an argument (in a discussion)
eine Gegenmeinung berücksichtigen/in Betracht ziehen	take a counter opinion into consideration/into account
einem Argument folgen	follow an argument
ein Thema ansprechen/vorbringen/vermeiden	introduce/bring up/avoid a topic/theme

Throughout the curriculum, learners receive vocabulary sheets that visualize, through spatial, typographic, and graphical means, the functionally organized, generically appropriate ways of expressing their opinions in tasks involving discussion or debate. In earlier levels, these “semantic webs” or “semantic fields” are closely connected to the theme at hand. Thus, the functional phrases for Level II reflect the topic *national pride*, thereby enabling students to handle the cognitively challenging task of conducting a coherent, multi-person argument on the subject. At higher levels, they increasingly invite nuanced choices in complex production tasks that emulate the secondary discourses of public language.

When learners use the scaffolds of the semantic webs and the functional phrase charts (see Table 4), the cognitive load during performance is decreased, allowing them to focus attention on complexity and accuracy while expressing their opinions cohesively and coherently in a generically defined task. Fluency develops over the course of the semester, indeed the entire curriculum, with repeated opportunities for performing such tasks. In this fashion learners acquire vocabulary knowledge that is highly contextualized along the three dimensions elucidated in Henriksen (1999). Obviously, vocabulary assessment will have to recognize the fact that such vocabulary knowledge combines declarative and episodic forms. (See Ellis, 2005 for an excellent discussion on the connections and dissociations of different forms of knowledge that accrue in L2 learning over time.)

Detailed research (Sprang, 2003) has shown that this approach to vocabulary development enables students at all levels, but particularly advanced learners, to acquire areas of lexicogrammar that have customarily been judged as nearly beyond the reach of instructed learners. The following generalizations stand out:

- Recurrent tasks provide enhanced exposure to L2 vocabulary in performance-specific contexts that learners can remember as exemplars;
- Explicit vocabulary instruction is appropriate, particularly when it is provided in terms of semantic fields;
- Mining texts for vocabulary enables learners’ knowledge to move beyond receptive to productive knowledge, and beyond comprehended reproduction to creative levels of production that is both appropriate and accurate;
- Developing vocabulary knowledge demands appropriate forms of assessment in order to capture it.

More broadly, a genre-based approach can clarify not only the relation of contextual factors to textual structures by means of a generic structure potential (cultural coherence) but, critically, the lexico-grammatical realizations of the register variables of tenor, field, and mode (situational coherence). In that case, global and local coherence emerge in a dialectical process of instantiating each other (cf. Ryshina-Pankova’s study of coherence in advanced writing, 2006). Teaching vocabulary in this fashion is thus an integral part of a genre-oriented literacy.

Linking genre-based tasks to educational outcomes assessment

Reflecting a comprehensive understanding of curriculum construction that involves all aspects of educational planning and practice, the paper concludes by considering the role genre-based tasks can play in developing criteria for assessing L2 learners' language abilities and content knowledge (see Norris's treatment of educative assessment, 2005, 2006; also Macken & Slade, 1993, for the curricular base of genre-oriented task assessment). Necessarily local, the considerations outlined here all refer to the curricular, pedagogical, and assessment work implemented within the GUGD. For space reasons we have chosen the assessment of writing abilities, an area that has received considerable emphasis in the program, as a way to exemplify possible consequences for assessment practices.

Developing tasks in a genre environment: The case of writing tasks

The design features that have become standard across the writing tasks that instantiate the curriculum draw extensively on genre theory as it has evolved within SFL, with two constructs of genre playing particularly important roles. The first refers to schematic structure, or the stagedness of texts, the second to register variables as understood in terms of field, tenor, and mode.

Understanding the schematic structure of a text

Schematic structure is a way of capturing the ordering of stages, or moves, that typically occur in genres. These recurrent text-structural patterns show how a text moves from Point A to Point B in what is referred to as a "moves analysis." In the case of oral personal narratives (see particularly Labov & Waletzky's 1972 analysis, reprinted 1997), the stages include: the abstract, the orientation, the complicating action, evaluation, the resolution, and coda – where the orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and resolution are required components to a story and their absence would signify the inability to tell a personal story properly.

By contrast, the schematic structure and the communicative purpose of the genre of *Aufruf* (political appeal), which occurs in Level III, is more akin to a problem-solution organization. It involves three obligatory stages of title, problem statement, and call for action, and three optional stages that include contextualizing the problem, recognizing past achievements, and making arguments for action (Crane, Liamkina & Ryshina-Pankova, 2004).

Table 5: Schematic structure and communicative purposes of the moves of the genre *Aufruf* (political appeal)

I. Title – to draw attention, to set up topic	What is this about?
II. [Address] ↵ – to identify and address the audience, to create rapport with it	Whom are you talking to?
III. [Contextualization] ↵ – to contextualize appeal via mention of any of the following: the body that created the <i>Aufruf</i> , the conditions under which the authors met (i.e., their responsibilities, titles, whom they represent, etc.), the place where they met	What's the background to the text and the authors?
IV. Problem statement – to identify and/or describe the main problem that is the reason for the <i>Aufruf</i>	What's the problem?
V. [Recognition of achievements] ↵ – to positively evaluate actions that have already been taken (often by the audience) to overcome the problems related to the main problem. Additional function: to create rapport with the audience; to encourage it to keep reading/listening; to give hope that the problems can be overcome	What successful actions have been undertaken? Why do you think I can help?
VI. Proposed action or Call for action ↵ – to propose one or several alternatives for action to overcome the main problem identified in move IV; to urge audience to become involved, to answer audience's question "What can I do?"	What can be done to solve the problem?
VII. [Argument for action] ↵ – to present reasons for taking a certain course of action	Why should I take part in the proposed action?
VIII. [Date/Place] ↵ – to anchor the <i>Aufruf</i> temporally and geographically as a historical/political document	When and where was this appeal officially agreed upon?
IX. [Signatures] ↵ – to give audience a chance to express solidarity, to demonstrate how many people agree with the evaluation of the problem and proposed course of action	Who officially consented to this appeal?

(**bolded** – obligatory move, [...] – optional move, ↵ - repeated move)

Outlining the expected moves or stages in a particular text serves two interrelated purposes. From the standpoint of teaching and learning it provides teachers and students with valuable information regarding the construction of task. From the standpoint of assessment, it provides assessors, e.g. teachers and students with an initial framework for the steps involved in fulfilling the expectations of the genre. Either way, determining the schematic structure of a genre has the potential to strengthen learners' awareness of discourse-level features as relating to the larger communicative purpose of the task. It can also heighten learners' awareness of planning, which is important given the cognitively challenging nature of these tasks relative to the respective instructional levels in which they appear (see, for example, Bygate & Samuda, 2005). Finally, the schematic structure provides instructors with an important resource for judging language abilities.

Register variables

The delineation of register variables provides a second important way in which the notion of genre affects task design. As discussed earlier, register refers to the total linguistic meaning potential that exists for a given situation and is informed by the three contextual variables of field, tenor, and mode which, together, provide insight on how and why certain linguistic choices are made within a given text. For example, for the genre *Aufruf* (political appeal), the ideational meaning typically refers to a serious cause that the writer/speaker feels passionate about changing; interpersonal meaning usually construes a peer relationship between writer and audience who roughly share the same level of power but who, as a group, juxtapose themselves against another group or individual with greater power. As a way of creating solidarity with the audience, the textual meaning manifests itself through the thematization of actors involved – thus contributing to the “us” vs. “them” dichotomy that pervades such texts.

Explicating register variables strengthens learners’ awareness of the intricate connection between form and meaning by providing unambiguous motivation for use of particular lexicogrammatical forms expected in the text. This further encourages learners to negotiate between individual choice and generic convention in their language use, thereby helping them to become well - informed and empowered language users. For assessment, specification of these register variables incorporates the situational context represented in the task and the linguistic means that are appropriate for the realization of the genre.

Considerations for task design

Stagedness and register variables manifest themselves in the tripartite structure of task appropriateness, content, and language focus that characterizes all writing task guidelines within the curriculum. The first rubric, Task Appropriateness, outlines the essentials of the task situation, including the communicative purpose and the intended audience. For assessment, Task Appropriateness includes the degree to which the task process is followed, the schematic structure in the form of moves is realized, and the way in which interpersonal tenor is handled. A shorthand metaphor for assessment is in terms of breadth of generic moves. The second rubric, Content, outlines the level of engagement with the content material expected of the students. Assessment of this category pertains to writers’ ability to fulfill the generic moves, and is conveyed through the metaphor of depth of content. The third and final task category, Language Focus, delineates the specific linguistic features that make the text recognizable as a particular genre and that meet the demands of the situation. In terms of assessment, it refers to the quality of the language used to realize the generic moves. Language use here is understood in terms of discourse- and sentence-level features.

Table 6 presents an English translation of the writing task guidelines students receive for the *Aufruf* task.

Table 6: Writing Task Guidelines: *Aufruf* (Level III, Advanced German, second semester)
(Translated from German)

Level III: German Stories, German Histories Political Appeal	
<p>Task: Public appeal</p> <p>As an engaged student and citizen, you are well informed about hot topics and problems at Georgetown University as well as around the world. At this point, you are actively involved with a particular topic/problem. To address this problem, you will write a public appeal, or manifesto, which you will want to present publicly and publish. Your appeal should have the following parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an engaging title, - a description of the problem, - one or more suggestions for solving the problem, and - an appeal for concrete action. <p>The goal of your appeal is to motivate the audience to act. The style of your appeal (formal, informal) depends on the particular audience that you want to reach.</p>	
<p>Content</p> <p>The political appeals that we have worked on in class ("For our Country" and the appeal by Stefan Heym) serve as the basis for this assignment. Particularly relevant are organizational structure and rhetorical means employed by the model texts.</p> <p>The following points need to be present in your appeal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You define the topic of the appeal: it can pertain to either (world) politics or life at Georgetown University • Your audience and your relationship to this group must be clearly identifiable • Place and date of your public presentation of the appeal • Description of the problem, including background information regarding and consequences of the problem • Suggestion(s) for solving the problem, e.g., via presenting alternatives or contrasts • Appeal for concrete action – What should the readers/listeners do? • Signature(s): individual or as a fictive group 	
<p>Language focus</p> <p>At the discourse level: Describing, justifying, persuading, calling for action</p> <p>At the sentence level: Complex syntax (focus on the correct verb position):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relative clauses for describing - temporal clauses for defining time periods - dependent clauses for justifying (e.g., "because") <p>Use of adjectives to describe (focus on correct adjective endings) Imperative sentences addressed to the audience to call for action</p> <p>At the word level: Vocabulary relevant for the chosen topic Use of rhetorical devices typical of a public appeal</p>	
<p>Writing process:</p> <p>Length:</p>	<p>Preparation worksheet, essay, and revision; first version due; final version due</p> <p>1.5-2 pages, double-spaced, with typed Umlauts</p>
<p>Assessment criteria:</p> <p>The three categories of task, content, and language focus are weighed equally. The overall grade is an average of the three grades for these categories. You can improve your grade for the second draft maximally up to 6 points (very good revision: improvement by 6 points; good revision: improvement by 3 points; satisfactory or poor revision: no improvement of the grade).</p>	

While the guidelines may at first glance appear overly detailed, such detail gives students the necessary contextual information that enables them to construe complex and nuanced meanings within the genre from the beginning stages of text production. Because the linguistic features needed to complete the task are delineated in the guidelines with clear connections between form and meaning, students are encouraged to play and experiment with the language in a safe environment that is designed for their success.

Furthermore, the major foci of the task guidelines reflect closely the rhetorical features, topic information, and language features that were emphasized during the scaffolded instructional treatment of two examples of actual *Aufrufe* that appeared in Germany at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Pedagogies associated with a particular text or texts can take anywhere from two or three instructional periods and culminate in the introduction of writing task guidelines. Students typically have one week before turning in a first draft of the assignment. Assessment of writing tasks mirrors the writing task guidelines along each of the three task categories. The instructor marks and grades the first draft and includes comments pertaining to (1) the degree to which task requirements are fulfilled, i.e., the degree to which the obligatory properties of the genre are addressed; (2) the depth of the content that elaborates each of the generic moves; and (3) the quality of language use i.e., complexity and accuracy.

There is thus a uniformity to the assessment of all writing performances across the curriculum while each task is embedded within a curricular unit and the genre privileged in its thematic focus. Throughout the curriculum students work with a general coding sheet that enables them, on their own, to attend to corrections between the first and second draft. Additionally, for specific writing tasks, students receive individual as well as group-oriented written feedback that addresses both text content and organizational concerns and also language-oriented issues, the latter frequently oriented toward vocabulary, particularly extended collocations, that arise within a given task.

Finally, as two qualitative action-research projects in the department affirmed one on departmental members' perceptions of genre in instruction and the other on graduate student teachers' professional development, work with this approach has resulted in important wash-back effects not only on curriculum maintenance, but also on teachers' professional development. Instructors' knowledge base of how texts work has expanded to consider the dominant linguistic features of texts that students need to be aware of and has led to the creation of new and better tasks that elicit desirable linguistic structures as they relate to specific course goals. As Byrnes states, "by focusing on task-based assessment—here writing—faculty faced their own assumptions about long-term development in instructed L2 learning and appropriate learning outcomes at particular states in that sequence" (2002, p. 428). The *Aufruf* is one such example. In the end, through such an approach to language use, which expects L2 learners to interpret, interact with, and create texts through an understanding of the established linguistic and rhetorical patterns that give them meaning, texts themselves become valuable "real-world" criteria for task-based assessment.

Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have argued that the notion of task can be reconceptualized to become the basis for multi-year curricula that acknowledge the attainment of advanced-level literacy abilities in an L2 as a viable and attainable goal for adult learners. Specifically, when the construct of task becomes text-based or, more precisely, when it is genre-derived within a framework for language use that ranges textually across a continuum of personal and public social contexts, task can appropriate from genre both schematic structure and register variables that provide a powerful link between socially situated language use and choices of language forms. When text and genre are used to inform task design it is possible to link cultural texts, curriculum, and pedagogy in support of extended language learning toward competent multiple literacies.

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