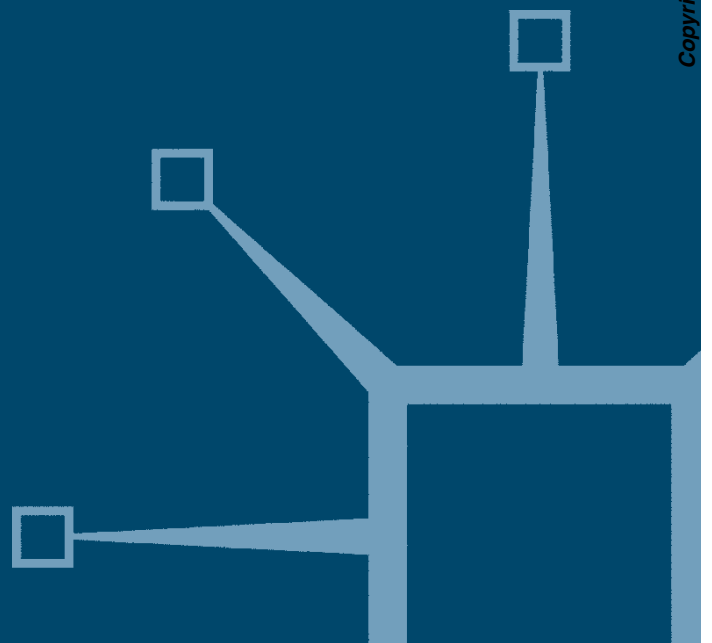


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Tasks in Second Language Learning

Virginia Samuda and Martin Bygate

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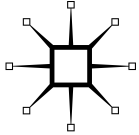
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Virginia Samuda and Martin Bygate

Lancaster University

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To the memory of Chris Brumfit

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Lauzerte
Summer 2007

Introduction

Quote 1.1 Dewey on educative, uneducative and miseducative tasks

If one means by a 'task' simply an undertaking involving difficulties that have to be overcome, then children, youth, and adults alike require tasks in order that there may be continued development. But if one means by a task something that has no interest, makes no appeal, that is wholly alien and hence uncongenial, the matter is quite different. Tasks in the former sense are educative because they supply an indispensable stimulus to thinking, to reflective inquiry. Tasks in the latter sense signify nothing but sheer strain, constraint, and the need of some external motivation for keeping at them. They are *uneducative* because they fail to introduce a clearer consciousness of ends and a search for proper means of realization. They are *miseducative*, because they deaden and stupefy; they lead to that confused and dulled state of mind that always attends an action carried on without a realizing sense of what it is all about. They are also miseducative because they lead to dependence upon external ends; the child works simply because of the pressure of the taskmaster, and diverts his energies just in the degree in which this pressure is relaxed; or he works because of some alien inducement – to get some reward that has no intrinsic connection with what he is doing.

(1913/1975: 54–6)

This book explores the 'educative', 'uneducative' and 'miseducative' properties of tasks in second language education. As part of the raw material that second language teachers, learners and researchers work with in different ways, tasks have been an element in second language teaching and research for over 30 years, and yet their use continues to invite controversy and debate. One of the aims of this book is to explore why this should be so, and to consider what people do to make tasks educative or uneducative, why this can happen and what the alternatives might be.

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Part 1

Background

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Introduction

Part 1 offers a broad overview of the historical and conceptual background from which 'tasks' have emerged as a significant force in second language education and research. The use of holistic activities for learning is not unique to language education, and has been one of the major focuses of educational debate over the last century. Nor indeed are tasks exclusive to education: they are a key research construct throughout the social sciences. Hence in Part 1 we review the construct of 'task' from a broad perspective, before narrowing the discussion to the use of tasks within language education.

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1

Language Use, Holistic Activity and Second Language Learning

1.1 Holistic activity

In talking about the role of tasks in second language learning, our starting point is the assumption that the aim of second/foreign language teaching is to develop the ability to use the target language. By 'use' we mean that the language is used not only to practise or show mastery, but also for information (personal and professional), for social, political and artistic purposes, as well as for aesthetic pleasure. One way of engaging language use is through holistic activity.

Concept 1.1 Holistic activity

Use is 'holistic' in the sense that it involves the learners' knowledge of the different sub-areas of language – phonology, grammar, vocabulary and discourse – to make meanings. Holistic activities contrast with analytical activities, in which phonology, grammar, vocabulary and discourse are each taught and studied separately, and not used together. Analytical activities are designed to reduce the number of aspects of language which the learners have to attend to, so they can concentrate more narrowly on a selected target feature, as in a pronunciation exercise focusing on a selected phonological contrast, for example. Holistic activities involve the learner in dealing with the different aspects of language together, in the way language is normally used. Much first language learning occurs through holistic activities, and it seems likely that holistic activities can also play a significant role in second language learning, teaching and testing.

Tasks are one kind of holistic activity. The holistic nature of tasks can be represented schematically in a diagram such as the following:

In Figure 1.1, the words *in italics* are points where the learner is required to make a choice. The overall purpose is broadly set between teacher and

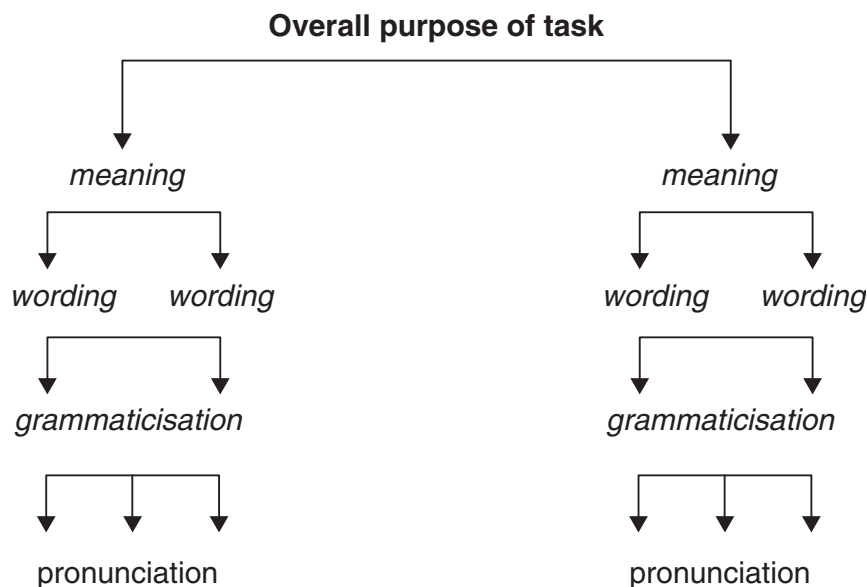


Figure 1.1 Schematic structure of a task

learners. The italics indicate that to achieve this purpose the learner must choose and sequence relevant meanings, words and grammar, with the pronunciation following in the light of that choice. By involving learners in making purposeful, on-line choices of meaning and form, a task engages holistic language use: through engaging with the task, learners are led to work with and integrate the different aspects of language for a larger purpose.

In contrast, analytical language activities have been traditionally used in language teaching to focus attention on a pre-selected language item or items, as in a drill involving the production of a particular vowel sound or a minimal pair contrast without attention to meaning.

Concept 1.2 Analytical activity

An exclusively analytical activity, like an exercise focusing on a single verb form, would predetermine the meaning, or the meaning and word, or the meaning, word and grammatical structure, or even the meaning, word, grammatical structure and pronunciation, with the learner being required to work with the target forms at some point of focus isolated by the exercise.

The argument of this book is that it is in holistic language work that key language learning processes take place, and that tasks are invaluable in achieving this purpose. Yet, although tasks seem to offer a key resource for language learning, the very fact that they are holistic creates a fresh series of educational challenges. For, like any teaching activity, tasks need to be

seen to serve a learning goal in the eyes of the learners and teachers who use them. This raises important central questions, in particular:

- What goals can different tasks serve for different students?
- How can tasks be exploited by teachers and learners to meet those goals?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of different tasks, and of different ways of using them?
- What could learners and teachers usefully know about tasks that the tasks are made to serve learners' and teachers' ends?

An enduring pedagogical challenge – and a recurring theme in this book – is how to balance a focus on aspects of the target language in ways that enhance learning, without losing the overall holistic quality of normal language use.

1.2 A sample task: Things in Pockets (TIP)

Example 1.1 illustrates what we mean by 'task' and the weight of some of these questions. In this task, participants are given a bag of objects, allegedly the contents of a person's pockets, and are invited to work in small groups to speculate on the identity of that person. Each group needs to reach a consensus on their ideas concerning the person's identity, presenting and justifying their conclusions to the rest of the class, first as an informal oral presentation and finally in written form as a poster or report.¹ In this version, the groups use a chart to record their initial hypotheses about the person's identity under categories such as age, gender, occupation, etc. The chart also requires groups to register the degree of probability/possibility of each initial hypothesis:

Example 1.1 A sample task

Things in Pockets

An overcoat was found on a plane after a flight from San Francisco to London. The objects that you have in front of you were all found in the pockets of that overcoat. Can they tell us anything about the owner?

As a group, look at everything carefully and share your ideas about the identity of the owner of the overcoat. Be ready to present your group's ideas about the person to the rest of the class and to explain how certain you are about your ideas.

¹A different version of this task appears in H. Riggenbach and V. Samuda (2000) *Grammar Dimensions: Form, Meaning, Use: Book 2*, Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Example 1.1 (Continued)

You can use the chart to organise your ideas and to show how certain you are about each one. For example, if you are 100% certain that you know the person's name, write it in column 3 (100% certain). But if you are not at all certain about the person's name, use Column 1 (less than 50% certain). If you are almost certain that you know this person's name, use Column 2 (90% certain).

	Less than 50% certain (it's possible)	90% certain (it's probable)	100% certain (it's certain)
Name			
Sex			
Age			
Marital status			
Occupation			
Likes and interests			
Recent activities			
Any other ideas			

In the rest of this book, we will be drawing on this task (henceforth TIP) as a reference point for highlighting issues involved in task use, design and research.

In Example 1.1 we see what the task looks like as it appears on the page, as set out by a materials writer or task designer. While this reflects how the designer envisages the task unfolding when enacted, it does not in itself say anything about what actually *will* happen or about the different ways that learners and teachers might redefine and reinterpret the designer's intentions. To highlight areas of potential difference between the task on paper and what happens when it is enacted, Breen (1987) distinguishes between 'task-as-workplan' and 'task-in-process':

Quote 1.2 Breen on task-as-workplan and task-in-process

Any language learning task will be reinterpreted by a learner in his or her own terms. This implies that a pre-designed task – the task-as-workplan – will be changed the moment the learner acts upon it. The task-as-workplan will be redrawn so that the learner can relate to it in the first place and, thereby, make it manageable. ... When considering what happens during language learning tasks, we can initially distinguish between the original task-as-workplan and the actual *task-in-process*. It is the latter which generates typically diverse learning outcomes and the quality and efficacy of any task must be traced directly to its use during teaching and learning.
(Breen, 1987: 24–5)

Example 1.1 then is an illustration of the TIP task-as-workplan. Example 1.2 is an illustration of the same task-in-process. It shows students engaging with the TIP task as part of their normal classroom coursework in a 'low intermediate/high beginner' intensive English pre-academic programme in a North American university. The extract in Example 2.1 is taken from an early phase of the task: the teacher has divided the class into groups and invited them to brainstorm their initial thoughts about the identity of the person. The learners in this example are four young women – three Japanese and one Swiss-French – in their early twenties who were familiar with each other as classmates, and who also associated with each other as friends outside the classroom. Here they are looking at the objects, and having established the owner as male, are trying to figure out his likely marital status on the basis of a diary and other personal items:

Example 1.2 Sample task-in-process: Things in Pockets

Group 1: Marital status episode

- 1 A: Maybe he divorced
 C: Why?
 A: Because Paula Paula maybe Paula his girlfriend
 N: Divorced?
- 5 C: Can I see?
 Y: Yeah at lunchtime (indicating diary)
 C: Or, or
 N: Yes, but
 C: he married but he has girlfriend
- 10 A: Not divorced?
 C: Not divorced but he has another girlfriend
 A: Ahh, it's possible
 Y: If, if he married and he has girlfriend why write down in schedule
 A: [noooo]
 C: [noooo]
 (laughter)
- 15 A: Ohhh
 C: Divorced
 N: (reading from diary) Wice presi vice president lunch vice president
 Y: His company?
 N: Or
 Y: (reading from diary) Anniversary
- 20 C: What's this thing?
 Y: Anniversary, wedding anniversary (.) He's married
 C: {huh?
 A: {huh?
 Y: Wedding anniversary

Example 1.2 (Continued)

- 25 C: Anniversary?
A: huh?
N: But maybe something something
A: huh?
N: Maybe just anniversary not wedding
- 30 A: for him? or or=
C: =friend?
Y: if [he]
N: [no] because here, here (points to diary), he have golf
A: Yeah
- 35 C: Yeah
(laughter)
N: No (.) Play golf
Y: So he married (.) Wedding anniversary
N: Maybe it's just, it just uh=
A: =write down
- 40 N: Yeah
Y: Ohh
N: Yeah maybe ten years that he will be married (.) because he play golf not
Y: But daytime
N: Yes, but
- 45 Y: Yeah his wife? I don't know
(laughter)
C: He married uh one year ago then he=
N: =Yeah maybe=
A: =Divorced
C: No don't divorce but he married uh maybe one month ago no one year ago and he still play with her
- 50 N: Maybe
A: Or my, my opinion
N: Or may, oh sorry
Y: You see Paula is his wife
C: Yeah
- 55 N: Yes, but why Paula send him this (showing document)
Y: He's busy (laughs)
N: (reading from document) Sorry I didn't meet you on Sunday
C: Yeah I think she is not wife
N: No (reading from document) because I was worried that somebody might see us together
- 60 C: Huh?
N: (reading) Please forgive me
A: (reading) Call me [soon]
N: [call me] soon
A: No, not wife

65	C:	No, no
	A:	Huh? Wait (.) Somebody?
	N:	Yeah
	A:	Ahhh, he's married
	Y:	Yeah
	A:	He's married
70	C:	He's married
	A:	Ohh [wow]
	C:	[wow]
	A:	Sure?
	C:	Sure
		(laughter)
75	Y:	Trust me
		(laughter)

This extract illustrates one episode in a very early phase of the task-in-process, a phase in which the learners are exploring possible interpretations of part of the task materials. The instances of laughter, the number of overlapping turns and the sustained focus on one topic suggest a high level of engagement; much of the talk here is highly elliptical, possibly reflecting the shared frame of reference of the task materials, the social relationships among the participants, as well as the in-group flavour of this phase of the task, where ideas are being developed collaboratively in private, and not yet ready for public consumption. In terms of the workplan, we might expect that the demands of later phases of the task (presentation and justification of ideas to the rest of the class and the teacher; writing up final conclusions, for example) to give rise to other kinds of talk. But we cannot be sure of this from the workplan itself; nor can we be sure of this from this extract of this phase of one small episode of the task-in-process. The intricacy of the relationships between phases of the task-as-workplan and phases of the task-in-process and how those relationships relate to our understanding of the use of tasks in second language pedagogy and research is a recurring theme in this book, and we will be returning at various points to these examples later.

1.3 Features of tasks for second language learning

In this section we draw on the TIP task to illustrate a number of general features of second language tasks. First, as can be seen, the task is *holistic* in the sense that it requires learners to decide on potential relevant meanings, and use the phonology, grammar, vocabulary and discourse structures of the language to convey these in order to carry out the task.

A second feature of any task is the need to achieve *one or more meaningful outcomes*. This is essential for the dynamic of the task. In the TIP task, the learners were asked to come up with a description of the likely owner of the objects. Depending on the teacher's instructions this could take one of various forms: written, oral or possibly a non-verbal representation, such as a picture, set of notes or ID forms, selected from an array. What these have in common is a target outcome in the form of a verbal or non-verbal representation of information. That is, it is not sufficient for them to produce accurate language: they have to produce a pragmatically credible response.

Third, the task could not work without the *input material* – in this case, the objects and the instructions. Here, the input material is the springboard for all that follows. Changing the objects or the instructions could change the procedures the students follow or the target outcome, or both. Input material is therefore an essential element.

In following the instructions in order to work towards the task outcome, learners engage in a *process*. 'Task process' refers to any language process(es) used in working towards an outcome. This can include the language used to plan and organise the work, to distribute sub-tasks, to monitor progress, to identify and share information, to suggest or hypothesise missing information, interpretations or solutions; to evaluate, counter, agree/disagree; and to negotiate an outcome such as a conclusion, solution, report or graphic representation. Both the product and the process are by definition necessary: without a target product there is no call for the process. But equally, without a process learners cannot achieve a product. Sometimes particular task processes are targeted by the teacher, whether explicitly or implicitly. Sometimes they are shaped by the way the task has been designed. Sometimes task processes are left to the initiative of the learners.

The task also involves a number of different *phases*. This is one key dimension where tasks differ from analytical activities like drills or exercises, which once started involve the same operations from beginning to end. From a task-as-workplan perspective, the phasing of a task generally involves breaking down the overall task into a series of interlocking steps (see Example 1.1) with the aim of making the task more manageable. Here phases might be framed in terms of an initial search for information contained in or relating to the input material, an exchange and pooling of opinions and ideas relating to that information, leading to some form of synthesis based on the demands of the task. These phases reflect a route for moving through the task envisaged by a task designer or teacher. From a task-in-process perspective, however, the task is phased by the actual

strategies that the learners use at different points in the activity. Possible examples here are an initial organisation and administration phase as learners orient themselves to the input material and to ways of engaging with it, followed by a phase of pooling, checking and exchanging preliminary ideas (as in Example 1.2), followed by a phase involving reorganisation and reworking of those ideas, a phase involving coordination and consolidation, a phase involving rehearsal and further reworking and checking, and finally a phase involving public presentation. These may or may not correspond with the phases set out in the workplan since the task-in-process is phased by the learners' need to make the content and the language manageable as the task unfolds. Phasing, then, is an element of the workplan and process and may be accomplished differently in each. An important point here is that the different phases of a task can serve different functions, and thus may give rise to different types of exchange and different types of talk. This means that generalisations about generic features of 'task interaction' or 'task talk' may be of limited value without reference to the phase of the task in which they occur.

Pedagogically, it is important for teachers to know what aspects of the language are being targeted, whether in terms of product or processes, since without this *knowledge/awareness* they cannot prepare and brief the students or provide relevant feedback. Likewise, in research terms, knowing the likely scope of a particular task with different kinds of students in different contexts is likely to be useful in developing the design and use of a repertoire of tasks. It may also shed light on second language learning. Language development is complex: it involves a number of distinct, though related processes such as social interaction, perception, ideational comprehension, motor control, contextual mapping and strategic control. Hence there are multiple ways in which a task can be exploited to contribute to development and a number of ways in which they can be researched. So although both the pedagogic use and the study of tasks start from the assumption that holistic activities in second language teaching are valuable, there are as many distinct ways of using and researching them as there are ways of conceptualising holistic language use and holistic language learning.

Another major factor that is important for pedagogical exploitation concerns *conditions*, which in any context influence the way people work. 'Conditions' can refer to the use and manipulation of external pressures, such as the imposition of time pressure, the use of competition or collaboration or both, and provision of pre-, while and post-task support. 'Conditions' can also include the atmosphere in and ethos of the class, the attitudes of the group members, their level of proficiency, how far teacher

and students attend to the processes and outcomes of the task, and how far work on the task is perceived to contribute to learning.

Finally, the *different uses* of a task can be worth exploring. A task like TIP can fulfil a number of aims. For example, it can be used to raise awareness of a language area which learners need to get to grips with; it can be used to encourage them to use what they already know to communicate in an area they have difficulty with; it can be used to give them the opportunity to improve their handling of a particular area; or it can be used to give them a basis for reflection for a future task.

The features of a task such as TIP can be summarised as follows:

Concept 1.3 General features of a task

1. It involves holistic language use.
2. It requires a meaningful target outcome or outcomes.
3. It necessarily involves some individual and group processes.
4. It depends on there being some input material.
5. It is made up of different phases.
6. It is important for teachers – and at some point the learners – to know what is being targeted in the language learning purpose.
7. The conditions under which it is implemented impact on process and outcome and can be manipulated and variously exploited.
8. It can be used for different pedagogic purposes at different stages of learning.

1.4 The use of tasks for second language learning: some key questions

Apart from the first general defining characteristic, the remaining seven all make explicit a wide range of ways in which tasks can be exploited to contribute to language learning, and raise questions that we could usefully know more about.

For instance, in terms of process, we might find it useful to understand the ways in which students can work through a task, and how far any differences affect learning. It might help to know how far the task can be made to work at different levels of proficiency and what happens in each case. It could be enlightening to understand the different options that teachers have to introduce tasks, to monitor tasks and to provide post-task follow-up, and to see whether they work in different ways, and why. In the classroom from which Example 1.2 was taken, this task was used at the start of a cycle of work and was followed by teacher input. (A full description of a study of this task can be found Samuda, 2001: Part 2, 7.1). But the same task could be used in many other ways, so it would be valuable

to see how it can be deployed at other points in a cycle of work, and how else it could be synchronised with the teacher's input. Also, we do not know how far a task of a particular format, such as this one, can be recycled to reuse language that is becoming familiar while introducing new language. And we do not know how this task differs from others.

So far we have characterised 'task' as a set of general elements, drawn from a single example; this has been done to sketch some of the broad questions that this book seeks to explore and to create a shared frame of reference for the background issues that we turn to next – influences from general education and human sciences research. However, later in Part 1 we return to the issue of what a task is and what it is not by exploring in more detail some of the ways that second language pedagogic tasks have been defined in the literature and some of the challenges that these definitions present.

1.5 Summary: the general elements of a task

We have noted that a task is a holistic activity, and that such activities are important to the extent that they target and enable the development of appropriate second language processes and appropriate language products. As we have seen, however, holistic activities of necessity involve the use of all aspects of language, and allow more choice than analytical exercises. This means that they can be harder for teachers and testers to use, since the language work will be relatively more complex and less predictable. For this reason it is worth attempting to understand how tasks work. A first step has been to identify some of the key elements involved. With these in mind, the aims of this book are to promote understanding of tasks for four main reasons:

1. To support development in the design of tasks.
2. To improve our understanding of how to select, adapt and use tasks in the classroom with different learners.
3. To increase our understanding of how to stimulate classroom language use.
4. To increase our understanding of the processes of language learning, and in particular the dynamic relationship between language knowledge and language use.

Our overall aim is to promote an empirical approach – to explore the use of tasks, their potential, ways of improving their design or use, and if necessary to seek out and develop alternative resources for achieving our aims.

2

Holistic Tasks in an Educational Context: Some Key Issues

Many of the principles underlying the design and use of what we now call 'tasks' in second language pedagogy owe their genealogy to developments in general education over the last century. In this chapter, we trace some of those developments. We start with the influence of Dewey and a number of issues that his work brings into focus. These are:

- experience as a catalyst for learning;
- the role of personal relevance and purposeful activity in mediating the world of the learner and classroom learning;
- the role of functional relevance in classroom learning;
- the roles of learners as active agents in their own learning.

Then through a series of brief illustrations we explore how these issues variously come into play in the work of educators centrally concerned with relationships between experience and learning, with examples from Freinet, Kilpatrick, Kolb and Freire.

From here we explore connections between these themes and aspects of the work of Bruner, focusing on:

- the organisation of knowledge and learning for use;
- the complementariness of the development of analytical and intuitive thought;
- the building of systematic relationships between concrete experiences and broader generalisation.

After this, we draw on the work of Barnes to explore aspects of these themes in relation to the role of classroom talk in the development of

knowledge, focusing on:

- relationships between process and product in learning;
- the roles of exploratory and final draft talk in learning.

The themes brought into focus here, together with the pedagogic challenges that they pose, will recur in various forms throughout this book.

2.1 The influence of Dewey: experience and learning

Since the nineteenth century, educationists have been increasingly concerned to make school learning socially purposeful or functional. By 1913 Dewey was arguing that classroom learning needed to be focused and shaped so that it met the personally held interests that pupils brought with them, and the ends that they held in sight:

Quote 2.1 Dewey on means and end

The problem may be stated as one of the relations of means and end. Anything indifferent or repellent becomes of interest when seen as a means to an end already commanding attention. Or seen as an end that will allow means already under control to secure further movement and outlet. But, in normal growth the interest in means is not externally tied onto the interest in an end; it suffuses, saturates, and thus transforms it.

(Dewey, 1913/1975: 25–6)

In presenting material as a string of received facts unconnected to pupils' interests and personal goals, 'traditional' classroom learning was thus seen by Dewey as essentially 'abnormal'.

Quote 2.2 Dewey on traditional classroom learning

Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders. Moreover, that which is taught is thought of as essentially static. It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future.

(1938/1963: 19)

In this approach to education, a focus on 'finished product' treats learning as a simple accretion of items of knowledge, unconnected both from each other and from pupils' broader experiences of the world. It is based on a static body of knowledge which is backward-looking, at best reflecting

the competencies of competent users, rather than those of learners. For Dewey, this leads to a fundamental misconception of the relationship between learning and the outside world:

Quote 2.3 Dewey on school learning

Almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his school days and wonder what has become of the knowledge he was supposed to have amassed during his years of schooling, and why it is that the technical skills he acquitted have to be learned over again in changed form in order to stand him in good stead. Indeed, he is lucky who does not find that in order to make progress, in order to go ahead intellectually, he does not have to unlearn much of what he learned in school. These questions cannot be disposed of by saying that the subjects were not actually learned, for they were learned at least sufficiently to enable a pupil to pass examination in them. One trouble is that the subject-matter in question was learned in isolation; it was put, as it were, in a water-tight compartment. When the question is asked, then, what has become of it, where has it gone to, the right answer is that it is still there in the special compartment in which it was originally stowed away. But it was segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under actual conditions of life.

(Dewey, 1938/1963: 47–8)

Dewey argued for a congruent relationship between pupils' larger purposes and any narrowly focused learning activities. Here, personal relevance is the key. Thus in his view (1917/1963) a functional approach helped to make the subject as a whole relevant by connecting it to personal experience. The implication is that we need to seek out new ways of teaching so that the content is accessible, useful and relevant given the levels of experience and understanding of learners. Thus disciplinary content needs to be made available to learners in terms of their own experience, and how it relates to what they already know. To this end, we need to seek out ways that pupils may be brought into active mental engagement with new content and in ways that relate to what is already familiar. For Dewey, active mental engagement entailing the integration of what is known with what is new is necessarily effortful.

Quote 2.4 Dewey on good teaching

Good teaching, in other words, is teaching that appeals to established powers while it includes such *new* material as will demand their redirection for a new end, this redirection requiring thought – intelligent effort.

(Dewey, 1913/1975: 58)

Although experience provides the site for effective learning to take place, it also raises its own set of pedagogic challenges: how to uncover ways in which appropriate pedagogical experiences can be provided for learners in sequences that will make school subjects relevant. Some macro-element is necessary to provide a credible, motivating context for 'intelligent effort'. For Dewey, the macro-element for bringing together the learner's experience of the real world, the logic of the subject matter and the accumulated experience of educators was through the use of 'overt and executive activities', in which the learner learns through the interaction between thought and action.

Concept 2.1 Overt and executive activities

By 'overt and executive activities' Dewey was referring to activities in which the learner had to make some decisions or perform a skill, what others have referred to as the use of 'procedural knowledge'.
(Johnson, 1996)

The search for functional relevance grounded in experience and realised through holistic activity has underpinned the development of various pedagogic initiatives since Dewey's time; some of these have been directly influenced by Dewey's thinking and others have developed independently. To illustrate, we begin with two examples from the early part of the twentieth century: the work of Freinet, developed independently of Dewey's; and the work of Kilpatrick, developed with explicit reference to aspects of Dewey's thinking.

2.2 Experience and learning: some pedagogic examples

2.2.1 Freinet

Freinet, working in rural primary schools in France between the First and the Second World Wars, wrote:

Quote 2.5 Freinet on sense of purpose

L'enfant qui sent un but à son travail et qui peut se donner tout entier à une activité non plus scolaire mais simplement sociale et humaine, cet enfant sent que se libère en lui un besoin puissant d'agir, de chercher, de créer.

[The child who has a sense of purpose in their work and who can entirely give themselves over to an activity so that it is no longer schoolwork, but just social human activity – that child feels come to life a potent need to do, to search, to create.]

(Freinet, 1971: 88)

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