Designing Communicative Tasks for College English Courses

A Dissertation Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of M.A. in

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Chapter 1　Introduction

1.1 A Brief Account of Communicative Tasks Design

As we all know language is the most important communicative tool of mankind, and English is an important tool for today's international communication. *College English Curriculum Requirements*，which was issued by the Ministry of Education, reflects the objective of college English, that is, to develop students' ability to use English in an all-round way, especially in listening and speaking, so that in their future work and social interactions they will be able to exchange information effectively through both spoken and written channels, and at the same time they will be able to enhance their ability to study independently and improve their cultural quality so as to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges.

Therefore, cultivating our students' ability to use English in communication is a major goal of English teaching in college. How can we make our English teaching follow the communicative principle, and how should the process of learning be a process of using English for communication?

Fundamentally reflecting the communicative teaching and learning is the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), which has gained popularity since it was first put forward in the 1980s. TBLT is the approach recommended to be applied to English teaching by China's Ministry of Education. It refers to a type of language teaching which takes "tasks" as its key units for designing and implementing foreign language instruction.

There have been a lot of researches and theories in the last twenty years on the use of tasks in language teaching, particularly tasks which involve interaction between learners (e.g., Breen, 1987; Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989). Jacobs, George M and Elena

Navas（2004）concluded such task-based language teaching is believed to promote language acquisition by:

a. providing learners with opportunities to make the language input they receive more comprehensible,

b. furnishing contexts in which learners need to produce output which others can understand, and

c. making the classroom closer to real-life language situations.

TBLT is based on the development of communicative language teaching, input and interactionist theory and learning theory. It not only focuses on "learning by doing things" but also doing things meaningfully. The aim of TBLT is to integrate all four skills and to provide opportunities for the learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes, to cultivate the learners' communicative competence, while the range of tasks available offers a great of flexibility and the teachers should design communicative tasks as well as lead to more motivating activities for the learners.

Under this communicative tasks design, teaching is turned into a process of fulfilling tasks by using the target language. Therefore, a major problem that we should face in carrying out this approach is how to design appropriate communicative tasks.

Outside China many researches on TBLT have been done and the achievements are great. The definition and explanation of tasks vary from scholar to scholar, but those concerning the key term of communicative task are few. In China, few researchers have done the job of designing communicative tasks for college English courses up to now. More researches should be done in order to implement successfully this teaching designing in college English classroom. This thesis will first discuss the

main aspects of designing communicative tasks for college English course systematically and thoroughly by analyzing special materials of college English course in our country as examples.

Nowadays, fostering the students' communicative competence is a very important goal in college English classroom, especially for the non-English major students'. So, the present thesis mainly focuses on designing communicative tasks for non-English major freshmen in China. The examples of communicative tasks in this thesis have been taken from a variety of sources. These materials as examples are cited from *New Practical English Comprehensive Course, Integrated Course of College English, College English* and *English*. The research method is based on task-based language teaching in this thesis.

1.2 The Aim of the Thesis

The new *College English Curriculum Requirements* was issued in the year 2004, which put great emphasis on the students' ability to use English in an all-round way, and sets the ability to study independently so as to solve problems with the target language as the main objective of college English teaching.

Task-based language teaching is the approach recommended to be applied to English teaching by China's Ministry of Education. TBLT is the further development of the theory of communicative language teaching (CLT). The aim of CLT is to foster the learners' communicative competence. TBLT takes "tasks" as its key units for designing and implementing foreign language teaching, while the communicative task is a branch of tasks whose aim is to cultivate the learners' ability to communicate with others.

In our teaching experiences, we have made several surveys on our students. We find the learners' two main problems: they have lower rates of verbal participation and they fail to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy.

Therefore, how to design effective communicative tasks for college English course to solve these two problems and to develop the learners' communicative competence is a key issue before us.

So, the major aim of the thesis is to provide college teachers with a framework for analyzing and designing communicative tasks, presenting teachers with two approaches of design communicative tasks to solve the learners' two main problems, which will help teachers select, adapt or create their own design of effective communicative tasks and   make their college English teaching more successful and more effective.

1.3 The Framework of the Thesis

Including a brief introduction and a conclusion, this thesis is composed of six parts:

In the first chapter, the thesis introduces the aim of the thesis and its framework. It covers a brief account of communicative tasks design, points out the key issue in designing communicative tasks for college English language teaching.

The second chapter sets out some of the basic issues in relation to communicative tasks. It explores the theoretical foundation of TBLT and recalls the relevant research results of communicative tasks, including the definitions of communicative tasks and the design of communicative tasks in the world.

The third chapter's objectives are, firstly, to present us with the models of organizing lessons in TBLT class, at the same time, to develop a short section on comparing TBLT with traditional ways of teaching, secondly to discuss the principles in designing communicative tasks for college English language teaching.

In the fourth chapter, we will look at the central characteristics of communicative tasks design. In this section the author analyzes college English course and non-

English major freshman, points out two main problems of learning English among learners, discusses the components of designing communicative tasks for college English course.

Then, the author proposes two approaches in order to design effective communicative tasks concerning the selection and adaptation of materials, looking in particular at the issues of attracting learners' participation and how to express themselves in oral English with basic fluency and accuracy.

In the fifth chapter, the author gives us research analysis and data analysis, concludes that the communicative tasks design are effective.

In the end of the thesis, the author draws conclusions about his research and also points out the limitations and suggestions of this research.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Basis of Task-based Language Teaching and Relevant Research

In this chapter, the author will discuss the theoretical foundation of TBLT, the definition of communicative tasks, the literature review of communicative tasks design in West Countries and in Our Country.

2.1 The Theoretical Foundation of TBLT

The first person who has applied TBLT to teaching programs and practice is Prabhu. It was in Bangalore of southern Indian in 1979 that Prabhu began his bold experiments to put his theories into practice which seemed radical at that time. He thinks that students may learn more effectively when their minds are focused on the task, rather than on the language they are using. Therefore, Prabhu is thought to be the originator of TBLT.

The theoretical basis of TBLT dates back to cognitive psychology ("the Learning theory") that has deeply affected the elementary education.

As early as the year of 1977, a famous English linguist Dick Allwright said, "If the language activities involve the learners in solving communicative problems in the target language, language learning will take care of itself."

It is usually thought that the other theoretical foundations of TBLT are Krashen's "Input and Interactionist Theory" and "Communicative Language Teaching".

2.1.1 The Learning Theory

In task-based language teaching, syllabus content and instructional processes are selected with reference to the communicative tasks which learners will (either actually or potentially) need to engage in outside the classroom and also with reference to theoretical and empirical insights into those social and psycholinguistic (cognitive)

processes which facilitate language acquisition. This approach to language teaching commonly includes the ideas of learning theories of Piaget's cognitive theory and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory.

Piaget described overall development as the result of children's interaction with their environment, with a complementary interaction between their developing perceptual cognitive capacities and their linguistic experience (Brown, 2002:29).

Piaget emphasized the constructive nature of the learning processes (Wei Yong-hong, 2004:45). That is, individuals are actively involved right from birth in constructing personal meaning, which is their personal understanding from their experiences.

Another cognitive psychologist, Vygotsky claims that cognitive development and learning originate in a social context (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that higher psychological functions, such as learning, develop in interaction between individuals. He hypothesized the existence of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where functions learnt in a social dimension are transferred to a cognitive dimension. An implication of this theory is that a learner learns under the guidance of an expert, who provides assistance and support by adjusting the difficulty of the task. Since a language classroom can also be considered as a social environment, the phenomena of interaction which take place there can be analyzed in the light of this theory.

Lev Vygotsky (1978) shared many of Piaget's assumptions about how children learn, but he placed more emphasis on the social context of learning. Piaget's cognitive theories have been used as the foundation for the discovery of learning models in which the teacher plays a limited role. In Vygotsky's theories both teachers and older or more experienced children play very important roles in learning.

There is a great deal of overlap between cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. However, Vygotsky's constructivist theory, which is often

called social constructivism，has much more room for an active，involved teacher. For Vygotsky the culture gives the child the cognitive tools (they are features of our minds that shape the ways we make sense of the world around us; the richer the cognitive toolkit we accumulate, the better the sense we make.) needed for his development. The type and quality of those tools determine, to a much greater extent than they do in Piaget's theory, the pattern and rate of development. Adults such as parents and teachers are conduits for the tools of the culture, including language. The tools of the culture provides to a child include cultural history, social context, and language. Today they also include electronic forms of information access.

Vygotsky's the "zone of proximal development" is probably his best-known concept. It argues that students can, with the help from adults or children who are more advanced，master concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own. No one ever achieves the full extent of their learning potential，but people can continue to develop their cognitive capacity throughout their lives and their social interaction.

Supported by social-interactive and constructive theory, a social constructive model of the teaching-learning process comes into being. It emphasizes the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks, and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others. In this model, a learner is an active meaning-maker and problem-solver and tasks involve input in the form of a piece of text or language. They involve activities，which are what the learners are required to do; and they involve cognitive operations, which are the cognitive process needed in order to carry out the activities. Together with the other two key factors, teachers and context, they interact as part of a dynamic, ongoing process.

2.1.2 Input and Interactionist Theory

Rod Ellis thought that the theoretical base of task-based approach is Input and Interactionist Theory (Ellis, 1999a). The explanation of Input and Interactionist Theory which Krashen emphasizes refer to using language to learn and then learning to use

language. Krashen and other second language acquisition theorists typically stress that language learning comes about through using language communicatively, rather than through practicing language skills. That is to say, we acquire a language mostly is the result of using language in the process of communicative activities, not the result of conscious language drilling.

According to Krashen, we acquire a language through our subconscious acquisition process not our conscious learning process. Language acquisition is a subconscious process not unlike the way a child learns language. Language acquirers are not consciously aware of the grammatical rules of the language, but rather develop a "feel" for correctness. In non-technical language, acquisition is "picking-up" a language. Language learning, on the other hand, refers to the conscious knowledge of a foreign language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them. Thus language learning can be compared to learning about a language.

Krashen also points out the students to acquire a language must receive comprehensible input. The input hypothesis states that a language acquirer who is at level "i" must receive comprehensible input that is at level "i+1". We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structures that is 'a little beyond' where we are now. This understanding is possible due to using the cultural background of the language we are hearing or reading and our knowledge of the world.

Interactionist critics pointed to some insufficiencies of Krashen's comprehensible input theory. They doubted that mere exposure to input, even if comprehensible, could promote language learning. When reading a book, watching a TV program, or listening to a radio broadcast learners do not interact with the source of language: the communication is unidirectional. They do not have the opportunity to show that they have not understood the message, to ask for clarifications or repetitions. On the basis of these considerations Long, although accepting the comprehensible input theory, decided to study how input is made comprehensible. His researches showed that native

speakers consistently modify their speech when they interact with non-native speakers. Most native speakers seem to adjust naturally their speech to the non-native-speakers needs, in order to facilitate communication (Long, 1983).

Long (1983:177-193) suggests that language acquisition can be gained only through the "conversational interaction". Meanwhile, he also thinks that the necessary language acquisition device is "modified interaction", which concerns (l) the modified interaction may make the input comprehensible; (2) the comprehensible input is good for language acquisition; (3) modified interaction benefits language acquisition. Therefore, in ELT we should design the activity with the modified interaction (task) so that learners can naturally acquire language through the conversational interaction.

Task-based language teaching can make language learning in classrooms closer to the natural route and may reach a higher rate of language acquisition because it provides learners with a clear communicative goal, interaction is needed to reach the goal, and comprehensive input can occur, and then language acquisition is facilitated.

Nowadays, more and more designers of communicative syllabuses attempts to organize communicative language teaching around a specification of communicative tasks. Some classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve interaction or negotiation of information and information sharing.

2.1.3 Communicative Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching can be regarded as one particular development within the broader "communicative approach" (Littlewood, 2004:1).

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has become the accepted orthodoxy theory of TEFL over the past ten years or more, and many, but not all, general courses include communicative goals, communicative practice or communicative methodology. Its theoretical base, according to Richards and Rodgers (1986/2000:71),

includes these characteristics:

1. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.

2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.

3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.

4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

2.1.3.1 Definition

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audiolingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills，the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

Margie S·Berns, an expert in the field of communicative language teaching，writes in explaining Firth's view that "language is interaction; it is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light, language study has to look at the use (function)of language in context, both its linguistic context (what is uttered before and after a given piece of discourse) and its social, or situational, context (who is speaking, what their social roles are, why they have come together to speak)"(Berns,1984:5).

2.1.3.2 Tasks and the Communicative Approach to Language Teaching

It should be obvious that the current interest in tasks stems largely from what has been termed "the communicative approach" to language teaching. Although it is not always immediately apparent, everything we do in the classroom is underpinned by beliefs about nature of language and about language learning. In recent years, there have been some dramatic shifts in attitude towards both language and learning. This has sometimes resulted in contradictory messages to the teaching profession, which in turn, has led to confusion.

Among other things, it has been accepted that language is more than simply a system of rules. Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of the meaning. In terms of learning, it is generally accepted that we need to distinguish between "learning that" and "knowing how". In other words, we need to distinguish between knowing various grammatical rules and being able to use the rules effectively and appropriately when communicating.

This view has underpinned communicative language teaching. During the seventies of the last century, the viewpoint that communication was an integrated process rather than a set of discrete learning outcomes created a dilemma for syllabus designers, whose task has traditionally been to produce ordered lists of structural, functional or notional items graded according to difficulty, frequency or pedagogic convenience. Processes belong to the domain of methodology. They cannot be reduced to lists of items. For a time, it seems, the syllabus designer pay little attention to the syllabus design based on processes.

One of the clearest presentations of a syllabus proposal based on processes rather than products has come from Breen (1984:52-53).He suggests that an alternative to the listing of linguistic components would be to:

…Prioritize the route itself; a focus upon the means towards the learning of a new

language. Here the designer would give priority to the changing process of learning and the potential of the classroom--to the psychological and social resources applied to a new language by learners in the classroom context….a greater concern with capacity for communication rather than repertoire of communication, with the activity of learning a language viewed as important as the language itself, and with a focus upon means rather than predetermined objectives, all indicate priority of process over product.

What Breen is suggesting is that, with communication at the center of curriculum, the goal of that curriculum(individuals who are capable of using the target language to communicate the others)and the means (classroom activities which develop this capability) begin to merge; the syllabus must take account of both the goals and the means.

Then a focus is placed upon the place of grammar. For some time after the rise of CLT, the status of grammar in the curriculum was rather uncertain. Some linguists maintained that it was not necessary to teach grammar and that the ability to use a second language would develop automatically if the learner were required to focus on meaning in the process of using the language to communicate. In recent years, this view has come under serious challenge, and it now seems to be widely accepted that there is value in classroom tasks that require learners to focus on form. It is also accepted that grammar is an essential resource in using language communicatively.

This is certainly Littlewood's view (1981). In his introduction to CLT, he suggests that the following skills need to be taken into consideration:

-The learner must attain as high a degree as possible of linguistic competence. That is, he must develop skill in manipulating the linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express his intended message.

-The learner must distinguish between the forms he has mastered as part of his

linguistic competence, and the communicative functions that they perform. In other words, items mastered as part of a linguistic system must also be understood as part of a communicative system.

-The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations. He must learn to use feedback to judge his success, and if necessary, remedy failure by using different language.

-The learner must become aware of the social meaning of language forms. For many learners, this may not entail the ability to vary their own speech to suit different social circumstances, but rather the ability to use generally acceptable forms and avoid potentially offensive ones.

Therefore, any comprehensive curriculum needs to take account of both means and goals and must address to both product and process. In the final analysis, it does not really matter whether whose responsibility for specifying learning tasks is called "syllabus designers" or "methodologists". What matters is that both processes and products are taken care of and that there is an interactional relationship between the two.

Whatever the position taken, there is no doubt that the development of CLT has had a profound effect on both methodology and syllabus design, and has greatly enhanced the status of the learning "task" within the curriculum.

To sum up, the Task-based Language Teaching not only incorporates the research achievements of SLA but also focuses on some newest teaching notions, e.g., cognitive psychology, interactive theories and so on. That is to say, TBLT develops and perfects the communicative language teaching approach.

2.2 Research on Communicative Tasks

In the last two decades or so, the tenets of communicative language teaching with their strong emphasis on students' ability to use language in real-life situations have taken hold in foreign language classrooms. Accordingly, TBLT that employs communicative tasks as the basic unit of analysis for motivating syllabus design and foreign language classroom activities has received increasing recognition. As the primary goal in language instruction is shifted from an object of study to a system of communication, the need to assess students' ability to use the language communicatively has been raised, and the effective design of communicative tasks has become more and more popular. However, there are several questions need to be solved as the follows: 1) What is a communicative task? 2) What is the progress of studying on communicative tasks design in west country? 3) What does the research on communicative tasks design in college English course in our country?

2.2.1 Definition of Communicative Tasks

Over the last 25 years, the communicative task has evolved as an important component within curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation (Nunan, 1991). In TBLT, syllabus content and instructional processes are selected with reference to the communicative tasks which learners will (either actually or potentially) need to engage in outside the classroom and also with reference to theoretical and empirical insights into those social and psycholinguistic processes which facilitate language acquisition.

In fact, there are two types of task in TBLT. One is communicative tasks, the other is learning tasks or enabling tasks (Estaire & Zanon, 1994:13-20). The latter type of task mainly focuses on language form (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence structure). Generally, the concept of communicative tasks has not received proper attention in discussions of TBLT. There is few researchers' study on the key term of communicative task applied to English language teaching systematically up to now, so

it is necessary to discuss the definition of communicative tasks further.

A communication task is a piece of classroom work which, as far as possible, resembles activities which our students or other people carry out in everyday life, thus reproducing processes of everyday communication (Estaire & Zanon, 1994:13-20).

A piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right (Nunan, 1989:10).

Communication tasks (Lambert uses communication tasks instead communicative tasks.) are pedagogic tasks which operate through a planned diversion in the information held by learners, and which usually approximate to some degree to a real-world task which learners may have to complete outside class. The need to share information requires learners to communicate functionally in a second language, and the real-world connection allows them to acquire task-specific language and skills. When they are well planned, communicate actively on topics of interest and relevance to them (Lambert, 2004:18-27).

When defining the communicative task above, Nunan (1989:10) said that the learners' attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. CLT has often been criticized for giving priority to fluency and not accuracy. This interpretation derives from the fact that when learners communicate in the classroom their performance is evaluated according to communicative effectiveness (Littlewood, 1981). Nunan's definition may be seen to reinforce the frequent misunderstandings about the roles of accuracy and fluency in CLT. As the author of this thesis interprets it, this part of Nunan's definition refers to the requirement of a non-linguistic purpose of the task (see above), and does not mean that form is of little importance in the learner's language. Estaire & Zanon and Lambert consider communicative tasks as

communicative activities, real-world tasks or real-world connection. They also do not mean that form is of little importance in learner's language.

2.2.2 Research on Communicative Tasks Design in West Countries

Shavelson and Stern (1981:478) suggest that tasks design should take into consideration the following elements:

l) Content--the subject matter to be taught

2) Materials--the things that learners can observe/manipulate

3) Activities--the things the learners and teacher will be doing during the lesson

4) Goals--the teacher's general aim for the task (they are much more general and vague than objectives)

5) Students--their abilities, needs and interests are important.

6) Social community--the class as a whole and its sense of "groupness".

Wright (1987) suggests that tasks minimally contain just two elements: input data which may be provided by materials, teachers or learners, and an initiating question which instructs learners on what to do with the data.

Candlin (1987) suggests that tasks should contain input, roles, settings, actions, monitoring, outcomes and feedback. Input refers to the data presented for learners to work on. Roles specify the relationship between participants in a task. Setting refers to the classroom and out-of-class arrangements entailed in the task. Actions are the procedures and sub-tasks to be performed by the learners. Monitoring refers to the supervision of the task in progress. Outcomes are the goals of the task and feedback refers to the evaluation of the task.

In 1989, Nunan published *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom.* Some consider this book as a milestons of task-based approach to language teaching. In his book, he proposed a framework for analyzing communicative tasks, and that tasks are analyzed or categorized according to their goals, input data, activities, settings and roles.

Goals ↘   ↙ Teacher's role

Input ⟶ tasks ⟵ Learner's role

↗   ↖

Activities   Settings
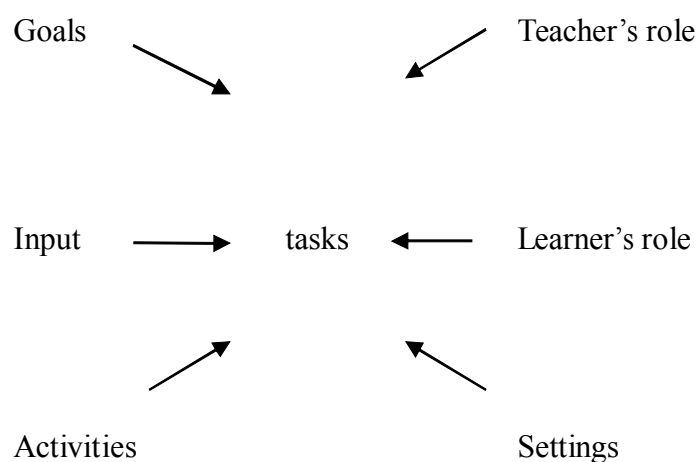
A framework for analyzing communicative tasks

(Adapted from Nunan1989/2000:11)

Long (1989) discussed two commonly aspects of communication tasks--the distribution of task-essential information and the goal orientation of learners. Regarding information distribution, Long discusses "one-way" tasks in which one learner holds all task-essential information and must communicate it to the others, and "two-way" tasks in which task-essential information is distributed between learners, requiring them to share and integrate it. Regarding goal orientation, Long discusses "open" task in which learners know that there is no "correct" solution to the task, and "closed" tasks in which learners know that there is only one or a small range of solutions. Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) combine these conditions to produce a

typology of tasks based on the opportunities for interaction that they provide (Lambert, 2004).

Yule (1997) provided a second typology of communication tasks. Yule proposes three task types (descriptive, instructional, and narrative) and argues that the discourse skills necessary for descriptive task are entailed in instructional task, and that the skills for both are entailed in narrative tasks. Whereas the typology of Pica et al. (1993) helps to understand how learners need to interact on individual tasks, Yule's (1997) typology provides a basis for sequencing tasks developmentally. Although new approach is emerging (Skehan1998), the typology of Pica et al. (1993) and Yule (1997) provide a basis for organizing foreign language instruction, and are relatively representative of current practice.

Lambert (2004) introduced an approach to planning sequences of communication tasks that require to become personally involved in their learning. By drawing on their own ideas and experience, as a product of earlier tasks in a given sequence, learners generate the content and resource material on which subsequent tasks operate. Lambert's idea is intended to increase understanding of the potential of tasks as a planning tool in FL/L2 education, and to provide practical examples for teachers and materials designers.

2.2.3 Research on Communicative Tasks Design in College English Course in China

So many scholars have been studying on TBLT approach applied to English classroom, but few of them explored communicative tasks design systematically. For example, Wei Yong-hong (2004) explored the theoretical foundation and practice of task-based foreign language teaching; Lin Li et al. (2005) discussed the application of task-based language learning in English language teaching. They all do not discuss communicative tasks design in their researches.

If you look up communicative tasks design in their book that comes to hand you will probably find that it is unmentioned; or at most you will find a few lines of sketchy instructions which give no ruling on several of the most important points. For instance, Wang Cai-qin (2001) discussed how to design listening tasks in college English. Sun Qiu-dan (1999) explored the application of task-based approach in oral English teaching. Wei Jian-hui (2003) talked about the usage of task-based language teaching in teaching and learning of reading. Cai Lan-zhen (2001) explored the application of task-based approach in college English writing.

Feng Yu-fang and Tang Xiao-yan (2004) discussed task-based approach applied to college English language teaching. They concluded that "Task-based Approach" is a meaning-focused teaching method, aiming at fulfilling language communicative tasks. A task involves real-world processes of language use as well as pedagogic communicative activities. Task-designing goes step by step, from simple to complicate. Via the case of task-designing in classroom teaching, from the perspective of the definition, types and designing-models of tasks, their thesis mainly explores the task-based teaching concept in English language teaching in order to strengthen teaching content and improve language communicative competence. Although they presented us the key term "communicative tasks", however, there is no further development and research of it.

In college English teaching, no one systematically discusses communicative tasks design up to now, which is a problem worthy of our notice. It is worth researching on it in teaching practice.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have looked in detail at the theoretical foundation of TBLT; we also know that the definition and the theoretical basis of communicative tasks. We have seen that the communicative tasks and the literature review of researching on communicative tasks design in the world. In the next chapter we shall look in greater detail at the models of organizing lesson and

principles of communicative tasks design.

Chapter 3   The Models of Organizing Lessons and Principles of Communicative Tasks Design

TBLT has slowly emerged since the 1980's to challenge the traditional itemized form-based methodology. TBLT is becoming a catchword in English teaching circles. What is this new TBLT approach about? David Nunan maintains that "setting specific tasks for students so that they act as if they were using the language in real life-- this is part of the essence of task-based teaching" (Lu Chun-hua, 2004). According to Nunan, the traditional approach of breaking down the different parts of a foreign language and then teaching them separately step by step does not help students generate meaningful language, i.e. solve problems in the real world. What is the model of organizing lessons of TBLT and principles of communicative tasks design? Each element will be analyzed particularly.

3.1 Models of Organizing Lessons

A traditional model for the organization of language lessons, both in the classroom and in course-books, has long been the PPP approach (presentation, practice, production). With this model individual language items (for example, the past continuous) are presented by the teacher, then practiced in the form of spoken and written exercises (often pattern drills), and then used by the learners in less controlled speaking or writing activities. Although the grammar point presented at the beginning of this procedure may well fit neatly into a grammatical syllabus, a frequent criticism of this approach is the apparent arbitrariness of the selected grammar point, which may or may not meet the linguistic needs of the learners, and the fact that the production stage is often based on a rather inauthentic emphasis on the chosen structure.

An alternative to the PPP model is the Test-Teach-Test approach (TTT), in which the production stage comes first and the learners are "thrown in at the deep end" and required to perform a particular task (a role play, for example). This is followed by

the teacher dealing with some of the grammatical or lexical problems that arose in the first stage and the learners then being required either to perform the initial task again or to perform a similar task. The language presented in the "teach" stage can be predicted if the initial production task is carefully chosen but there is a danger of randomness in this model.

Jane Willis (1996), in her book *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*, outlines a third model for organizing lessons. While this is not a radical departure from TTT, it does present a model that is based on sound theoretical foundations and one which takes account of the need for authentic communication. TBLT is typically based on three stages. The first of these is the pre-task stage, during which the teacher introduces and defines the topic and the learners engage in activities that either help them to recall words and phrases that will be useful during the performance of the main task or to learn new words and phrases that are essential to the task. This stage is followed by what Willis calls the "task cycle". Here the learners perform the task (typically a reading or listening exercise or a problem-solving exercise) in pairs or small groups. They then prepare a report for the whole class on how they did the task and what conclusions they reached. Finally, they present their findings to the class in spoken or written form. The final stage is the language focus stage, during which specific language features from the task is highlighted and worked on. Feedback on the learners' performance at the reporting stage may also be appropriate at this point.

The main advantages of TBLT are that language is used for a genuine purpose meaning that real communication should take place, and that at the stage where the learners are preparing their report for the whole class, they are forced to consider language form in general rather than concentrating on a single form (as in the PPP model). Whereas the aim of the PPP model is to lead from accuracy to fluency, the aim of TBLT is to integrate all four skills and to move from fluency to accuracy plus fluency. The range of tasks available (reading texts, listening texts, problem-solving,

role-plays, questionnaires, etc) offers a great deal of flexibility in this model and should lead to more motivating activities for the learners.

Learners who are used to a more traditional approach based on a grammatical syllabus may find it difficult to come to terms with the apparent randomness of TBLT, but if TBLT is integrated with a systematic approach to grammar and lexis, the outcome can be a comprehensive, all-round approach that can be adapted to meet the needs of all learners.

3.2 Principles of Communicative Tasks Design

Task design is the most important element in TBLT. No tasks, no Task-based Language Teaching. The same is true of communicative tasks design. So, the teacher should have a clear idea about what kind of tasks (here refer to meaningful tasks and authentic tasks), whether focus on language form or not and how difficult the tasks should be in order to facilitate learning of different learners with different learning levels. Therefore, it is necessary to build up the rationale of designing tasks for a task-based classroom in the teachers' mind and to take all the following elements into consideration so that sound and effective tasks can be designed.

3.2.1 The Principle of Meaningful Tasks

Halliday (1975) emphasizes that learning a foreign language involves the acquisition of a new system for realizing familiar meanings. In natural SLA circumstances, we begin by wanting to mean, (and understand what others mean) and then go on to seek or notice wordings that express those meanings. Language does not exist in a vacuum, and it does not develop in a vacuum. This is why in classroom circumstances lists of words and sample patterns taught as single items very rarely become part of the learners' deployable system. Language develops in response to the need to mean and to understand what others mean. It follows that materials we offer

learners should allow them to focus first on meanings in contexts and then go on to look at the wordings that realize the meanings.

From the above viewpoints, we can argue that any pedagogical process which supports natural acquisitional processes should therefore lead from meanings to wordings.

This is a major principle behind a task-based approach to course design. In setting learners a task to achieve (e.g., a problem to solve), the emphasis is first on learners' exchanging meanings to complete the task, using whatever language they can recall. Then they examine the language that fluent speakers or writers used to do the same task and focus on typical words, phrases and patterns (i.e., wordings) that occurred (Willis, 1998a).

Language is a meaning system. In a meaningful task students are asked to exchange information among themselves in small groups and/or with the teacher. This kind of student collaboration has two benefits. First, the whole class actively participates in a task at the same time and students can then compare their findings when the task is over; and second, the meaningful task is rehearsed in class for later use in real communication outside the classroom.

3.2.2 The Principle of Some Focus on Language Form

Of the many issues in our field, that of focusing on form or focusing on meaning has probably been one of the most widely discussed. Most applied linguists argue that both are important, and that they are in fact two sides of a single coin and not the opposing issues. However, that should not mean a return to presenting grammar out of context, nor of confronting learners with decontextualized sentence level structures that they are expected to memorize and internalise through repetition and manipulation. We need to dramatize for learners the fact that effective language use involves achieving harmony between form and function. We need to show them that

different forms will enable them to express different meanings in different contexts. Meanwhile, when we design a task or an activity, we mean that a good guidance to each task, even a subtask is usually shown in the language teaching or learning, so as to have learners understand and use language effectively in the communicative activity, through a rich array of task practice.

Although many students acquire a new language with little focus on language form (For example, in CLT class, the learners are exposed to the target language and have lots of opportunities to use it to express their own meanings), there is now some evidence that learners do better if, at some point, their attention is drawn to typical features of language form (Skehan, 1994a). This can be done in two ways:

- Through consciousness-raising exercises highlighting frequently used language items, to help learners perceive patterns (Schmidt, 1990), and systematize what they know.

- By challenging learners to communicate in circumstances where accuracy matters (e.g. making a public presentation of their ideas or findings), so they feel the need, at a prior planning stage, to organize their ideas clearly and to check that their lexical choices, their grammar and pronunciation are accurate. (A similar need for a prestige variety was identified in research by Labov, 1970.) The cycle of Task →Planning →Report, which forms the central part of a TBLT framework, caters to this (Willis, 1996, 1998a).

3.2.3 The Authenticity Principle

Language data can be divided into authentic data and non-authentic data. Authentic data are samples of spoken and written language that have been specifically written for the purposes of language teaching. Authentic data are genuine English statement. They come into being as two or more individuals engage in genuine communication. Non-authentic data are those spoken and written texts, and other

samples of language that have been specially written for the classroom.

Before teaching, the authentic data exist in the real world, and non-authentic data are definite in the classroom or the textbooks. We mean that non-authentic data can provide learners with examples of target grammar and vocabulary in texts that are simple enough to enable learners to understand and process the language. As such, they are valuable resources for learners, particularly in the early stages of learning.

However，in addition to non-authentic data, it is also beneficial for learners to work with authentic data. In such data, learners encounter target language items in the kinds of contexts where they naturally occur. If learners never get to listen to or read authentic texts in the supportive atmosphere of the classroom, if they are only fed with an exclusive diet of contrived dialogs and listening or reading text, the challenge of functioning effectively in genuine communication outside the classroom will be that much greater(Nunan，1999). So, When we design a task，we have to deal with the relationship between its authenticity and the contents in the texts and try to have learners understand and practise a language in a naturally authentic language situation.

For example, if we take the recording in the real life into the classroom, we still don't think it is authentic because the learners are not participants but hearers (audience).

The advantage of using authentic data is that learners encounter target language items in the kinds of contexts where they really occur, rather than in contexts that have been concocted by a non-authentic textbook writer. Ultimately, this will assist learners because they will experience the language item in interaction with other closely related grammatical and discourse elements.

Here are two conversations that illustrate the similarities and differences between authentic and non-authentic data. It is not necessary to spell out which is which, because it is obvious.

Jane: *Who's that boy over there?*

Zhou Lan: *That's Tang Lin. Come on. I'll introduce you.*

Jane: *All right.*

Zhou Lan: *Tang Lin, I want to introduce my friend, Jane.*

Tang Lin: *Hello.*

Jane: *Hi.*

          (Adapted from Chen Xiao-tang 2002:63)

Jane: *Who's that boy over there?*

Zhou Lan: *That's Tang Lin. Come on. Let me introduce you.*

Jane: *All right.*

Zhou Lan: *Tang Lin, I'd liket to introduce my friend, Jane.*

Tang Lin: *Hello.*

Jane: *Hi.*

The two sentences "I will introduce you" and "I want to introduce my friend, Jane." are not genuine English statement. They can be changed into "Let me introduce you." and "I'd like to introduce my friend, Jane." respectively.

Proponents of task-based language teaching have argued for the importance of

incorporating authentic data into the classroom, although much has been made of the fact that authenticity is a relative matter, and that as soon as one extracts a piece of language from the communicative context in which it occurred and takes it into the classroom, one is "de-authenticating" it to a degree. However, if learners only ever encounter contrived dialogues and listening texts, the task of learning the language will be made more difficult (Nunan, 1999).

All the above reflect the tasks should be related to the learners' daily life or social life. The reality is that in EFL contexts, learners need authentic data. In many ways authenticity of tasks can be achieved and pedagogic tasks can have more meanings and be more related to the real world. These include making tasks more authentic though the following means:

a .Through genuine task purposes

Willis (1998) asserts that one of the crucial aspects of task authenticity is whether real communication takes place. So the first way to make tasks authentic is to find out a genuine purpose for the language to be learned, only when there is a purpose will real meaningful communication take place. In this point Willis argues that with a genuine communicative purpose, students have the chance to interact naturally, in "real time" to achieve a communicative goal, which will be far more likely to lead to increased fluency and natural acquisition than controlled exercises that encourage students to get it right from the very beginning.

b .Through real world targets

Working within a needs-analysis framework, Long and Crookes (1992) argue that pedagogic tasks must be related to real-world target tasks. Examples given by them are: buying a train ticket, renting an apartment, reporting a chemistry experiment，taking lecture notes and so on. From this perspective, although classroom-based pedagogic tasks are not the same as the target tasks, they can be said to be authentic if they have a

clear relationship with real-world needs.

c .Through classroom interactions

A classroom is a special society. Students and teachers get together for a common purpose. So, pedagogic tasks can be authentic through classroom interactions. Teachers should have the ability to explore the potential authenticity of the learning situation in classrooms. Breen argues in his book (1985) that all of the everyday procedures, the learning tasks, types of data, and the materials are to be selected and worked on, the actual needs, interests, and all preferred ways of working of all people have gathered in the classroom, all provide sufficient authentic potentials for communication.

d. Through learners' engagement

Another crucial element of task is whether it is relevant to the learners. So in order to make tasks more authentic, task designers must take learners' engagement into consideration. It's true that some tasks are authentic to some learners but not at all to others. So how to make students all engaged in the task is in fact one of the ways to make tasks more authentic.

3.2.4 The Principle of Reasonable Task Difficulty

Researches have proved that task difficulty have great influences on the effect of tasks，namely the accuracy, complexity and fluency of the learners' language outcomes. So, proper choice of difficulty in different stage of a TBLT class is of great importance.

In order to control the difficulty of tasks，teachers must know what elements contribute to task difficulty. In other words，teachers should know how to make tasks easy and difficult to meet different needs.

Nunan reviews some factors relating to task difficulty. He and Candlin offer two

lists in 1987, one of which focuses solely on the nature of the task, while the other is based upon the cognitive operations required of the learners.

The first list which is offered by Candlin is as follows:

1. cognitive complexity;

2. communicative difficulty;

3. whether the task follows a general sequence of operations or whether this is unclear;

4. linguistic complexity;

5. continuity between tasks.

The following is the second list which was issued by Nunan and Candlin:

1. attending to or noticing or recognizing the input;

2. making sense of the input，e.g. how the language 15 organized and structured;

3. processing information (e.g. hypothesizing，inferring);

4. transfering and generalizing what is learned.

Skehan (1994:191-192) developed a scheme to help teachers with their decision-making about task difficulty. He also presents a three-phase approach to task implementation as he insists that "analyzing and selecting tasks does not automatically determine task difficulty" (Skehan, 1996:24). In each phase (pre-task, during-task, post-task) he identifies which aspects of task difficulty should be considered so that task implementation can have a positive effect on task value and task selection can become a "less arbitrary" process.

Assessing tasks in terms of difficulty

Code complexity

 Linguistic complexity and variety

 Vocabulary load and variety

 Redundancy

 Density

Communicative stress

 Time limits and time pressure

 Speed of presentation

 Number of participants

 Length of texts used

 Type of response

 Opportunities to control interaction

Cognitive complexity

a. Cognitive processing

 Information organization

 Amount of 'computation'

Clarity of information given

Sufficiency of information given

Information type

b. Cognitive familiarity

Familiarity of topic and its predictability

Familiarity of discourse genre

Ease of relationship to background knowledge

Familiarity of task

(Skehan 1994:191-192)

The tasks for the TBLT lesson presented in this thesis were selected and assessed in terms of difficulty according to Skehan's schemes. The following phases are taken into consideration:

Pre-task stage

Cognitive complexity will determine the extent to which active thinking about new material is involved in doing the task. It will have to be balanced with cognitive familiarity as to how easily a task can be completed by drawing on existing schematic knowledge. The teacher will introduce the topic (foregrounding) and the students will do a similar task so that the task requirements are made clear. Different tasks will place different processing loads on learners, therefore careful planning will ease the burden during the task and attention may be directed to the detail of the language.

Code complexity is concerned with structuring and interlanguage development, and the use of pedagogic tasks will be introduced and draw attention to aspects of the

target language code. Students will focus on language forms that will be useful in the coming tasks. The teacher has ensured that the text structure and vocabulary load are just beyond the students' current knowledge, so that redundancy can be activated to fill in for partial comprehension of certain parts of the text. The density of information is controlled either by the choice of text or the choice of activities: for example when the text is dense, students will focus on scanning for information. Skehan (1996:25) also stresses the fact that we should regard any pre-task focus on language as a useful stage but "it will only create the condition under which [learning] may occur.

During-task stage

The area of communicative stress is concerned with how the task is transacted. The teacher will need to manipulate pressure: he/she carefully considers the time limits for the task (time pressure) in relation to the length of text, type of response and number of participants, so that learners use language at a comfortable speed. If a task is transacted in pressure conditions and without careful planning there is the danger that students will by-pass syntax in the attempt to process meaning and will use fossilized language (language they have rehearsed/memorized). As a consequence, "less desirable interlanguage forms may be reinforced" (Foster, 1996:135).

Post-task stage

This stage can be used to promote pedagogic goals. Students will engage in a similar task which will be carried out publicly (the audience will consist of the other students). Students will have the incentive to focus attention more clearly to language itself and "it may lead learners to switch attention repeatedly between accuracy and restructuring and fluency" (Skehan, 1996:27). This stage could lead to a balancing of the various goals that are desirable. A "second time around would quite conceivably result in changes in performance" (Bygate, 1996:138). It could influence the learner's general language development.

3.3 Summary

In this chapter the author has analyzed the models of organizing lessons, and the principles are the basis of communicative tasks design. From the above analysis, the teachers will easily understand the basic procedures and advantages of TBLT; the teachers can also get some practical principles to apply them to their communicative tasks design. From all the above we can see what will help teachers to design effective communicative tasks for college English course.

Thus, the learners want to acquire the target language effectively, they need to engage actively in processing the meanings of whatever they hear and read. A variety of communicative tasks can be designed which will motivate and give learners a purpose for doing this. These tasks should also help learners practice the skills they will need, so, in the next chapter, we turn from a focus on the important issues of communicative tasks design in order to help teachers to design effective communicative tasks.

Chapter 4   Designing Communicative Tasks for College English Course

After outlining four basic principles relating to communicative tasks design, the author then describes and illustrates a practical process of course and materials design which takes these principles into account.

In this chapter, according to the analysis of components of communicative tasks, the author points out communicative tasks design must be based on certain materials, so that several kinds textbooks for college English course are needed to be analyzed first. At the same time the analysis of non-English major college students is necessary. Then this chapter proposes two approaches to solve the learners' two main problems in the process of learning English.

4.1 Components of Communicative Tasks

Nunan (1989) suggests that the communicative tasks will contain a goal, input, activities, settings and roles. Goals of tasks are to develop students' communicative competence including socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Tasks contain some form of input data which might be verbal (for example a dialogue or reading passage) or non-verbal (for example a picture sequence). Activity refers to tasks, not exercises. An activity is in some way derived from the input and sets out what the learners are to do in relation to the input.

We will focus on task goals, inputs, and activities among these five terms in this thesis, and then we will discuss the analysis of materials and students and redesign traditional materials to meet the needs of solving the learners' two main problems.

4.1.1 Task Goals

Goals mean the general intentions behind any given communicative tasks and learning tasks. They may be related to a range of general outcomes (communicative, effective or cognitive) or may directly describe teacher or learner behaviour.

The making of goals is very important before learners' communicative activities. Communicative activities with no goals, can not encourage learners' interest in verbal participation; when communication is with no goals, this activity is not a real task (See 4.3.1). Therefore, goals are the necessary elements of communicative tasks, and goals play a very important role in the whole process of communicative activities.

The goal's purpose is to exchange personal information. Goals provide a point of contact between the task and the broader curriculum. For example, a teacher may give the objectives (Unit 1 in *College English Book 1*) before learning one unit: By the end of the unit, students will be better able to

1). Talk and write about the importance of creativity and imagination during college students;

2). Use about 30 new words and 10 new phrases and expressions in brief conversations, translation and preliminary writing tasks.

3). Use "ask if---" and "one argues (believes, points out) that---";

4). Read material of a similar topic and degree of difficulty;

5). Know how to use exact words in writing in terms of their connotations and denotations.

The above five goals of this unit are general goals, some of them can be called communicative goals (e.g. the first two goals), others are the goals of learning tasks. Communicative goals also can be divided into several kinds of goal areas, there are a few differences between them.

Clark (1987) divided communicative goal into three goal areas:

1). Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, and through this to exchange information, ideas, opinions, attitudes and feelings, and to get things done;

2). Acquiring information from more or less 'public' sources in the target language (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers, brochures, documents, signs, notices, films, television, slides, tape, radio, public announcements, lectures or written reports etc.) and using this information in some way;

3). Listening to, reading, enjoying and responding to creative and imaginative uses of the target language (e.g. stories, poems, songs, rhymes, drama) and, for certain learners, creating them themselves.

Task and task goals enable the program planner and material writers to provide explicit links between the task and the broader curriculum it is designed to serve. "Without clearly articulated sets of goal statements, there is a risk that task-based teaching programs will lack coherence as Widdowson (1987), among others, has pointed out." (Nunan, David. 2004)

In this thesis, we just discuss general goals not specialized goals. That is to say we are not to develop skills in specific specialized areas such as English for science and technology. By the way, how to make our task goal is an important issue.

The making of goals is based on *College English Curriculum Requirements*, "The teachers and foreign language teaching researchers learn the information of *Curriculum Requirements*, which is advantageous to carries on teaching material analysis and design." (Cheng Xiao-tang, 2002:14) In addition, the designers should not neglect the task difficulties, learners and materials when they make the task goals. Goals are generally referenced against the sorts of things which learners want to do with the language outside the classroom. Typical goal statements include:

1). to develop the skills necessary to take part in academic study;

2). to obtain sufficient oral and written skills to obtain a promotion from unskilled worker to site supervisor;

3). to communicate socially in the target language;

4). to develop the survival skills necessary to obtain goods and services;

5). to be able to read the literature of the target culture.

After the making of goals, learners need to have enough materials as input before participating in communicative activities. Input is another important element of communicative tasks, it is necessary to analyze input as is indispensable to a communicative task.

4.1.2 Input

The theories of second language acquisition agree that, for learning a modern language, learners must be exposed to a considerable amount of language input either in natural or artificial teaching settings. Rod Ellis (1999:127) considered that input is used to refer to the language that is addressed to the foreign language learner either by a native speaker or by another foreign language learner. By the way, input also is a term used to mean the language that the students hear or read. There should be some new information that the learners have not known: the input should be, in other words, at a slightly higher level than the student is capable of using, but at a level that he is capable of understanding. Krashen calls this "rough-tuning" and compares it to the way adults talk to children. The suggestion being made by Krashen, then, is that students can acquire language on their own provided that they get a great deal of comprehensible input.

A further distinction needs to be made, however, between two different types of input: roughly-tuned input and finely-tuned input. The former is language at a level slightly above the students' abilities. The later is language selected very precisely to be at exactly the students' level. For our purposes finely-tuned input can be taken to mean that language which we select for conscious learning and teaching.

4.1.2.1 Roughly-tuned Input

The need for roughly- tuned input (where students have to deal with language that is at a higher level than they are capable of producing) has already been extensively argued. We have said that it is this kind of input that helps students to acquire a new language. In our methodological approach, then, we will make sure that we include a considerable amount of such input.

Input of this type can come from a number of sources. The teacher talking to the class is giving them input; and reading passage has the same function as does a listening exercise on tape. So, we believe that the making of task goals (Unit 1 in *College English Book 1*) fit roughly-tuned input:

1). Grasp the main idea (the essence of writing is to write what one enjoys writing);

2). Master the key language points in the text;

3). Conduct a series of reading, listening, activities related to the theme of the unit.

It is clearly necessary to give students a lot of reading and listening materials. This is so because one of inputs' major aims will be to teach students how to read and listen to English. In other words, we will ask our students to read a text in order to be able to extract two or three pieces of specific information, for example. The more they do this, we suppose, the better they become at reading for that purpose. The same is true of listening activities.

Roughly-tuned input provide exactly the kind of input that, as we have suggested, is necessary. But reading and listening texts that are roughly-tuned do not only train the students' conscious learning of language forms. While students are involved in the training of finely-tuned input, they will be consciously learning "new" language that appears in the text.

4.1.2.2 Finely-tuned Input

Finely-tuned input is language which has been selected for conscious learning, such as the present simple, the past continuous, the language of imitation, etc (Harmer.1983:35).

The following task goals (Unit 1 in *College English Book 1*) fit this kind of input:

a). Grasp the structure of the text (narration in chronological sequence) and perform the language of imitation;

b). Master the grammatical structures in the text;

We present examples to explain the first task goal (a):

Students circle all the time words, phrases and clauses in Text A (Unit 1 in *College English Book 1*). They include: *since my childhood in Belleville, until my third year in high school, until then, when our class was assigned to Mr. Fleagle for third-year English, late in the year, until the night before the essay was due, when I finished, next morning, two days passed, when I saw him lift my paper from his desk-- 'when Mr. Fleagle finished.* When they finish, the teacher asks several students to make some sentence using these time words, phrases and clauses and to read aloud what they have done.

We give another example to fit the needs of the second task goal (b):

The teacher asks students to form pairs and ask each other questions based on paragraph two using the structure "sb. / sth. is said/ believed/ reported to do/be". (Unit 1 in *College English Book 1*) Theteacher may offer the following model:

--What kind of person is Mr. Fleagle?

--He was said/ reported/ believed to be very formal, rigid and hopelessly out-of-date.

Afterwards, a pair or two may repeat their questions and answers to the class.

Generally, input may include the approaches of listening, reading and interaction stages. Listening can extract specific information and reading can extract specific information, so does interaction. Listening as a skill may be extremely similar to reading, but the text the listener has to deal with is considerably different from the written one and these two are also different from interaction. Thus, we should point out both roughly- tuned input and finely-tuned input are included in each of stages (listening, reading and interaction stages) sometimes.

4.1.2.3 Approaches of Input

In communicative classroom, the approaches of input often refer to listening to extract specific information and reading to extract specific information. In the following part, we will discuss these two main approaches respectively with specific examples.

4.1.2.3.1 Listening to Extract Specific Information

One of our tasks when teaching listening will be to train students to understand what is being said in such conversations: to get them to disregard redundancy, hesitation, ungrammaticality. After all, they do it in their own language, so it seems reasonable to suppose that we can train them to do it in English, although clearly in acceptable stages: we would probably let them look at the transcript of dialogues quickly to check their extracted listening information, then, play the tape again.

The following example (Unit 1 in *College English Book I*) shows us one of

approaches to extract specific information:

Listen carefully to Dialogue A. Then check your comprehension by either filling in the blanks or choosing the correct answer from the three choices given.

(Transcript of Dialogue A is omitted)

1). The two speaker are--.

2). They are talking about--.

A: biology and fieldwork

B: imagination and creativity in their college work

C: professors and examinations

3). Both speakers believe that—

A: they work more or less like machines

B: imagination leads to creativity

C: artists are more creative than biologists

This kind of training of listening comprehension aims to train students to understand what is being said in the dialogue and try to extract specific information. It is necessary to do this job, because it can develop the abilities of learners' listening comprehension.

4.1.2.3.2 Reading to Extract Specific Information

It is often difficult to convince students of English as a foreign language that texts in English can be understood even though there are vocabulary items and structures the

students have never seen before. Reading to extract specific information can be satisfactorily performed even though students do not understand the whole text; the same is true for students who want to 'get the general idea' of a text.

We present the following example to fit the needs of reading to extract specific information (Unit 1 in *College English Book 1*):

Reading tasks for Text A: Writing for Myself (omitted):

Teacher draws students' attention to Writing Strategy in Theme-related Language Learning Tasks, especially the part about details. Teacher then asks the following questions:

--In Part1, what details are selected to show "I'd been bored with everything associated with English course"?

--In Part 1, what details are given to show that Mr. Fleagle was dull and rigid?

-- In Part 2, which sentences show that at first Baker was unwilling to write the essay?

-- In Part 3, the author didn't tell us directly that his essay was very good. By which sentences did he manage to give us the impression that his essay was very good?

It is considered vitally important to train students in these skills (e.g. the ability to understand what is important even though the reader cannot understand everything) since they may well have to comprehend reading in just such a situation in real life.

The same is of course true for listening, but because the reading text is static,

students are often tempted to read slowly, worrying about the meaning of each particular word. And yet if they do this they will never achieve the ability to read texts in English in anything but a slow and ponderous way. Certainly they will continue to have difficulty in quickly scanning a text for information unless the teacher insists on these skills being performed rapidly. In other words, the teacher should insist on the comprehension task being performed in a limited amount of time: the students gradually can perform tasks in a shorter time than before.

4.1.3 Activities

Activities refer to the behaviour that participants do with the input, which forms the point of departure for the learning task. Nunan(1989/2000)proposes three general ways of characterizing activities:1) rehearsal for the real world (authenticity); 2) skills use; 3) fluency and accuracy.

Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems the most important activity: People who know a language are referred to as "speakers" of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; and many, if not most, foreign language learners are primarily interest in learning to speak.

Speaking activities in the classroom that develop learners' ability to express themselves through speech would therefore be looked as an important component of a language course. However, it is not easy to design and administer such speaking activities. There are some problems caused by learners as they participate in speaking activities, so the teachers should analyzes their students' problems of speaking. In line with that, teachers should design "an effective speaking activity" to meet the needs of solving learners' problems.

4.1.3.1 The Effective Speaking Activities

According to Penny's view (2000:120), an effective speaking activity includes four aspects as the following:

1). **Learners talk a lot.** As much as possible of the period of time allotted to the activity is in fact occupied by learner talk. This may seem obvious, but often most time taken up with teacher talk or pauses.

2). **Participation is even.** Classroom discussion is not dominated by a minority of talkative participants: all get a chance to speak, and contributions one fairly evenly distributed.

3). **Motivation is high.** Learners are eager to speak: because they are interested in the topic and have something new to say about it, or because they want to contribute to achieving a task objective.

4). **Language is of an acceptable level.** Learners express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other, and of an acceptable level of language accuracy.

4.1.3.2 The Problems on the Part of Learners

What are some of the problems in getting learners to talk in the classroom? Perhaps you can recall your experiences as either a learner or a teacher. Now look at the following problems and consider what we might do in the classroom in order to overcome each of the problems described in the following items.

1) **Shame.** Unlike reading, writing and listening activities, speaking requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience. Learners often feel shamed about what they are trying to say in a foreign language in the classroom: worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.

2) **Nothing to say.** Even if they are not inhibited, you often hear learners complain that they cannot think of anything to say: they have no motive to express themselves beyond the guilty feeling that they should be speaking.

3) **Low or uneven participation.** Only one participant can talk at a time if he or she is to be heard; and in a language group this means that each one will have only very little talking time. This problem is compounded by the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.

4) **Mother-tongue use.** In class where all, or a number of, the learners share the same mother tongue, they may tend to use it: because it is easier, because it feels unnatural to speak to one another in a foreign language, and because they feel less 'exposed' if they are speaking their mother tongue. If they are talking in small groups it can be quite different to get some classes-- particularly the less disciplined or motivated ones, to keep to the native language.

4.1.3.3 The Approaches to Solve These Problems

What can the teacher do to help to solve some of the problems? We can use the following activities to help teachers.

1) **Use group task.** This increases the sheer amount of learner talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the full class. For example:

Group work

Break into small groups and discuss the following questions. Later the teacher may want to ask some of you to report the answers of your group to the class.

a. As student, Baker was long bored by writing compositions. Later, however, his attitude changed completely. What do you think brought about this change?

b. Mr. Fleagle says "it's of the very essence of the essay", yet he gives no further explanation. Think it over. What does he mean?

c. How do you understand the title " Writing for Myself"?

(Unit 1 in *College English Book I*)

2) **Base the activity on easy language.** In general, the level of language needed for a discussion should be lower than that used in intensive language learning activities in the same class: it should be easily recalled and produced by the participants, so that they can speak fluently with the minimum of hesitation. It is a good idea to teach or review essential vocabulary before the activity starts.

3) **Make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest.** A good topic is one to which learners can relate using ideas from their own experience and knowledge; the "ability-grouping" topic is therefore appropriate for most students, learners or young people whose school memories are fresh. It should also represent a genuine controversy, in which participants are likely to be fairly evenly divided. Some questions or suggested lines of thought can help to stimulate discussion, but not too many arguments for and against should be "fed" to the class in advance: leave room for their own initiative and originality.

A task is essentially goal-oriented: it requires the group, or pair, to achieve an objective that is usually expressed by an observable result, such as brief notes or lists, a rearrangement of jumbled items, a drawing, a spoken summary. This result should be attainable only by interaction between participants: so within the definition of the task you often find instruction such as "reach a consensus", or "find out everyone's opinion".

Some examples of discussion tasks are presented as follows (a spoken summary, for example):

Please find and discuss the exact words or the number of the sentence that best sums up the main idea of Text A :

What does the author want to tell us in this essay?

(Unit 1 in *College English Book I*)

4) **Give some instruction or training in discussion skills.** If the task is based on group discussion then include instructions about participation when introducing it. For example, tell learners to make sure that everyone in the group contributes to the discussion; appoint a chairperson to each group who will regulate participation.

5) **Keep students speaking the target language.** You might appoint one of the groups as monitor, whose job it is to remind participants to use the target language, and perhaps report later to the teacher how well the group managed to keep to it. Even if there is no actual penalty attached, the very awareness that someone is monitoring such lapses helps participants to be more careful.

6) **Role-play and related techniques.** Role-play is used to refer to all sorts of activities where learners imagine themselves in a situation outside the classroom, sometimes playing the role of someone other than themselves, and using language appropriate to this new context. For example: ask and answer questions, one student can play the teacher and the other play student.

Pair work

One of you asks the first three questions and the other answers. Starting from question d, change roles. When you have finished, the teacher may want to put some of the questions to you for a check.

a. How did Baker use to feel about English courses?

b. When did he begin to think it possible for him to become a writer?

c. What did Baker hear about Mr. Fleagle?

Now switch roles

d. What was his own impression of his new English teacher?

e. Why did he put off the writing assignment till the last minute?

f. What was the topic that held his attention?

(Unit 1 in *College English*

Book 1)

Normally, the groups or pairs improvise their role-play between themselves, simultaneously, with no audience. Sometimes, however, volunteers may perform their role-plays later in front of the class. This is virtually one of the ways we can give our learners the opportunity to practice improvising a range of real-life spoken language in the classroom, and cooperative; but more anxious people find role-play difficult and sometimes even embarrassing. Factors the language demanded is well within the learners' capacity; you own enthusiasm; careful and clear presentation and instructions.

4.1.3.4 Supplementing Speaking Activities

Here the author makes it very clear that the group work is a kind of speaking task in the classroom. In group work, learners perform a learning task through small-group interaction. It is a form of learner activation that is of particular value in the practice of oral fluency: learners in a class that is divided into several groups get several times as

many opportunities to talk as in full-classroom organization. It also has other advantages: it can foster learner responsibility and independence, can improve motivation and contribute to a feeling of cooperation and warmth in the class. The success of group work depends to some extent on the surrounding social climate, and on how habituated the class is to using it; and also, of course, on the selection of an interesting and stimulating task whose performances are well within the ability of the group. But it also depends, more immediately, on effective and careful organization.

4.2 Analysis of Students and Materials

In order to design effective communicative tasks for our college English courses, analyzing the components of communicative tasks is a main step, and analyzing learners and materials is another main step. Without understanding our students and courses, we can not design effective communicative tasks. Therefore, it is necessary to do some researches on our students and materials before our materials design.

4.2.1 The Analysis of Non-English Major College Students

Zhu Ju-fen (2003:40-47)made a survey and discussion on the English learning situations of freshmen by means of the descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of a study of the non-English major freshmen. Two of her major findings are as follows: (1) What they mostly want to master during the four-year study in university has turned out to be oral English instead of reading ability. (2) They know why they should learn English but they learn very passively (the traditional teaching methodology affect themselves).

According to Yuan Feng-Shi and Xiao De-fa's （2004:47-51） survey on the discrepancy of performance in the class between English major and non-English major students, the non-English major students represent lower rate of verbal participation. One of reasons is that they worried about making mistakes, for fear of expressing themselves with little accuracy.

The author also made a survey on communicative competence of non-English major students in 2004. (Wang Cheng-jun, 2004:14-17)There are 102 students among 174 students who can not get the foreign language teaching goal in communicative competence. The author made a comparison between two parallel classes (College of Economics & Political Science of Chongqing Normal University) of the non-English major freshmen in 2004. The teaching material used is *Practical English* (Second Edition) published by Higher Education Press. We use TBLT in class A, designing communicative tasks in each unit for college English course. At the same time, we use traditional teaching methodology in class B, having no communicative tasks design.

After one semester, we had a survey of our students by means of the statistics and analysis based on my classroom observation and collecting of classroom data. We find the differences in three main aspects: the verbal participation, the basic fluency in oral English and the basic fluency and accuracy in oral English.

Table 1 Comparison between class A and class B in three main aspects

Element / Class	numbers of students	the rate of verbal participation	the basic fluency in oral English	the basic fluency and accuracy in oral English
Class A	38	38	33	29
Class B	36	20	16	12

From the above comparison, we know that the rate of verbal participation in class

A is 100%, but 55.6% in class B; the rate of students' basic fluency in oral English in class A is 86.8%, but 44.4% in class B; the rate of students' oral English with basic fluency and accuracy in class A is 76.3%, but 33.3% in class B.

We also find the students' participation in class B is nearly half of Class A, the rate of students' oral English with basic fluency and accuracy in class A is more than twice of class B, the reason is that we do not use TBLT and design communicative tasks for college English course in class B. The rate of students' verbal participation and oral English with basic fluency and accuracy in class B are lower in the classroom of the traditional way of teaching.

Therefore, Teachers should find out some approaches to design effective communicative tasks to attract their participation, to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy, "to pay more attention to foster communicative competence of non-English major students". (Wang Cheng-jun, 2004:14-17)

4.2.2 The Analysis of College English Textbooks

College English course series are intended for non-English majors who have known a certain amount of vocabulary and who have laid some grammatical foundation but are poor in listening and speaking. Therefore, the learning objective is to help students develop their communicative competence in English, and its focus is on the communicative aspect of language learning, namely on language output. Thus, different kinds of topics of interests are provided for students to talk or discuss so that they can achieve communicative competence in the end.

Despite the current emphasis on TBLT in the research literature, there are yet few genuinely task-based textbooks on the market (although there are a number of task-based teacher resource books). Some textbook series, claim to be task-based, but are still based on an underlying grammatical syllabus. Furthermore, teachers are frequently required to use a textbook mandated by the institution in which they teach.

Therefore, the only alternative open to many teachers who wish to use a task-based approach is to adapt the materials found in traditional textbooks to fit the principles and procedures of TBLT.

"The TBLT has been taken as a means to remedy the inefficiency of foreign language teaching by encouraging communication. However, due to the fact that there has been no genuinely task-based textbook, teachers who wish to use a task-based approach often have to redesign textbooks based on a more traditional approach." (Huang Lu and Han Jin-long.2003:51-56)

The textbooks that we use in our teaching design are *New Practical English Comprehensive Course, Integrated Course of College English, College English* and *English*, which were published respectively by Higher Education Press, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Peking University Press and Higher Education Press.

Liu Ran (2004:10-11) considered the objective of *Practical English Comprehensive Course* as to develop the students' practical abilities of English, it's content is   interesting, communicative which can be simulated easily by learners.

In the viewpoint of Mao Li-qun (2004:70-75), the objective of *Integrated Course of College English* is to improve the students' integrated ability to use the language comprehensively. These are exercises designed at a level of communicative tasks.

Huang Bi-kang (2004:2) said that the objective of *College English* fit the needs of *College English curriculum requirements*.

English course meets the first level of *College English Curriculum Requirements*--basic requirements. One of requirements concerns speaking: Student should be able to communicative in English in the course of learning, to conduct discussions on a given theme, and to talk about everyday topics which people from English-speaking countries. They should be able to give, after some preparation, short talks on familiar

topics with clear articulations and basically correct pronunciation and intonation. They are expected to use basic conversational strategies in dialogue.

Generally speaking, these textbooks have the following features (the series of *English* course uncovered the second and the fourth features):

1. Each unit has a carefully selected topic that is of interest to young learners.

2. In each unit the teaching of four skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, is well balanced and integrated.

3. There is careful linkage between tasks to ensure the smooth progression.

4. The reading texts cover a wide variety of formats and are genuinely relevant to students' everyday life.

5. Recycling of vocabulary and other aspects of the English language appears not only within units but also between units.

6. There is a systematic coverage of grammar items together with clear and concise explanations.

7. They are not the completely task-based textbook.

4.3 Materials Design

In order to adapt whole units of non-task based materials to fit a TBLT framework and to solve the two main problems of students, we also proposed two approaches to design effective communicative tasks to attract their participation, to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy: 1) designing effective communicative tasks or designing goal-oriented communicative tasks, and 2) designing post-task language focus on phrases.

4.3.1 Designing Goal-oriented Communicative Tasks

Coming up with appropriate tasks is critical to the adaptation process because everything the students do is derived from the tasks and it is the tasks that generate the language to be used. In most cases, activities from non-task-based sources that are supposed to provide free practice of targeted structures and functions have to be redesigned in order to fit the chosen tasks. In a few cases, a unit that does not contain even one activity could be redesigned to become a task. The following activity is an example of the kinds of activities that had to be redesigned. It illustrates a typical salesperson/Alice (customer) role-play; a common activity found in units on shopping in lower level texts (Unit 17in *English Book 1*).

Unit 17 Can I Help You?

Passage: I Don't Need a Bag

A large store is having its spring sale on shoes and boots. It is the first day of the sale, and the shoe department is full of women. They are eagerly trying to buy the shoes and boots. There are all kinds of shoes and boots in a variety of colors, and the prices are much lower than usual, because the store wants to sell all of them in order to make room for new stock.

The cashiers are very busy. They receive money and offer bags to the customers for their new shoes. Now Mrs. Green comes to one of them with her money in her hand and says, "I don't need a bag, thank you. I'm wearing the new shoes." "Would you like a bag to put your old shoes in?" The cashier asks politely. "No, thank you," Mrs. Green answers quickly, "I have sold those to someone else."

Role-play: A. Work in pairs. Collect items in the classroom and place them on your desk (e.g. *shoes, boots, a bag*). Take turns to be a salesperson and *Mrs. Green*.

Salesperson**:** Decide on a price for each item. Answer the *Mrs. Green*'s questions.

*Mrs. Green***:** Ask the salesperson how much each item costs. Say if you want to buy it.

Have conversations such as the following model:

*Salesperson**:** Good afternoon, madam. May I help you?*

*Mrs. Green**:** Yes, thank you. May I see that kind of shoes, please?*

*Salesperson**:** Here you are.*

*Mrs. Green**:** What size is it?*

Salesperson: It's size37.

*Mrs. Green**:** That's just my size. But it looks small. May I try it on?*

Salesperson: Of course. The fitting rooms are over there on your right.

Mrs. Green goes into the fitting room. Minutes later, she comes out, wearing the new shoes.

Salesperson: How does it fit?

*Mrs. Green**:   I think it too tight. May I try size 38, please?*

Salesperson: Okay It looks nice.

*Mrs. Green**:** This is perfect. How much is it?*

Salesperson: It's $70.

Mrs. Green: Don't you have any discount on this kind of shoes?

Salesperson: I'm afraid not.

Mrs. Green: Ok, I'll take this one.

B. Switch roles. Do the role-play again. The problem here is that this activity is not a real task. As Willis (1996) points out, in this kind of activity, students are being asked to act out their roles with no purpose other than to practice specific language forms. There is no goal to aim for, no reason to strive to explain something fully or to convince someone to follow a particular course of action, and no consequences for the student to face (no winner or loser) if the objective is not met. To make this activity more communicative the author redesigned it as follows:

Role-play: Can I help you?

Group A: You are *salespersons*. Answer *Mrs. Green*'s questions. Your goal is to be the first *salesperson* to sell his or her merchandise and make more money than the other *salesperson*.

Group B: You are *Mrs. Green*. You have $120. You must buy the items on your shopping list. Different *salesperson*s are selling the same kinds of items for different prices. Ask the clerks for the price of the items you have to buy. Decide which ones you want to buy.

Salesperson: Good afternoon, madam. May I help you?

Mrs. Green: Yes, thank you. May I see that kind of shoes, please?

Salesperson: Here you are.

Mrs. Green: What size is it?

Salesperson: It's size37.

Mrs. Green: That's just my size. How much is it?

Salesperson: It's $80.

Mrs. Green: Don't you have any discount on this kind of shoes?

Salesperson: I'm afraid not.

Mrs. Green: Ok, let me think a moment.

Salesperson: ...

Mrs. Green: ...

Switch roles. Do the role-play again.

The activity is now a whole-class mingle task. The *salespersons* have to try to sell their merchandise for more money than the other *clerks* do and to sell all their merchandise. *Mrs. Green* competes to see who can buy the items on their lists for the least amount of money. Half of the students play *salesperson*s assigned to different workstations representing department stores and half play *Mrs. Green*. Each department store has three of ten possible items for sale (e.g. blouses, socks, boots, shoes, shirt, and cap) and each shopping list has three items. The customers, therefore, have to find the stores which are selling the items on their shopping list, ask the

*salesperson*s how much the items cost (determined individually by each *salesperson*), and get the best deal before the items on their list are sold out. Once a *salesperson* has given the price of an item to a customer, he or she cannot change the price unless that customer comes back to the store after rejecting the initial price. When they finish, they add up the prices and find out who were the most successful *salesperson*s and customers. These changes add goals and problems to the activity and make it more communicative.

The above can be characterized as follows:

Goal	ⅰ) Your goal is to be the first salesperson to sell his or her merchandise and make more money than the other salesperson. ⅱ) *Mrs. Green* competes to see who can buy the items on their lists for the least amount of money.
Input	Extracting information and language knowledge from *Passage: I Don't Need a Bag*.
Activity	ⅰ) Reading passage. ⅱ) Role-play.
Teacher role	Monitor and facilitator.
Learner Role	Conversational partner.
Setting	Classroom/pair work.

4.3.2 Designing Post-task Cycle Language Focus on Phrases

As we explore the communicative tasks design, we shall see that it is not always easy to draw a fast conclusion that whether grammar exercises are communicative tasks or not. There are several reasons for this, not the least of which is the fact that meaning and form are closely interrelated. We use different grammatical forms to signal differences of meaning. In fact, good oral grammar exercises can and should be both meaningful and communicative. (Nunan, 2000:10)

Attempting to fashion post-task cycle language focus on phrases out of structural/functional materials proved to be a more difficult, labor-intensive process than coming up with communicative tasks. It is here where the fundamental accuracy to fluency direction of structural/functional materials comes most into conflict with the fundamental fluency to accuracy direction of a task-based framework. The following examples illustrate how constructing a language focus on phrase requires more than merely reversing the order of presentation in a cycle consisting of a grammar explanation, practice exercises, and a fluency activity. The materials are found in the first unit (greeting and introducing people) of *New Practical English Comprehensive Course*.

These units usually focus on topics such as greetings, introductions and on asking for and giving personal information. For grammar, they usually focus on yes/no and wh- questions with the verb be and on making statements with the verb be.

Verb	Subject	Rest of Sentence	Answer
Are	you	Mr.LiTiegang?	Yes, I am.

Are	you	Mr. Green?	No, I'm not.
Is	Jack Green	from Zhonghua Technical School?	Yes, he is.
Is	Jack	your student?	No, he isn't.
Are	you and Jack	business partner?	Yes, we are.
Are	you and Lu Yang	in the same company?	No, we aren't.
Are	Lu Yang and Dick	here for the same research project?	Yes, they are.
Are	Jack and Dick	in the same school?	No, they aren't.

The following example shows a standard grammar presentation of yes/no questions with be. (I am Li Tiegang, manager of a company.)

This would then typically be followed by one or more language manipulation exercises such as the following fill-in-the-blanks exercise.

A. Fill in the blanks and then practice the dialogues with another student.

1). A: _____ you from Henan province?

B: No, _____ _____. _____ from Shanghai.

2). A: _____ Susan a teacher?

B: Yes, she _____. _____ _____ a Spanish teacher.

3). A: _____ Susan teaching English?

B: No, she _____. She _____ teaching Spanish in a language school here..

4). A: _____ *Lu Yang and Dick here for the conference?*

B: Yes, _____ *.*

5). ...

This kind of exercise would serve to help prepare students to do some kinds of fluency activities based on the functions covered and on yes/no and wh- questions with be (assuming wh- questions with *be* had also been covered in a similar fashion). Typical activities found at this point include partner interviews (e.g. partners ask each other questions such as: What is your name? Are you Mr. Lu? Where are you from? etc., and then report their findings to a group or the whole class.), some kinds of role play (e.g. students assume the identity of a famous person and answer personal questions), or a mingle activity (e.g. Find a student who ... has a twin, ... can speak more than three languages , etc.).

The problem with the kind of grammar exercise shown above is that students are only being asked to manipulate and apply language structures rather than analyze them for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of how they work. Therefore, a completely new design is called for. However, for an analysis activity to work, students must be provided with at least two closely related linguistic features that will enable them to induce the underlying rules through comparative analysis. The problem with units that focus on yes/no, and wh- questions with be is that these structures are not closely related and there is no way for students to figure out how one works by comparing it to the other. The author's solution to this is to include yes/no questions with do/does in the same unit, along with yes/no questions with be. This would allow for a task such as the following "get to know your classmates" task. It is based on information gathered informally from the students over the course of the first unit.

Talk to your classmates. Write a classmate's name only once. Find someone who/whose ...

1.   *...family lives in Chongqing.*
   Does your family live in Chongqing? _____

2.   *...mother is from Beijing.*
   Is your mother from Beijing? _____

3.   *... is living with his/her boyfriend/girlfriend?*
   Are you living with your boyfriend/girlfriend? _____

4.   *... speaks more than three languages.*
   "Do you speak more than three languages?" _____

5.   *...*

B. Pair work. Compare the information a student found with the information found by a partner.

   This task now allows for the following language focus that involves students in analyzing the differences between yes/no questions with be and yes/no questions with do/does. (The students would, of course, have to do several tasks before moving on to the language focus on phrase). The following table contains some of the questions the teacher used in Unit 1. Read the questions and then answer the questions below.

   column 1   column 2

Are you Mr.LiTiegang?	Do you still remember me?
Is Jack from Zhonghua Technical School?	Do you come from Zhonghua Technical School?
Are you and Jack business partner?	Do they shake hands first or present cards first?

1.   How are the two sets of questions the same?

2.   How they different from each other?

3.   Circle the verbs. How are the verbs in column 1 different from the verbs in column 2.

C. Pair work. Change the following statements into questions.

1.   You are here for the conference.

2.   You still remember Lu Yang.

3.   Your name is Dick.

4.   I am Richard Washington.

5.   *Your family lives in Chongqing.*

Do you know the rules?

To turn statements with the verb to be into yes/no questions, move am, is, are to _____.

To turn statements with action verbs into questions use:

do with _____.

does with _____.

This more intensive approach also allows for a language focus on the contrasting intonation patterns of wh- questions and both kinds of yes/no questions, such as the following.

A. Listen to the teacher read the following questions. Which questions end with rising intonation and which ones end with falling intonation? Draw an arrow over each question to indicate your choice.

1. Where does Jack Green come from?

2. How is your project?

3. Do you still remember me?

4. Are you Mr. Li Tiegang?

5. What brings you here?

6. Is Jack from Zhonghua Technical School?

Do you know the rule?

Wh- questions usually have _____ intonation.

Yes/No questions usually have _____ intonation.

B. Practice asking the questions in part A

These examples illustrate one of the more difficult problems a designer must confront when attempting to rework structural/functional materials to include post-task language focus work -- the given units of work do not always include enough related language structures or features that allow for language analysis activities. Therefore, the designer must create a more intensive approach by expanding the given tasks or adding new tasks in order to provide practice of other related target structures.

4.4 Summary

Since TBLT is a new approach requiring a change in methodological focus rather than a new method requiring the wholesale learning of new teaching techniques, a text based on traditional materials can provide some activities out of which task-based frameworks can be constructed. While a variety of design changes and changes in how the materials are used will typically be required, the biggest challenge for a designer is whether a set of materials adaptation or redesign is suitable for a group of students.

Chapter 5　The Analysis of Research Results

In this chapter we will examine the result of implication of communicative tasks design to Class B. The author made a classroom observation and gathered the data of

class A and Class B, then presents us the results of the first semester and the second semester. In order to examine the common effectiveness of communicative tasks design, this thesis also shows us a large-scale survey on whether these communicative tasks design solve the learners' two major problems.

5.1 Reflection of the Implication of Communicative Tasks Design to English Language Teaching

In chapter 4.2.1, we made a comparison between Class A and Class B; we find out the students of Class B are less involved than Class A in verbal participation and expressing themselves with basic fluency and accuracy. In the second semester, we design communicative tasks for both Class A and Class B. By the end of the semester, we also made a survey on Class A and Class B in order to examine whether the communicative tasks design can solve the learners' two major problems in Class B. The data are collected from the classroom observation.

Classroom observation is done by teachers themselves, collaborating with a colleague, either as part of a teacher development or classroom research project. Classroom observation may include some naturalistic observation (perhaps of a colleague's class), but will typically involve teachers in the setting up of some small-scale intervention that will then be monitored by the teachers themselves over a period of time. Topics for this type of classroom research may be the development of oral competence of a learner/ learners, why the content of certain materials appears not to stimulate students' participation, or, whether tasks actually improve the language learning.

Now, let us see the data collected from observation of Class A and Class B as follows.

Table 2 Comparison between class A and class B in three main aspects

Element / Class	numbers of students	the verbal participation	the basic fluency in oral English	the basic fluency and accuracy in oral English
Class A	38	38	35	32
Class B	36	34	28	26

From the above data, we observed the percentage of the basic fluency in oral English is 92.1% and the basic fluency (the basic fluency refers to consistent ability to move the structures of the vocal tract easily, rapidly, smoothly, and with appropriate timing relative to other vocal tract activities, even if the speakers make some mistakes.) and accuracy in oral English (the basic accuracy refers to proper pronunciation, tone and few grammar mistakes) is 84.2% in class A. We compare the results in the second semester with that in the first semester. We can find the percentages are increased, and the increased rates in number are 5.3% and 7.9% respectively. Look at the data of Class B, the percentage of verbal participation, the basic fluency in oral English, the basic fluency and accuracy in oral English are 94.4%, 77.8% and 72.2% respectively. Comparing the results of the second semester with the first semester, we can see the increased rates are 38.8%, 33.4% and 38.9% in the above three aspects respectively.

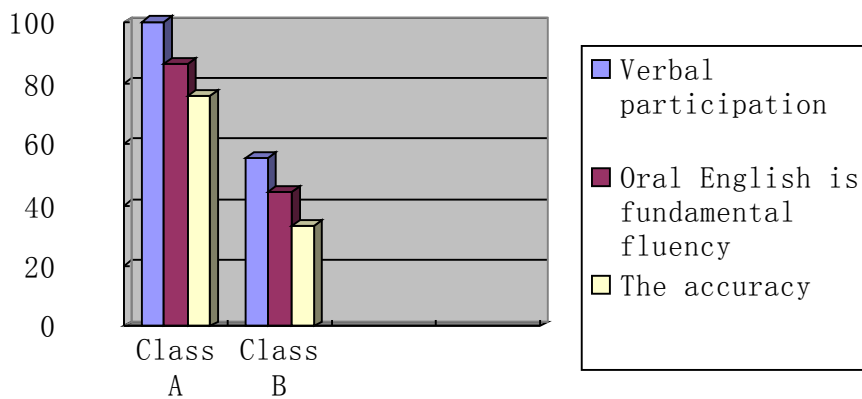We can use a bar chart to see a clear increase of the mass of data.
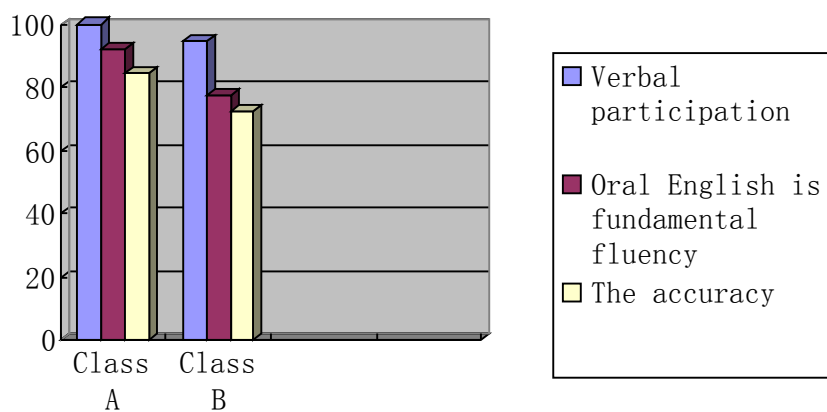
Figure 1(The first semester)

Figure 2(The second semester)

Obviously, the basic fluency and the accuracy are fast developed in Class B by the end of the second semester. All the above show that the communicative tasks design we use in Class A and Class B are effective, the design of communicative tasks are suitable for the learners' needs. However, the observation is just limited in the two classes, whether a set of materials adaptation or redesign of communicative tasks is suitable for a group of students in other classes and solve their two main problems, so, it is necessary to make a large-scale observation which will be discussed in the following section.

5.2 Research Analysis

The last necessary step is to find out whether a set of materials adaptation or redesign of communicative tasks is suitable for a group of students in a number of classes. There are some surveys on the evaluation of effective tasks which have been done by the foreign researchers. They proposed five elements of evaluating effective tasks: tasks management, emotion/cognitive elements, authentic language, language skills and the relationship between tasks and learners. (Lin Li et al. 2005:122)

The elements of evaluation	The scopes of evaluation
tasks management	Good organization, controllable tasks, less needs the help of the teacher.
emotion/cognitive elements	Meaningful tasks attract learners' active participation.
authentic language	Using target language, real world activities.
language skills	Pair work, group work and language skills include writing.
learners	Learner centered, task difficulties are suitable for the learners' English level.

In Chapter Three, we present four principles of communicative tasks, following these principles we design speaking tasks to develop students' communicative competence in Chapter Four. These four principles are consistent with the above five elements of evaluating effective tasks. Meanwhile, we give two approaches of effective communicative tasks design to solve the learners' communicative problems (to design effective communicative tasks to attract their participation, to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy) (see the appendix on page 67).

Therefore, we made a large-scale survey on communicative tasks to check whether they are effective in Chongqing Normal University. The elements of the survey are of six aspects: tasks management, cognitive consideration, authentic languages, task difficulties, verbal participation and the learners want to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy.

We made this survey based on six parallel classes of the non-English major freshmen in Chongqing Normal University from June 6th to June 10th, 2005. Their communicative tasks design (include speaking tasks and two approaches of effective communicative tasks design) are based on our four principles. One unit is designed which decided by the teachers according to their own textbooks. Six schools (College of Economics & Political Science, College of Media and Visual Arts, College of History and Museology, College of Physics and Information Technology, College of Vocational Education and College of Management) are involved in this survey, for each school we select one class to finish our statistics and analysis. There are 98 boy students and 133 girl students, and the average age is 19. The students need not sign their names on the survey; we get 204 pieces of survey paper at last. In order to check whether our communicative tasks are effective, we give five standards of evaluation whether they are suitable for the learners needs: Strongly agree[Ⅰ], Agree[Ⅱ], Don't know[Ⅲ], Disagree[Ⅳ], Strongly disagree[Ⅴ].

Table 3 Five standards of evaluating effective communicative tasks

the standards / The elements	I	II	III	IV	V
tasks management	31%	31.7%	24.5%	10%	2.7%
cognitive consideration	30.6%	39.1%	16.8%	10.1%	2%
Authentic languages	34.1%	35.6%	17.1%	9%	2.8%
task difficulties	38%	34.7%	16.5%	8%	2.7%
verbal participation	39.8%	42.2%	8.5%	7.1%	2.5%
the accuracy	39.2%	38.7%	12.2%	6.8%	3%

5.3 Data Analysis

The bar chart below will give clear information about the typical value or central tendency from the data.
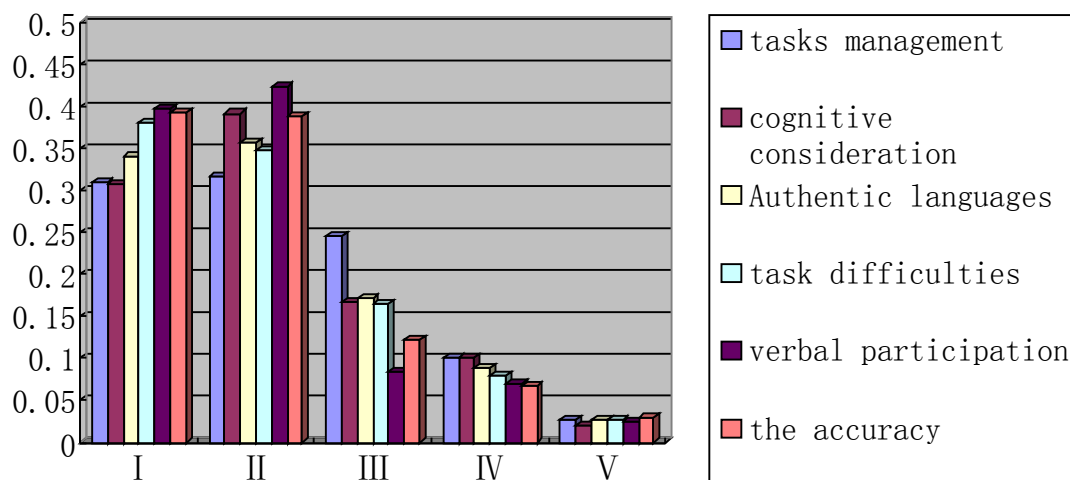
The chart shows that the students who strongly agree or agree with the statements in the six elements are about two thirds, this means over 60% of the students consider this communicative tasks design to be successful and they like the communicative tasks design because they are encouraged to participate and given more chance to communicate in English. The atmosphere in the class is active and they are motivated to use English to express themselves.9% to 25% of the students are not so sure about their opinions perhaps because of their confusion about the elements of evaluation or this new teaching design (they are used to traditional way of teaching) or they really have no opinion.

The students who disagree are about 9% to 15% and only around 2% to 3% of the students strongly disagree. It is inferred that the small number of students lack self-confidence and courage and they prefer listening to the teacher and being given the explanation of the materials to participating or taking risks.

This chart would be a "bimodal" distribution obviously, indicating that the students fell into two distinct camps (agree or strongly agree) on these elements. The

percentage of the students who chose "don't know", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" decreases sharply.

Through the elements of evaluation presented to the students, we conclude that communicative tasks design has its advantages that students are motivated to actively participate in activities in English. The learners can learn to use English language through the use of English language. Various classroom activities can arouse their interest in learning English. They can learn English spontaneously in the creative English language environment. As a result, they are not only structurally competent but also competent in communication in English; on the other hand, its disadvantages are that it will take more time to finish a task than the teacher's explanation directly and at the same time teachers in the communicative tasks classroom are required to possess high qualification in both English language and classroom management, especially for large classes.

5.4 Summary

We have seen the reflection of the result of implication of communicative tasks design and the analysis of research result. It may be useful to observe the group dynamics of a particular class during a language lesson in order to observe the interaction patterns that occur as a result of communicative tasks that the teacher sets up and managed. Analyzing and perhaps contrasting two or more classes can help us as teachers to understand how these learners are using the communicative tasks to maximize their own learning potential, if at all. Therefore, the effective communicative tasks design is very necessary. As teachers of English as a foreign language, we should design our own communicative tasks in order to foster the learners' communicative competence.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

6.1 The Conclusion of Whole Thesis

Communicative tasks design has been proved to be effective in teaching a foreign language in promoting the learners' competence in using the language to do things they need to do. Communicative tasks design offers a change from the traditional teaching routines through which many learners have previously failed to communicate. It encourages learners to experiment with whatever English pieces they can recall, to try things out without fear of failure, to express themselves with basic fluency and accuracy.

Since the teaching materials for the students in China are not designed under a task-based syllabus, teachers should carefully design effective communicative tasks for the teaching units and implement them in class scientifically for the best teaching effect. So teachers of English should know the basic ideas about communicative tasks and task design, about how to design the components of the communicative tasks, and how to conduct activities when implementing them.

This thesis provides some ideas of how to design communicative tasks in non-English major classrooms in order to achieve better teaching effects, in which the following are included: what principles of communicative tasks should be based on, what components should be in the communicative tasks, what the main problems of non-English major freshman in English classrooms are, how to design our traditional materials to fit TBLT, what activities should be taken in the classroom of communicative tasks design, whether the communicative tasks are effective and so on. With these ideas, teachers of college English will find it easier and more effective to adjust their teaching to meet the demands of the *College English Curriculum Requirements*, and the students will find they benefit more than their expectation when they leave school and begin to use English for different purposes and in different circumstances.

In a word, it is of great importance for a college English teacher to have a clear conception of the communicative tasks design and then to be able to design appropriate communicative tasks for different teaching materials and to conduct activities to implement these tasks in appropriate ways with different students. Also, it is crucial for a teacher to frequently reflect on their teaching beliefs and teaching practices so that they can make continuous progresses in their teaching.

6.2 Limitations and Suggestions

In this thesis, the author has explored communicative tasks design systematically; there are four principles of communicative tasks design should be based on when design communicative tasks for materials; the author also finds out two main problems of non-English major freshmen when they learn English in the classroom; we have looked in detail at materials analysis and materials design; the author presents two approaches of communicative tasks design to encourage the learners' participation, to development their speaking with basic fluency and accuracy; the author also finds some limitations of the implementing of communicative tasks and give some suggestions at the same time.

As a developing teaching design approach, communicative tasks still have drawbacks and needs improving for better effects. Especially communicative tasks require more time for learners to figure out what to do than that syllabuses required by. This will be particularly problematic in programs with limited time for reaching oral skills objectives. For this reason, it is essential that teachers and materials designers do not design communicative tasks uncritically, but continually monitor how their materials are functioning with respect to their learners, teachers, and the goals and objectives of program as a whole.

Different colleges will use different teaching materials, at the same time, the level of the students' linguistic competence are also different, so the teachers should analyze their courses and their learners, and then design communicative tasks based on their

courses and their learners. The communicative tasks design is not always used for every class hour, so that it can leave enough time to do exercises of learning tasks. Perhaps there are some others limitations we can not predicted at present, which need our further study in the future, but our teaching objective is the same one which requires the teachers to adapt their courses and design communicative tasks based on *College English Curriculum Requirements*.

In our view, it deserves further systematic exploitation to show the world that in China communicative tasks design can produce better teaching and learning effects than the traditional teaching approaches when it is designed and implemented carefully.

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Appendix

Questionnaire:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly agree
1. We are more involved in today's tasks management than before.	○	○	○	○	○
2. Meaningful tasks attract learners' active participation.	○	○	○	○	○
3. Using authentic language, real world activities in this unit.	○	○	○	○	○

4. The task difficulties are   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

   suitable for learners.

5. We are offered more   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

   chances to

   communicste in

   English in

   the class.

6. Our oral English are more   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

   accuracy than before.