

# A SUGGESTED MILITARY TASK-BASED SYLLABUS DESIGN TO FULFIL THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) phenomenon, some practical solutions to language learning barriers are searched by the researchers and language teaching experts. However, the present findings and solutions are still making use of man-made techniques and human to human communication aspects. In fact, as to the requirements of FLT both in the military and civilian institutes, this issue has new insights compare to the recent adaptation of the present syllabuses. In the FLT methods and approaches, most syllabuses are based on *Competence* and *Performance* (Chomsky, 1965: 27) procedure. From this point of view, the syllabus designers have taken into account the notions and functions of a language very respectively and designed so many all-purpose syllabuses as well.

The term "Syllabus Design" is quite a common word and associated closely with FLT, curriculum design, language teaching methods, contents and notions of the target language. As to the necessity of a language syllabus, Widdowson (in Brumfit,1984) appears to argue that a syllabus is necessary, economical and useful. So he makes a conceptual distinction between syllabus and teaching methodology. He also suggests that a syllabus should be structural, that is, it is the methodology that can be communicative. Brumfit (1984), whose position is similar to that of Widdowson's, argues that a syllabus must be based on concepts of language, language learning, and language use. However, a syllabus is also required to produce two kinds of proficiency in each level of language teaching for whatever purposes it is designed: **Pragmatic** that is economy of time and money; **Pedagogical**, which is economy in the management of the learning process. In connection with the idea above, Yalden (in Brumfit, 1984), in his paper "*Syllabus Design in General Education: Options for FLT*" states the three basic organizing principles of a syllabus as follows:

- a. How foreign language learned
- b. How language is acquired, and
- c. How language is to be used.

On the theoretical basis, in syllabus design, whatever type of syllabus it is, there should be a selection of material depending on the subsequent definitions of the objectives, proficiency levels, duration of the course, and more significantly, types of the tasks and their specifications. After such theoretical insights of the syllabus design, the task based syllabus design will be covered and the specifications are going to be presented as well.

In addition to the task-based type of syllabus, Demirel (1992) in his paper "*Approaches to FLT curriculum Design*", presented at the Second International ELT Conference in Turkey, gives us the types of syllabuses as follows:

- Structural Syllabus Design**
- Situational Syllabus Design**
- Notional (functional) Syllabus Design**
- Content-based Syllabus Design**
- Skill-based syllabus Design**
- Task-based Syllabus Design**

In these syllabus types, the Task-based Syllabus Design does not necessarily mean the syllabus that will be covered here in this presentation. The Military Task-based Syllabus Design is also different from Candlin and Breen's task-based model in which tasks are designed to foster strategies for learning and communications (Yalden, 1987:79).

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First of all, before covering the details of the Military Task-based Syllabus, the following question should be asked: “Is the task-based syllabus based on language for specific purposes or task purposes?” No doubt, the syllabus we cover here will base on the suggested tasks that the military personnel will presumably be assigned. So the aspects of the military task-based syllabus will be assessed in the light of such a viewpoint.

### **SPECIFICATIONS OF THE MILITARY TASK-BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING SYLLABUS DESIGN**

The tasks mentioned here are not the ones that are being practised at every stage of foreign language learning/teaching such as graded tasks, supplementary tasks, extension tasks, consolidation tasks, general tasks and cooperative tasks. These tasks are the activities that will encourage the learners to take part in language skills they acquired. However, the term military task implies the assignments and duties in peace keeping operations, U.N. forces set up for various tasks, short/long term military missions abroad, joint military drills, exercises and manoeuvres, joint peace-keeping operations and so on. In the light of these task specifications, we can determine the task requirements in addition to language needs and syllabus objectives. In fact, each task has its own specifications, but the sole aim here is to give the general rules and the basic principles of such a syllabus design.

The task in this presentation will cover the duties and posts held by the military personnel. Since the tasks are the major concern of this syllabus, it is inevitable to give the characteristics and insights of the tasks. The background of such a syllabus will cover the military terminology and the content will be set up through the requirements of the tasks determined. Today, in our work, most peace keeping operation forces are formed by military personnel and these personnel is in need of necessary language skills to accomplish their duties and maintain the communication both in written and oral activities throughout the tasks as much as possible. These personnel should be trained on four skills and most required skill(s) should be emphasized as well. So the syllabus needed in a task-based syllabus that will serve the military personnel’s familiarization with the tasks assigned. Such a syllabus will most likely be a specialized language teaching for communication purposes.

The task based syllabus design and its implementation can be done after the completion of basic foreign language training. So the fundamental principle of such a syllabus can be listed as follows:

- a. to use the Target Language for the task purposes after the completion of basic language training,
- b. with the help of communication media, to be able to follow the technological, military and scientific development,
- c. to be able to maintain any kind of briefing (tactical or operational), conferences and meetings actually,
- d. to be proficient enough to fulfil the written and oral activities based on the military tasks involved,
- e. to use the linguistic abilities for the task purposes in order to overcome the language barriers,
- f. to be able to use the written and oral abilities and task-based military terminology .

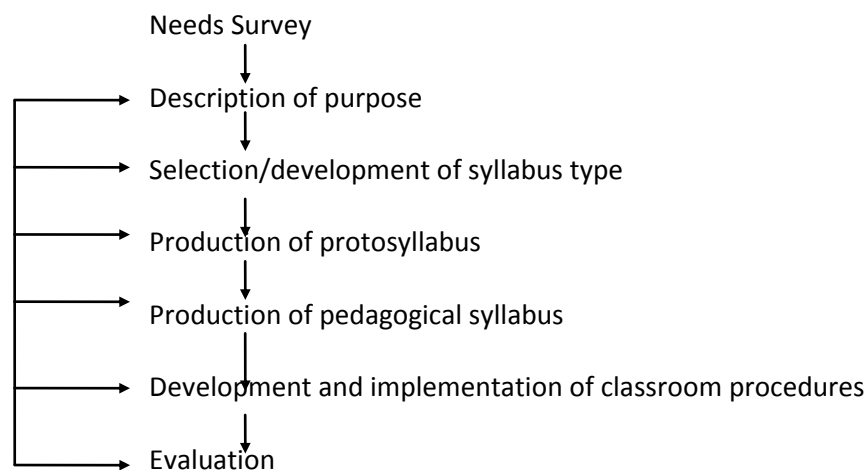
The principles above might be increased in accordance with the language training based on the tasks, but these principles can be listed according to the specifications of the task(s) as well. Hence, in my opinion, the most important principle is to determine the learners who will take up the foreign language and the characteristics and specifications of the task(s) that the learner is going to involve in. Besides, after a very profound needs analysis, concerning the specifications of the task, one or more of the foreign language skills may be emphasized throughout language teaching syllabus designed.

### **NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE MILITARY TASK- BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE SYLLABUS DESIGN**

In a syllabus design in FLT, a careful needs analysis of the peer groups and the tasks should be done for the genuine assessment of the needs. The needs analysis will cover the task evaluation and its requirements both specific and general, and other affective factors such as institutional requirements, learner specifications as well. Moreover, the needs analysis will help us to determine the foreign language teaching approach and method. In general terms, language curriculum development and

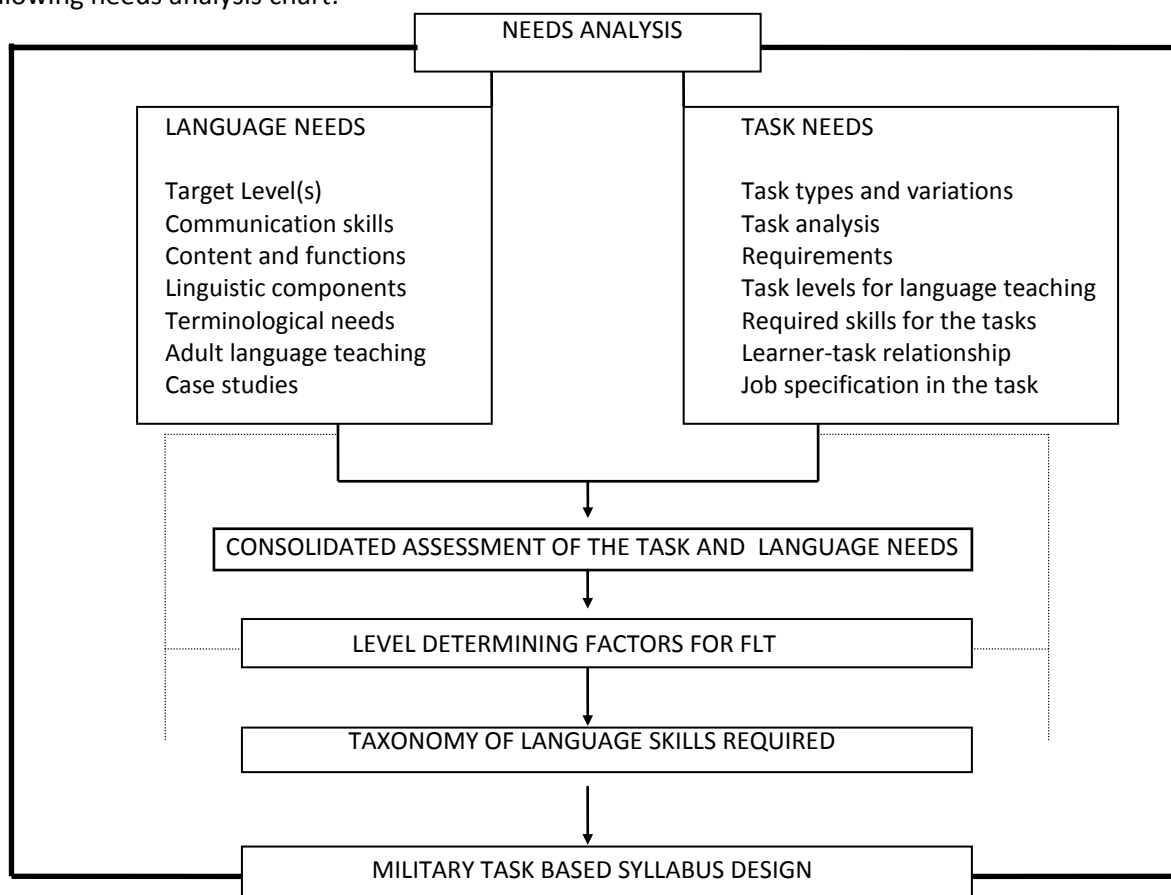
syllabus design are concerned with principles and procedures for the planning, delivery, management and assessment of teaching and learning of foreign language.

Theoretically, Janice Yalden (1987) presents us with the stages in language program development with such a chart as follows:



**Figure 1:** Stages in Language Program Development (Yalden, 1987:93)

This chart gives us the general principle of the program development in which the needs survey is the starting point. Together with the description of purpose syllabus types and their implementation are the major parts, but in the needs analysis chart that is going to be presented below will cover the whole needs analysis process. The needs analysis that I deal with will be different from the one above. Yet it is a very specific needs analysis that will concentrate on merely the task based needs. So the determining factor in the needs analysis is the task specifications and language needs along with the tasks. In fact, this needs analysis will not be done in accordance with a given syllabus but it will help us to set up our syllabus as detailed as possible. Now let us consider the following needs analysis chart:



**Figure 2:** Needs Analysis Process for the Military Task-based Syllabus Design for FLT.

In the needs analysis, the main concern will be both language and task needs correlatively. The case studies on the tasks will be another determining factor as well. The tasks might be in various types and aspects; however, a pilot study will be done according to the needs of the institution and military determined in advanced. Hence, the learner specifications and special study areas on the tasks will also play an important role in the needs analysis. Whatever results have been drawn out from needs analysis the level of the syllabus will be at least intermediate on lower intermediate.

### THE CONTENT AND FUNCTION OF THE SYLLABUS

Since the learners of such a task based syllabus are at least intermediate learners and considered to have basic foreign language skills and training, the content of the syllabus will be based not only on the basic language needs but also the communication skills. So in determining the framework of the content the principles below can be followed:

1. both the design of the framework and its final product, the language course, should be conducted with as much consultation as possible with all those involved,
2. the framework must necessarily be kept lean, and any tendency to the teachers' work for them should be resisted,
3. the framework must be written so that it may be adapted easily,
4. the framework should take into account available resources. (Yalden, 1987 : 97)

This framework will enable us to be more flexible in determining the syllabus content and the language functions. However, there is so much current research relevant to the course design, so the changes in the syllabuses are inevitable. These principles above are not enough to determine the function of the syllabus, because the syllabus mentioned in this paper will have different functions according to the task characteristics and the linguistic skills needed for the accomplishment of the tasks.

The following are going to be very useful in the determination of the syllabus content and language functions after the needs analysis:

1. The duration, location, content, specifications and peculiar aspects of the tasks
2. The characteristics of the missions throughout task accomplishment and the responsibilities that the personnel might have
3. Foreign language specifications and terminological elements that will be given in the task-based syllabus in accordance with the task specifications
4. The determination of the communication skills that the task will require (such as written or oral, listening or reading skills)

So many others can be added to these above but, consequently the type of the task will be a dominant factor in setting up the content and the language functions required in the syllabus.

To conclude, we need such a syllabus design that will enable us to maintain the peace and good relationship among the countries. What type of syllabus we are able to design, we need to have a genuine communication and understanding among us. So, as I believe, we should take advantage of the language as to understand each other very precisely. I would like to end my presentation with these words: Language is knowledge, and knowledge is our best defence.

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