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# **Attending to form in a meaning-focused programme: the integration of grammar into a task-based blended learning programme**

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## **Introduction**

This article intends to explore the views of teachers and students as to the place of grammar in a task-based language learning programme. After overviewing the theories of task-based learning and teaching and the place of grammar within that approach, we will examine how those theories have influenced our programme design.

Our paper is based on the work of the team of teachers and technicians involved in a Business English blended learning programme launched in 2008 at the University of Nantes in France. This programme was implemented in the first year of a degree in Foreign Languages and International Trade as an attempt to find an answer to the problem of large groups of students. There can be up to 50 students in a group for a total of more than 700 students in the first year. We also wanted to find a solution for the lack of motivation and involvement in language classes, to provide more individual feedback to students and to encourage collaborative work (Narcy-Combes, 2008).

In the second semester of the academic year, first-year students in Applied Foreign Languages and International Trade (“Langues Étrangères Appliquées” or LEA) attend four hours of compulsory “Business English and Translation” classes every week: one hour with the entire class and one hour in small groups for classroom sessions, and two hours in mini-groups of four students without their teacher for the preparation of tasks. Since January 2011, third-year students have benefited from the same type of programme but with a different organisation depending on the week concerned: either three hours with the entire group or one hour with the entire group and two hours in mini-groups.

Before the programme was developed, our hypotheses were that motivation and interest would be sustained if students were offered more personalized and

individual tutoring and feedback. We also expected that regular work on collaborative tasks would result in acquisition both in terms of linguistic skills and organisational skills, as students have to complete these tasks in groups (Lantolf, 2000). The programme now includes four oral tasks (*e.g.* presentations, simulations of meetings or of business conversations) and four written tasks (*e.g.* reports, translations).

Studies are currently being carried out as to students' beliefs about the programme, subsequent to their undertaking the work involved.

### **Bringing beliefs to the surface prior to programme development**

The development of the new programme had to take on board the different beliefs regarding the place and the importance of grammar, expressed by both teachers and students. In the early stages of development, bringing out these beliefs was important, as was discussing them openly, in order that those using the programme could understand the place given to grammar and especially that this essential element of language learning was not, in fact, neglected. This discussion took place within the teaching team initially, but may well in the future be the subject of discussion within the teaching groups, since students frequently express the opinion that there is insufficient grammar focus. It may well be that this discussion brings out essentially differences between the meaning that students and teachers attribute to the term "grammar". Are teachers looking for signs of grammatical competence, for example, while students are looking for exercises that will prove their knowledge of the system? It would be interesting to look at this point. Questionnaires were given to LEA students at the end of the year by J. McAllister (research in progress). They illustrate student beliefs about the perceived importance of several aspects of language learning including grammar as well as the satisfaction regarding these aspects and their weight in the programme. On a scale of 1 to 4, grammar is given a score of 3.3 with regards to perceived importance, in joint fifth place (out of ten). However, in terms of student satisfaction with the programme, grammar practice drops slightly to 2.7, and is in last place.

The initial assumption by one of the authors regarding beliefs was prompted by the observations carried out by students in their third year of a degree course in Foreign Language, Literature and Civilisation studies, undertaking work experience in secondary schools. This work experience involved the observation of L2 teaching approaches and, in the resulting dissertation, few of these students reported having observed task-based learning during lessons whilst there seemed to be a prevalence of communicative activities, preceded by a grammar focus, often deductive, with the presentation and explanation of the rule giving rise to a battery of exercises using the form that had been explained and ending in a communicative activity designed to promote the use of the targeted form. This is the classic PPP approach – Present

the structure, Practice it, Produce it. This may be because teachers are likely to reproduce the approaches used when they themselves learnt, the communicative approach being prevalent in the 80s and 90s, in France. Van den Branden (2006: 221-222) summarises research showing that “many teachers appear to be resistant to external intrusions: to take decisions they primarily rely on their own experiences in the classroom, either as a learner or as a teacher” (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Lortie, 1975; Richards, 1998) and adds that

[...] it is not so much the educational training enjoyed by the teachers or the academic wisdom they are offered in inservice training or in educational journals, but what they have done and do in the classroom itself, and the meaning that they attach to these experiences, that constitute the backbone of what they think and believe about education (Van den Branden, 2006: 222).

An analysis of textbooks on the market, especially those published pre-CEF (Common European Framework) and those published shortly after, again reveals a preponderance of communicative activities, rather than tasks, and the PPP approach. The assumption was made that the LEA 1 students targeted by the new programme were likely to have followed this kind of course.

### **Effect of these beliefs on programme content**

In terms of the teachers’ beliefs, it has been important to include activities and tasks which allow grammatical accuracy to be an important criterion for the assessment of successful realisation of the task. In fact, grammatical accuracy appears in many forms in the assessment criteria. For the pre-task, linguistic accuracy accounts for 50% of the assessment, although the latter is not expressed in terms of a mark, but in terms of indicators of a given level. For the end of term exam, linguistic competence is again expressed in terms of indicators of a given level, but is allocated a range of marks depending on syntactic complexity, grammatical accuracy and richness of the language. The place of grammatical awareness activities in the pre-tasks and post-task feedback is also given importance in discussions on the tasks. All tasks include some of these activities in the pre-tasks, and the feedback after all tasks is highly likely to include some calls for remedial action to be undertaken on one grammatical form or another.

For the students, it seems clear that the grammatical elements need to be flagged up more explicitly, since we believe that there is ample opportunity within the programme content for this work to be done, but they clearly do not recognise those opportunities. It may be that too much emphasis is placed on the successful completion of the task, making them think that the pre-tasks are less important. This could also explain another result from the previously-mentioned questionnaire: only 26% of the students regularly carry out all of the pre-tasks, with a further 70% doing them infrequently or partially, but 3% declare never having done them (Buck & McAllister, 2011). Since one of the foci on form

takes place during the pre-tasks, the importance of doing this work is clearly something we need to work on. Similarly, although the post-task feedback indicates the remedial work to be done and where examples of such work can be found, there is no obligation for the student to do it.

### **Task-based language teaching and learning (TBLT): an overview**

As a team, the approach adopted falls within the framework of task-based teaching and learning. In early team meetings, and even after four years of experimentation, discussion often revolves around what exactly constitutes a task. A plethora of definitions of “task” exists. Among those which have proved important for our discussion are these (definitions quoted by Van den Branden, 2006: 7-8):

Nunan, 1989: “A piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form.”

This is one of the earlier definitions and one which clearly places the primary focus on meaning and on “learning by doing”.

Willis, 1996: “[...] activities where the TL is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome.”

This is a much broader definition which could encourage those currently engaging in communicative approaches to continue to do so. The idea of “outcome” to a task is important.

Skehan, 1998: “A task is an activity: meaning is primary, learners are not given other people’s meanings to regurgitate, there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities, task completion has some sort of priority, the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.”

The idea of “outcome” occurs again, with the tasks both being the means and the result. Of particular interest is the idea that learners do not simply “regurgitate” – they have to process the input and come up with their own ideas using it. Also of relevance to our programme is the idea of “real-world tasks”, as we will show later in this paper.

Bachman & Palmer, 1996: “[...] an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or outcome in a particular situation.”

Again, the idea of “using language” to get to the outcome, *i.e.* the language is both the means and the result, makes this definition interesting for our programme.

Van den Branden (2006:4): “A task is an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language.”

The task is the means for getting to the end, and by engaging in it, the student has to use language.

There is a slight problem with these definitions, however, and that is the use of the word “activity” to define “task”. Earlier in this article, mention was made of communicative activities. This leads to an important question: when is an activity not a task? Ellis (2003: 3) refers to Crookes (1986) in writing “[...] in neither research nor language pedagogy is there complete agreement as to what constitutes a task, making definition problematic [...]”. He concludes thus: “[...] we need to recognize that the overall purpose of tasks is the same as exercises – learning a language – the difference lying in the means by which this purpose is achieved”. Widdowson (1998) distinguishes between “semantic meaning” being the focus of the exercise and “pragmatic meaning” being the focus of tasks, pointing out that exercises can require attention to meaning too (this being the case, for example, in exercises asking the learner to distinguish between several past tenses where the sentence gives the clue as to which tense is appropriate).

We chose to approach this question by looking at classroom events. We might attempt a classification of classroom events to explain what we mean by a task in our programme.

Exercises are primarily language/form-focused. They require the learner to intentionally focus on learning the correct form. They focus on the learner as a learner rather than as a user of the language. The knowledge of the form is a prerequisite for the exercise to be successfully completed.

Activities are simple tasks requiring language use for successful completion, and are the application of learnt forms. They may be limited in scope and require minimal decision-making on the part of the learner. A role-play where both learners are given cue cards on which their roles are written out for them in cue form would be an activity as it requires their voicing the remembered language prompted by the cues. An activity where the learner has to answer a postcard following the cues given to him is similar: it involves a peripheral understanding of the original postcard, but it especially requires the use of the forms learnt beforehand in order to convey the message as intended by the cues. Both of these activities are closely guided by the activity writer. Activities can be seen to need the application of know-how in order to be successful.

Tasks are more complex, and are primarily meaning-focused. This “primary focus on meaning” is seen by Ellis (2003) as one of the main features of TBLT. The participants act primarily as language users rather than as language learners, employing communicative processes to reach the objective. The developer of the task most probably does not know all of the possible outcomes of their task, as the outcome depends on the learners. This can be seen in the outcomes of some of the tasks developed for this programme. For example, in a first task about outsourcing, the thirteen “teams” in one teaching group, engaged in deciding to which country they might outsource or offshore in the future, came

up with thirteen radically different outcomes which they then presented orally. All of them had the same input and the same task details, but the results went from outsourcing but not offshoring, offshoring but not outsourcing, and both. Which part of the business would be offshored or outsourced was another variable as was the country (out of the four proposed) which occasionally included other countries, thus demonstrating further research having been undertaken by the learners. The task gave opportunity for individualisation of the outcome and also engaged the interest of the team doing it as well as the other teams who listened to the presentation. Using declarative knowledge and pragmatic know-how is necessary for the successful completion of a task.

It is important to note the word “primarily” – when engaged in a task, a learner is highly likely to see guidance on form or lexis, a switch (Ellis, 2003) from focus on meaning to focus on form almost like a “time-out” from the task itself. Long (1997) states that “focus on meaning alone (a) is insufficient to achieve full native-like competence, and (b) can be improved upon, in terms of both rate and ultimate attainment, by periodic attention to language as object”.

Instances of this “time-out” are observed regularly in the tasks we have developed. Equally, the more formal micro-tasks focusing on a grammar point or on essential vocabulary, specified as part of the pre-tasks, can be seen as a switch of attention from meaning to form.

The above classifications are not seen as categorical. The degree of personal involvement may vary in an activity and in a task. As part of the discussion on planning and designing the tasks, we took into account several of the key parameters as mentioned by Ellis (2003). In particular, authenticity, *i.e.* situational authenticity or real-world tasks, was important. To these was added interactional authenticity – the behaviour elicited by the task corresponds in some way to the kind of communication that arises from performing the task in the real-world. This is often difficult to achieve since, inevitably, the learners are not performing in the real world when they are in classroom 443 in a university in France.

We also wanted to ensure that all of the skills were covered at some point in the programme: that listening comprehension, for example, was not neglected in a programme where the tasks are all production tasks. The place chosen for the receptive skills was in the pre-tasks, where the input needed for task accomplishment was to be found.

Finally, the cognitive processes involved in task performance are a major parameter in TBLT, *i.e.* the processing of language which is needed in order to fulfil the task. Prabhu (1987) drew attention to the need for the learner to make connections, to extrapolate, evaluate, deduce, etc. from the input in order to decide on an appropriate output. There are instances of input processing in the tasks developed.

However, a further definition found in Ellis (2003) gave the way forward to our search for a middle way between communicative language teaching and

TBLT. He describes as task-supported learning those programmes that, while maintaining a primary focus on meaning, are developed so as to promote the use of a particular form in the productive stage. It is the term “task-supported learning” that most closely corresponds to the current tasks of our programme.

This research into definitions of classroom events and approaches allowed us to develop a definition of a task within our programme. A task involves learners in using language in order to achieve a set outcome. That “using language” involves all of the language skills, and the different facets of knowledge, skills and existential competence. Empirical knowledge of the language as system is part of these but is seen not as an add-on, or a separate part of the programme but as an integral part of the tasks themselves and the process the learner goes through in order to be able to accomplish the tasks.

The question then needed to be asked as to when grammar learning should occur within the tasks. There are two views of the place of grammar, as explained in Willis & Willis (2007). “Get it right in the beginning” refers to the view that it is important that the grammar is mastered before attempting to use it. The forms of the language are seen as the building blocks of the language and each stage in the process has to be correct before you can move on to the next. Forms are presented in an incremental fashion – mastery of one leading to the introduction of another. Ellis refers to this as “Focus on Forms”, in the plural (FonFs). Pre-selected forms are presented to the learner either explicitly (teaching the rules, structure-based instruction) or implicitly (inferring the rules from a given set of exercises, or communicative lessons containing the target form). Long (1997) further qualifies focus on forms as leading to a “classroom input that is functionally restricted and ‘impoverished’ in various ways. In other words, a focus on forms often leads to what Widdowson (1972) called language usage, not to realistic models of language use.”

It is difficult to see how this view could be incorporated into our programme as the learners are highly likely to have had a first learning of most of the key structures during their secondary school instruction. Our programme can, on the other hand, give them the opportunity to revise their prior knowledge while focussing on meaning.

The opposing view is expressed as “Get it right in the end” – focus on the meaning and let the grammar arise from the input and from the learner’s needs. Long (1997) explains focus on form thus:

Focus on form refers to how attentional resources are allocated, and involves briefly drawing students’ attention to linguistic elements (words, collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns, and so on), in context, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning, or communication, the temporary shifts in focal attention being triggered by students’ comprehension or production problems.

Ellis (2003) refers to two elements of this “Focus on Form” in the singular (FonF). Planned FonF is the treatment of pre-selected forms while the learner’s



primary focus is on processing meaning (communicative input and tasks containing the form), which would appear to be closer to the definition above of activity, and Incidental FonF, where the form is not pre-selected and attention occurs incidentally when the learner's primary focus is on meaning (recasts and negotiation of meaning during communicative interaction can be seen as examples of this, as can the "time out" previously mentioned). Long (1997) describes this shift of focus thus:

Learners' attention is briefly shifted to linguistic code features, in context, when students experience problems as they work on communicative tasks, *i.e.* in a sequence determined by their own internal syllabuses, current processing capacity, and learnability constraints.

Whilst it is clear that our programme is more based on the latter category, we have made provision for both planned and incidental FonF in our programme. However, this supposes another discussion: how far should the FonF be teacher-driven, or alternatively, learner-driven? If the learner reacts to the input and asks questions in order to understand the structures used in the input, this can be seen as reactive, or learner-driven, FonF as opposed to the pre-emptive teacher-driven attention to form. In many of our tasks, there is a pre-emptive teacher-driven element to focus on form in the choice of exercises and activities which make up the pre-tasks, but there is an invitation to reactive work given through feedback leading to remedial work. As we have already seen, learners performing meaning-focused activities can benefit by shifting their attention momentarily towards form, and such a shift can promote interlanguage restructuring. Therefore we can say that the tasks developed have provision for both types of FonF.

As part of the discussion, mentioned above, authenticity, this time of the input, was seen as an important criterion. There are ways of making the target form stand out more clearly to the student. One choice could have been to make the target structure more salient, using highlighting, pop-ups, or bold typeface. This is known as "enhanced input" (Sharwood Smith, 1993). Another choice would have been rewriting the input in order to include as many examples of the target structure as possible, an "input flood". The decision was to do neither but to use authentic input at all times. However, the adoption of a textbook, even one which uses texts taken from major journals such as the *Financial Times* or *The Economist*, partially precludes that, unless we decide not to use the texts available as part of the pre-tasks. The latter option was chosen for some tasks, where the input included documents taken from authentic sources and not modified in any way.

Some of our current pre-tasks do enhance the input, making the grammar point more obvious to promote the later use of it in production tasks, but there are no instances of input flood.

## **The effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction on pragmatic use of the language**

In the previous paragraphs, we have skirted around the issue of whether the explicit instruction of grammar works. Macaro & Masterman (2006: 2) state that “explicit grammar instruction results in gains in explicit knowledge and its application to specific grammar-related tasks but there is less evidence that it results in gains in production tasks”. Their research was carried out on an admissions procedure to a university-based modern foreign languages course where a grammar-based gap fill test and a translation one were given to prospective students. Prior explicit instruction was seen as beneficial for a test targeting solely the recognition of the grammar point, but the efficacy of it for a real-world task, in this case a translation task, was less clear.

However, declarative explicit knowledge of grammar and implicit, unanalysed awareness, may well interact in long-term memory. Known as the interface position (Ellis, 1994, cited in Ellis, 2003), this would advocate the need for both types of learning. This position reflects that chosen for our programme, where certain pre-tasks offer the potential for explicit learning and the input and performance give opportunities for implicit awareness to be shown.

It may be important to stress to teachers and pupils that the roles played by the teacher in a task-based environment differ slightly from those played in a more grammar-focused environment. When a focus on form(s) is taking place, the teacher is seen as a knowledgeable expert, who explains and guides. This occurs both pre- and post-task. When the focus is shifted to language, the teacher is both facilitator and guide, who clarifies a linguistic point, providing scaffolding to enable the student to phrase correctly, explains the point when necessary, corrects and more. This occurs while the learners are engaged in the task and also post-task. During the time when the learners are focussed on meaning, the teacher is seen as a mediator, focussing the attention on attaining comprehension of input and on choosing salient points for attaining task completion, using paraphrase and reformulation. This too occurs while the learner is engaged in the task.

Therefore the task-based environment in no way negates the need for the teacher as expert in the language involved. S/he remains the main source of linguistic expertise, although that role may temporarily, within the groups, be played by a student. The teacher acts to encourage the focus on the form or forms. This role continues in the language focus, where the teacher facilitates access to linguistic correctness while the task is taking place, during those “time-out” times previously mentioned when the focus shifts from meaning to form. In the meaning focus, the teacher again acts as facilitator, enabling access to meaning using reformulation, clarification, scaffolding and paraphrasing.

## From theory to application

We will now focus on how this exploration of the theory translates into the development of tasks for the programme. Since the beginning, tasks have been designed following the steps and parameters defined by Willis & Willis (2007).

- Identify learner needs, what they need to be able to do in the language.
- Select appropriate topics in the light of the identified needs (and, in our case, since we identified a textbook we would use) in the light of the resources available.
- Design task sequences, including the identification of the forms and vocabulary and the skills required.
  - Decide on the outcome or outcomes (there may be an intermediate task) required and see what the learner needs in order to get to that goal. Writing that outcome involves deciding on mission, on audience, on format, on expected language use. Writing the initial “brief” helps the course developer to see where the students are heading and it should be clear to them.
  - Decide what the priming phase will consist of: this is the starting point of the task – will it be an impromptu discussion, or a brainstorming, a call to prior knowledge or experience from the students, a visual to provoke interest, etc.?
  - Identify the steps needed to reach the goal and write them as pre-tasks. Identify the format of each of these and make that clear to the student.
  - This task structure needed to be closely controlled for our tasks since the preparation stages were carried out almost exclusively at distance. Deadlines and word limits as well as the occasional mid-task intervention were also specified.
  - Clarify learner roles.
  - Put pressure on language production. Encourage students to push themselves to produce output as far as possible to achieve accuracy – this can involve learner or teacher as expert. It can be interesting to record and publicise instances of scaffolding and other learner interactions.
  - Pre-plan, but be ready to change, post-task activities. This can include feedback (individual or whole group, as an invitation to remedial work), assessment, focus on form activities (individual or whole class).
- Monitor the effectiveness of the tasks in the classroom and refine them or even stop using them where necessary.

However, some of these steps had to be refined to take into account the distance learning element of the programme.

Tasks are designed by the teachers themselves and are reviewed by the whole team at the end of the conception process. Thanks to a partnership with

the educational publisher Pearson/Longman, we have been able to use a selection of the themes and activities of their Intermediate and Upper Intermediate *Intelligent Business* course books. We checked that all the tasks produced used parts of the textbook and that no two tasks used the same activities from the textbook, which did occur in the first stages but was quickly remedied.

### **Teachers' representations prior to the implementation of the programme**

Changing teachers' beliefs about what students should be asked to do was not simple: at the beginning, tasks were not necessarily oriented towards authentic use of the language, but were similar to school-type activities, probably because of the washback effect of the French exam "Baccalauréat", which students take in the final year of secondary school. In the first versions of tasks, there were sometimes problems with instructions which were not TBLT-oriented either. In the current versions of the tasks, we draw our students' attention to forms in the pre-task phase: in some of the students' task files, grammar is introduced in a "How to say it" section which refers to exercises in the coursebook, to the students' grammar book or to our virtual self-study centre on the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

For example, the fourth task of the programme is an oral production task in which students have to prepare a presentation on the topic of counterfeiting. Here is the mission they have to accomplish with their mini-groups:

You work for an international company with subsidiaries in France and the UK. It is currently worried by illegal copying of the goods it produces. Your brand manager has asked you to prepare a short presentation on how counterfeiting may affect the profitability of the company. You have carried out some research and are now ready to present your team's findings.

Before completing the task, students have to go through pre-tasks based on activities from the *Intelligent Business* course book. The pre-tasks include a vocabulary building section as well as reading and listening comprehension activities. Then, with their mini-groups, the students have to invent their own company. Later, but still during this pre-task phase, they are asked to pause their preparatory work on meaning for a moment to focus on the use of conditionals and on presentation skills. This is based on the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), which states that drawing learners' attention to form in the input may lead to acquisition. Our hypothesis is that after studying the use of conditionals in English, students may use them in their presentations to make predictions for the future of their invented companies. However, the impact of noticing on the outcome of the task or on the final oral production still remains to be examined.

The fifth task is another example: it consists of a case study which includes an intermediate task in the form of a class discussion prior to the final written task. Students have to carry out the following mission:

You work for a consultancy which gives advice to companies on different topics. One of your customers, the eBay online auction company, wants feedback on customers' views of its activities and website and suggestions on how to improve them. As a group, you will present those findings orally during a round table with the rest of your class. After that, taking into account other groups' comments, you will prepare a short report for the management of eBay, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the company and suggesting improvements.

In this task there is an intermediate task: the class round-table discussion on eBay. This allows the students to base their oral production on their own experience. During the last three years, this discussion has expanded into alternative e-commerce sites which might be seen as competitors to eBay, including France-specific sites, bringing out students' thoughts about "local" sites, and fears involving trust in e-commerce in general. This element has been adapted by some teachers who ask the students to investigate other, less well-known, online auction sites, again competitors to the site under discussion.

This intermediate task feeds directly into the main task, a mini case-study where the knowledge of competitors can lead to suggestions, as the task requires.

If focus on language is explicitly introduced in some of the tasks, grammar is also dealt with in the post-task, feedback phase in class. Focus on form arises from the difficulties the teacher has identified in the students' oral and written productions. Most of the teachers manage to explain or re-explain grammar points during the class sessions, but lack of time often makes it difficult. As our assessment of the tasks is based on advice and suggestions as to what can/should be improved, students are also individually advised to do some work on the Moodle VLE where they have access to a virtual self-study resource centre. Our team has created various remedial micro-tasks for students to practise, that is to say listening comprehension activities, vocabulary, translation, grammar explanations and interactive exercises. However, combining our approach with the algorithmic nature of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Guichon, 2006) is not simple and those micro-tasks look somehow very "traditional" (structural exercises, for example). The use of the Moodle VLE for remedial work or for practise has another limit as there is no online tutoring, so students might feel they are left alone with their questions about grammar. This is a problem that all self-study centres based on VLEs or websites have to face.

Based on the first results we have observed, and because we will be introducing a different coursebook as of September 2012, the whole programme is under revision at the moment, with the development of tasks using the new coursebook. We are currently thinking about how we are going to decide which grammar points will be introduced in the future tasks. Will they be in the authentic documents given to students? Or depending on the students' difficulties at each level?

We are also looking into technical feasibility which conditions the task types we will eventually choose. For example, at present, the attractive option of having students record an extended monologue and put it on the platform is causing concern, but the technical team is working on it. We are also assessing the resources that we have available at our fingertips and looking at resources that we will import.

It is expected that the grammar points chosen will emerge from the input selected, rather than conditioning the selection process. As an example of this, although not grammatically correct, the McDonald's slogan "I'm loving it" could be chosen as an example of how correct language morphs into incorrect but totally acceptable language and then passes into the accepted language forms of the country concerned. Clearly, a part of the grammar elements that we choose will come out of our expectations and experience as to student difficulties – this is especially so for the self-study part of the course, which is also in the process of being remodelled in order to offer more interactivity and more tutoring.

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