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Characterizing the ‘Focus-on-form’ as the SLA Classroom Mediation Strategy: Should This Be ‘Grammaticality’- or ‘Textuality’-oriented?

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ABSTRACT

Grammar has always been considered by language learners as well as by those engaged in language education as an essential component of language, and their expectations from and planning for any language education programs have been conditioned accordingly. The definitions of the term grammar and its categories in all languages go back to traditional Latin and Greek grammarians irrespective of their possibly obvious differences and have persisted even now long after the emergence of the scientific study of language which recognizes the unique system of every single language (cf. Saussure, 1916/ 1956). What is grammar and how much is it effective in ‘learning’ an L2, if at all?

This paper will examine the commonsensical understanding of the term grammar, i.e. ‘the code-system’ as opposed to ‘grammar’ as ‘a theory of human experience’: an agency construing human experience into meaning (cf. Halliday & Matthysen, 2004), i.e. ‘grammaticality’ as opposed to ‘textuality’, arguing that if any recourse to grammar is advocated, as done in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature in the form of ‘focus-on-form’ mediation, this ‘form’, rather than being defined in terms of ‘grammaticality’, should be ‘textuality-oriented’ due to the reality that the knowledge accumulated by the learner about the grammaticality is of declarative nature and as such it will not convert into procedural communicative competence. Expanding upon the work done earlier on the topic (cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2015, 2016, & 2019), the concept of textuality and how its perception by the recipients of a text enables them to handle it will be further discussed and examples of textuality-oriented L2 education pedagogic moves, as the SLA classroom mediation strategies will be examined.

Keywords: focus-on-form; grammaticality; code-system; textuality; SLA; language education; pedagogic moves; SLA classroom mediation

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Introduction

The decision on what to be included in language education programs and how to implement them is mostly made by the language educationalists depending on how they define language and the level of competency in using it. For example, traditionally, language was considered as mainly a code-system and as such, the language education programs were mainly concerned with grammaticality and the accuracy of sentences. Following the advances in approaches to language, changes in approaches to language education have naturally emerged, though with some lapse in time. But in the fast pace of the emergence of the evolutionary trends in approaches to language, misappropriations can occur in the application of their new tenets leading to situations where obvious mismatches can be easily detected between the proclaimed approaches and the suggested curricula or the teaching methods.

In the history of language education, grammar can be witnessed to have had a domineering influence. Prior to the advent of modern linguistics, the grammarians prescribed the way language should be used and the language teachers proudly implemented their prescriptions. A few decades after the Saussurean introduction of the structuralist principles (Saussure, 2016 / 1956), the language teachers, under the influence of the Behaviourist psychology of the time (Skinner, 1957) which considered language as a habit and its learning not different from a habit formation process, abandoned the 'grammar-translation method' of their predecessors and concocted their 'pattern drills' for language teaching, believing that the 'habit of language' could be established through such drills without any attention to 'rule'. This view was harshly censured by Transformational Generative Grammarians (Chomsky, 1968) saying that man, unlike animals, is endowed with a thinking mind which is cognitively functional in learning anything including languages, a move which encouraged the importance of 'rule' and use of grammar in language learning. Chomsky's approach to language was in fact considered as a revolution in philosophy and cognitive linguistics; but as an instance of the 'misappropriation' noted in the above paragraph, it was 'misapplied' to language teaching by teachers looking for trendy moves at the time. The reality was that when invited to address the AILA Congress 1964 in London, Chomsky himself baffled the audience by pronouncing that his approach had nothing to do with language teaching!

In fact, it was as a consequence of this misappropriation and misunderstanding of the Chomskyan distinction between 'competence' and 'performance' (Chomsky, 1965) that he was later the target of a torrent of criticisms for neglecting the social dimensions of language in this distinction, a torrent which led to the emergence of a socio-cultural surge in language studies projects in the decades which followed.

Following this socio-cultural surge in the approaches to language (see, for example, Hymes, 1962 & 1972 ; Austin, 1962; Grice, 1975), the scholars working in language education (cf. Krashen, 1976; Krashen & Terrel, 1983) came to consider the differences between L1 acquisition and L2 learning, where the former happens in real life situation focusing on meaning and involving no teaching while the latter takes place in classroom, focusing on form and involving teaching without a live context, and started proposing a new approach to L2 which was similar to L1 acquisition. They called it Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which advocated creating situations similar to L1 acquisition in L2 classroom focusing on meaning with occasional focus on form. But, parallel to this new orientation, not much was attempted for characterizing the nature of the *form* to be *focused-on*; and it seemed the popular understanding of the concept as *grammaticality of sentences* was implicitly understood to be the default option. In other words, it was assumed that, in SLA classroom, if the students are 'mediated' to focus on rules of grammar at some points in this process, better results will be achieved. But the reality is switching from learning to acquisition was a switch in paradigm and change in principles. It involved a change in the basic tenets in the nature of verbal communication, meaning in language, and the role of language as a code-system

in interaction, highlighting the importance of context in language use, the way socio-cultural factors and the code-system interact.

Grammar in ESL education: Is it essential? Which grammar?

Grammar is commonsensically considered to be an essential part of, if not equivalent to, the language, and as such, it is normally seen as the primary, if not the only, route to language education. But despite this general commonsensical consensus on the term, one wonders if it is defined identically by everybody across the wide spectrum of its users. The term has been used implying: a set of rules on which a language operates, the structure of a language, and the study of language. In fact, the term 'linguistics' was introduced to replace 'grammar' in its latter definition early 20th century (cf. Saussure, 2016/ 1956); but the word 'grammar' has persisted in all its significations in the literature though it has had to accommodate some pre-modifying partners such as 'practical' 'communicative', 'pedagogic', and 'functional' in order to distance itself from the common sense.

Whatever the underlying concept of the term, one wonders if its knowledge is essential for a person to be able to use the language. What is obvious is that the 'knowledge', which is believed to enable the person to use a language is of special 'procedural' nature, which is a 'knowledge of how' rather than 'knowledge of what', i.e. 'declarative'. As an example of the latter, a teacher can ask the class if they 'know' the name of the headmaster, which can be easily provided / obtained right away. But this mode of availability does not apply in the case of 'knowledge' implied by a question like "Do you know how to swim?", which belongs to the former category. The person who knows how to swim may, of course, be able to cite some 'rules' related to swimming such as how to move one's arms and legs while swimming, how to manage one's breathing. But it is obvious that the mere knowledge of such rules cannot enable a person to swim and such an ability or 'knowledge' cannot be given to the students by the teacher as in the case of the headmaster's name. Knowing a language is a procedural knowledge but knowing its grammar is declarative one. The rules of the grammar of the language people use is part of their subconscious and can be consciously available only through special literacy education, without which they are not expected to possess any awareness about it. For example, a native speaker of English with a lower literacy level would not be able to know the difference between an adverb and an adjective in English. Likewise, no one is capable of learning how to swim or how to engage in communication using a language by merely accessing a set of the related underlying rules. Declarative knowledge is, thus, a 'provide-able' entity (i.e. teachable) while the procedural knowledge is not. Language, as a procedural skill, cannot be provided by the teacher to the recipient. Similar to the way a person learning how to swim picks up the skill by engaging in the actual swimming action, a person learning a language will be able to pick up the skill by engaging in the actual use of the skill. One will never be able to engage in actual swimming or start communicating using a language only by consciously accessing a set of rules in swimming or language.

With this in mind about the nature of language knowledge, the question which is often raised is on the role of the conscious knowledge of grammar in attaining competence in a language. Does it have any function in the process? If not, what about so many successful language education programs which involve plenty of grammar teaching? The answer is "no simple judgement can be made about the success of such programs without a careful investigation of all the other factors involved including the nature of the 'grammar' used and the other possible factors involved." What can rather be said is that by merely 'providing' declarative knowledge of the rules of a language, the recipient will not manage to develop a procedural skill in that language.

As noted above, in SLA literature, the process in which children pick up their L1 in real life situation without any teaching of their language declarative grammar rules is called 'acquisition' and the term 'learning' is reserved to be used to refer to that which happens in an L2 teaching classroom. Here, the term SLA (Second Language Acquisition) is used to refer to a process whereby a situation similar to L1 acquisition is created in L2 classroom where the students can 'acquire' an L2 focusing mainly on meaning with some occasional form-focused hints. Parallely, other terms such as the following are used to refer to the related activities in this field: 'instructed SLA vs. naturalistic SLA' and 'explicit vs. implicit rules'. There is no agreement among the scholars on the exact nature of the relationship between the 'acquisition' and 'learning' referred to as the 'interface position' : the presence or absence of an interface between learning and acquisition and whether 'learning' which has taken place through teaching can become acquisition (cf. Krashen, 1982; Bialystok, 1979; Seliger, 1979; Stevick, 1980) . In other words, can 'rules' and 'grammatical competence' lead to 'language ability' and 'communicative competence'?

No one can, of course, dispute that language is 'rule-governed' and that the language learners' awareness of the 'rules' involved in its functioning would be conducive to a smoother and better learning process. In fact, as it was noted above, it has been due to this commonly-held understanding about the role of 'rules' in language use that everybody venturing to learn a language or those engaging to 'teach' it, especially those with little or no background in the study of language science, tend to define language learning mainly in terms of learning language rules, i.e. 'grammar'. An obvious piece of evidence for this outlook is the presupposed association between language and grammar which forms almost everybody's commonsensical understanding about language. Thus, the concept of 'rule' or 'grammar' cannot be and is not denied.

A point of disputation and disagreement is rather related to how the concept is characterized and perceived. Is this omnipresent feature of the language defined in terms of the way language operates as a 'code-system' or rather in terms of the way language as a 'means of communication' functions in real-life interpersonal verbal transactions?

Grammar, in its two distinct senses, and language education

As noted in the two sections above, two distinct senses of 'grammar' tend to emerge. One is grammar as the description of the way language as a code-system operates at different levels, for example, the way new words are made combining morphemes, the way words are juxtaposed to form higher level structures, and the way different aspects, tenses and moods operate. The other is a functional sense of the term grammar as presented in Systemic-Functional Linguistics where it is defined in terms of a wider and more functional role it plays in human communication actions. Chen and Foley (2004), following Hallidayan line of thinking, talk about the way grammar construes human experience into meaning and how the categories of grammar and those of meaning stand in a 'natural relationship' with one another:

“...Grammar plays an essential role in construing human experience into meaning and its categories (clause complex, clause, and group) stand in a natural relationship with those of meaning (sequence, figure, and element) that are construed through grammar.” (p. 190)

It is natural that grammar in this latter sense should rather be of interest for those engaged in language education because, rather than being considered as a bunch of rules on how the code-system operates, it is seen as the characterization of any changes and variations in language code system as they are situated with regard to the immediate communicative goals and the socio-cultural factors involved in a specific communication event. This sense of the term will be further discussed in the sections below.

Language ability, like swimming skill, as it was discussed above, cannot be transferred to the learner from the teacher. It can rather be picked up by the learners through their exposure to or being engaged in real communication. It is natural to argue that this process can be enhanced by helping the learners to notice and raising their consciousness of the grammar or form. But the form or grammar chosen for this purpose cannot be of type one (i.e. functioning and accuracy of the code-system) because, due to its nature, as consisting of descriptions of segmented components of the code-system detached from a natural socio-cultural flora, it may only lead to an increase in the learners' reservoir of rules on the code system rather than enhancing their skill in handling the language system as it is employed in real-life communication activities. Real examples of such situations can be cited where EFL teaching is carried out only in terms of teaching grammar in its type one sense with some texts from the target language being introduced only for exemplifying and practising such grammar rules. Success in such teaching programs is gauged in terms of the amount of grammar knowledge accumulated on the part of the learner: the amount which is normally more than that consciously held by the majority of the native speakers of that language. But this knowledge can hardly help the learners to use the target language for communication.

The reason for this, as discussed above, is that 'learning' (of the code-system) does not convert into 'acquisition' (of the communication skill) : no 'interface' is argued to exist between learning and acquisition because the conscious rules which the learners learn, are 'anomalous', as proposed by Seliger (1979), in the sense that "different learners end up with different representations of the rules they have been taught" (Ellis, 1986, p.234). These rules, i.e. the explicit rules the L2 learners learn (the code-system) cannot be of any avail to the recipient in their actual communication process and they do not convert into acquisition because they are 'learned' out of their natural socio-cultural bed. In this connection, Ellis argues for a weak interface position between 'learning' and 'acquisition' saying that "The rules that are 'learnt' do not describe the internal knowledge that is called upon in natural communication, so, not surprisingly, they cannot be held responsible for actual language behaviour" (ibid, p. 234).

Second language education can best be carried out through engaging the learner in 'doing' actual verbal communication tasks (of listening, speaking, reading and writing), similar to the way a child acquires mother tongue focusing on meaning without any teaching of formal rules. This process can, of course, be enhanced by raising the learners' consciousness on the functioning of the language in communication actions. But this awareness raising process should target both code-system and the socio-contextual flora in their natural interaction with -not in isolation from- one another.

It was along this line of thinking that the discussion of 'grammaticality' vs. 'textuality' was presented where it was argued that in SLA approaches, the 'form' to be focused on should be textuality- but not grammaticality-oriented (cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2015).

Textuality vs. texture

'Text-ness' or 'textuality', does not arise solely by the presence of the stretch of language beyond sentence boundary. Inter-sentence connectedness (i.e. texture) may or may not represent textuality depending on whether it is perceived by the language user to be situated in a context or rather to be representing a discourse. This contrast between 'texture' and 'textuality' is somehow similar to the one between 'sentence' and 'utterance', which can also be extended to 'accuracy vs. 'appropriacy'. 'Sentence' is a grammatical unit bereaved of context, but an 'utterance' is any piece of language perceived together with the ethnographic (socio-cultural) information associated with

it. We have already talked about 'grammaticality' vs. 'textuality' along this new paradigm, comparing and contrasting them in certain dimensions (cf. Lotfipoursaedi 2007):

Grammaticality	Textuality
Rule-based	Meaning-based
System-specific	Interaction- / Event- specific
Sentence-/ frame-bound	Situation-/ process- bound
Two-dimensional	Three-dimensional
Choice allowed syntagmatically within the boundary of the sentence	Choice monitored paradigmatically by context

Here are a few examples for the above contrasts:

In the following piece,

.....*The decision to set a date came in a meeting yesterday between the two leaders.*

grammatically, the element 'came' is considered as an intransitive verb forming a frame with 'the decision' as its subject. But textuality-wise, it is a 'mental process' requiring only one participant-role and its value would depend on what 'the decision' refers to in the text: In fact, the textual relations override the semantic value and grammatical form of the elements.

In the following piece,

... *When he stepped out of the terminal in Los Angeles, she was, of course, nowhere to be seen.*

the past form 'was' as a *grammaticality* property is an obligatory feature within the boundary of the given sentence. But the choice of 'when he stepped out of the terminal...' as the textual *theme* (as opposed to *rheme*) has certainly been impacted by the situation of the discourse, which could have been changed had the situation required it.

As an example for the two- vs. three-dimensionality, we can consider a single lexical item such as 'YIELD' and see how it may relate two-dimensionally to other items before and after it in a syntagm to determine its grammatical category as opposed to the way the same single lexical item would operate in the following context as a traffic sign initiating a discourse to imply its value and intended message :



Thus, *textuality*, as distinct from grammaticality and also distinct from texture, becomes operational mainly due to the availability of the socio-cultural conditions associated with a text.

“I identify a text not by its linguistic extent but by its social intent” “we achieve meaning by indexical realization, that is to say, by using language to engage our extralinguistic reality. Unless it is activated by this contextual connection, the text is inert.” (Widdowson, 2004, p. 8, my emphasis)

Whether a piece of language would be considered as sentences with interconnectedness (i.e. texture) or as utterances constituting a text (with potential textuality) will be dependent on the ‘intention’ on the producer’s side or what Widdowson calls ‘social intent’ and the perception of the socio-cultural context (the ethnography of communication) associated with that piece of language on the receiver’s side. Otherwise, the piece of language would be deprived of its communicative potentials and would be what Widdowson labels as ‘inert’. Widdowson defines ‘discourse’, as distinct from ‘text’ as the process of engaging in meaning-making which becomes possible only upon the availability of the socio-cultural context:

“It is this activation, this acting of context on code, this indexical conversion of the symbol that I refer to as discourse” (Widdowson, 2004, p. 8). He further adds, “Discourse in this view is the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation. Text is its product.” (Ibid, p. 8)

Thus, text-ness, or rather, textuality, does not depend on the amount or quantity of text or the presence of connectedness or texture and cohesion across its constituent sentences. It rather depends on whether there is a ‘social intent’ lying behind what is said and the perception of the socio-cultural information associated with it by the receiver.

For example, consider the following exchange between a mother in a Canadian family, addressing her 19-year-old son who is busy working at his desk on his laptop:

Mother: Tuesday tomorrow!

Son: I know. Just finishing the paragraph.

This exchange would constitute a text presenting a discourse only for those who are aware of the underlying ethnography of communication and the socio-culture of the family, where Tuesdays are garbage collection days for this neighbourhood and the households are expected to put out their garbage at the curb. For a person not familiar with the above ethnographic description, notwithstanding his/her proficiency in handling the code-system, the exchange will certainly be difficult, if not impossible, to process. Such a person will fail to perceive the *textuality* of the text and to construct a meaning even if he/she possesses the lexico-grammatical competence to see through the *grammaticality* and handle what is said.

A text would naturally be a propositional and ideational reflection of the experiential world outside the language, as suggested in functional linguistics: “The concepts of *process*, *participant* and *circumstance* are semantic categories which explain in the most general way how phenomena of our experience of the world are construed as linguistic structures.” (Halliday & Matthysen, 2004, 178, my italics)



A text is not merely a bundle of clauses. Unless a bundle of clauses assumes a specific CONFIGURATION referred to as TEXTUALITY, it cannot be perceived as representing an underlying discourse. Or rather, as soon as this bundle is underlain by an INTENT and is contextually situated, it is empowered by 'TEXTUALITY', changing from 'A propositional Reservoir' into 'Indexical Discursive Agency'.

Linguistic structures representing phenomena of our experience

In our discussion of the two distinct senses of the term 'grammar' above, we looked at how functional linguistics views grammar as a theory of human experience (Halliday, 1994). According to this outlook, grammar plays "an essential role in construing human experience into meaning" (Chen & Foley, 2004, 190); and as cited above, the categories of meaning and those of grammar stand in a natural relationship with one another. In other words, the context of situation representing the phenomena of our experience or rather our meaning is characterized in terms of three major components of field, tenor and mode, each, in the process of textualization, being later relayed into the ideational, interpersonal and textual mega-functions respectively (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). These mega-functions are then realized as grammatical categories : Ideational function determines the propositions (the processes, their participants and circumstances) ; the interpersonal function reflects the type of relationship between the interlocutors and the context of interaction and their attitudes to what has been selected by the ideational function for presentation; and the textual function is related to the actual presentation and surface arrangement of what has been determined to be presented.

To exemplify this act of conversion of context of situation into an actual physical text, we pick up a short piece from a text on 'Environmental Issues':

Our current view of the world's most pressing problems

Navigating emerging technologies

In the 1950s, the large-scale production of nuclear weapons meant that, for the first time, a few world leaders gained the ability to kill hundreds of millions of people — and possibly many more if they triggered a nuclear winter, which would make it very difficult to grow crops for several years. Since then, the possibility of runaway climate change has joined the list of catastrophic risks facing humanity.

https://8000hours.org/key-ideas/?gclid=EAIaIqobChMItOO3wv2S5gIVDRQMCh2cGgIxEAAAYASAAEgJVivD_BwE

This piece of text can be seen to represent the following clusters of propositions:

//Views about problems/ views are ours/ views are current/ problems belong to the world/ problems are very pressing//

//We navigate technologies/ technologies emerge//

//Producing meant something/ this was in 1950s/ people produce weapons/ weapons are nuclear/ producing is large-scale/ that something was about leaders/ leaders belong of world/ leaders are a few/ leaders gained the ability/ the ability was related to killing/ leaders kill people/ people are millions/ millions are hundreds / there is something else/ it is possible/ leaders kill many more people/ this happens if / the leaders trigger a winter/ the winter is nuclear/ the winter makes it difficult/ crops become difficult to grow/ this difficulty continues for several years/ this happened after 1950s/ change happened in climate/ change joined the list/ change runs away/ this joining is possible/ the list belongs to risks/ risks are catastrophic/ risks face humanity //

[Note: single slashes represent proposition boundaries and double slashes show a change of direction in text, for example, topic, sub-topic, paragraph]

As noted before, in the process of construing “phenomena of our experience of the world...as linguistic structures” (Halliday & Matthysen ,2004, p.178), the constituent propositions are assigned varying roles : some performing ideational functions representing the field of discourse, some performing interpersonal functions representing the tenor of discourse and some others performing textual functions representing mode of discourse, all operations being monitored and motivated by the ethnography of communication: the socio-cultural factors of the context and the goal of communication.

As examples:

(A) Ideational-function-oriented changes:

1. We can name the way some propositions are assigned as the main verb (& the participant roles) of the T-units. For example, the proposition /leaders gained the ability/ is given the status of the main verb & its participants for the first T-unit and the proposition /change joined the list/ is assigned the status of the main verb & its participants for the second T-unit.
2. Also, in this category, we name the assigning of propositions as the adverbial (circumstantial) of the T-unit. For example, the elements such as: in the 1950s, for the first time, since then in the above example text.
3. Some propositions undergo lexical and grammatical changes, resulting in nominalizations and grammatical metaphors and adding to the lexical density of the text. As an example of nominalization, in the above text, the proposition “people produce weapons” is reduced to noun “production of weapons” and as an example of grammatical metaphor above, we can name “runaway climate change” where the verb ‘runs away’ is reduced into a modifier: “runaway climate change”. In fact, nominalizations also fall into the category of grammatical metaphor. In systemic functional linguistics, all variations in the combination of the elements of a clause without a change in meaning are referred to a

'grammatical metaphors' (cf. Halliday, 1985; Martin, 1993). For example,

Diamond is an energetically unstable substance... (congruent)

Diamond is a substance of energetic instability ... (metaphorical)

(B) Interpersonal-function-oriented changes:

4. The fact that the first T-unit in the above text is preceded by the 'that-clause' "the large-scale production of nuclear weapons meant that" is an example of interpersonal choice. Also, the adverb 'possibly' in line 3 is a reduced proposition acting here as a 'hedging' device. Note that we have previously characterized all 'pre-that' clauses as well as the first verbs in

V1 + to + V2 constructions as performing interpersonal function (cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2016).

(C) Textual-function-oriented changes:

These are changes in connection with the surface presentation of the text:

5. Propositions assigned to stand as the title
6. Decision on typographic changes such as font size or bold type
7. Decision on assigning *thematic* position to certain elements such as "in the 1950s" in T-unit 1 and "since then" in T-unit 2.

This way of characterizing the functioning of language in interpersonal communications and the way 'contexts' are textualized, 'the phenomena of our experience' are represented in 'linguistic structures', 'meanings' are crystalized or rather 'construed' in such transactions are in fact rooted in discursal outlooks on language, which can be summarized along the following paradigms.

Paradigms of discursal approaches to language

Discursal approaches to language, partly discussed above under 'textuality vs. grammaticality' can, thus, be defined along the following all-inclusive paradigms:

- (a) Text, rather than sentence, is the domain of operation in verbal transactions.
- (b) Meaning is not carried in its pre-tailored shape by the text. It is rather constructed and negotiated by the participants in interaction based on the shared socio-cultural factors and the immediate context.
- (c) Text operates as an interface between the sender and receiver.
- (d) Apart from the code-system, the socio-cultural factors as well as the immediate context of interaction are considered as factors affecting the communication.
- (e) Any change in text is seen as being motivated by the context.

SLA-oriented language pedagogy

As noted above, due to the reality that knowledge of language is procedural and not declarative in nature, it cannot be taught. It should rather be picked up (learned) by the learner, in a manner not dissimilar to the first language acquisition process, which happens in real-life situation focusing on meaning and communication without any teaching. Language proficiency, as it was characterized above, is nothing other than a person's ability to engage in a discourse process mediated by a text for constructing and negotiating a meaning on the basis of the socio-cultural factors at hand and immediate communication goal of any verbal transaction.

The language teacher's role is, thus, not 'teaching' but rather 'facilitating' the learners' learning by engaging them in performing 'communication activities', in the sense they are characterized above. These SLA tasks should be designed with the aim of engaging the learner in authentic performance (reading, writing, listening and speaking) activities, and not 'language practising exercises.'

It was along these lines of thinking, and, as it was noted above, as a consequence of the socio-cultural and functional surge in approaches to language, that SLA approaches gained dominance after mid-1970s, and advocated creating conditions similar to L1 acquisition in L2 classes, where language education can proceed by designing tasks, or communication activities for the learner to perform focusing mainly on meaning with some focus on form (cf. Krashen & Terrel, 1983).

Performance tasks vs. practice tasks

The verbal communication activities engaged in by human beings in real life situations are naturally socio-contextually situated serving a definite communicative goal and are, thus, authentic in nature. The socio-functional approaches to SL education would now advocate the communication activities required to be performed by SL/FL learners to be 'authentic' too. Authenticity has, in fact, been a highly trendy attribute recommended to be observed in relation with any language education and task design activity in SL education programs. But despite all the philosophical, pedagogical, and educational justifications lying behind such a recommendation, one wonders if the real-life verbal communication activities and those performed within an SL/FL education programs can be of equal authenticity levels! There are naturally certain elements or rather aspects of real-life verbal communication activities, both in terms of the communication goals and socio-contextual factors, which would easily betray their artificiality in SL/FL education communication tasks disrupting their authenticity attribute. It would, thus, be more feasible to talk of relative rather than absolute authenticity of language education tasks: authenticity being characterized in terms of certain primary factors, and the language education programs to be evaluated in terms of how and to what degree such factors are taken care of. One of such primary factors can be considered to be the 'communicative goal' of the activity. It is, in fact, in terms of this factor that we would choose to make a distinction between '*performance*' vs. '*practice*' tasks'.

By performance-tasks, we mean the tasks carried out for the purpose of performing the real (listening, speaking, reading, writing) tasks with a communicative goal whereas the practice-tasks are assigned to the language learner for the purpose of practicing a pedagogic point rather than attaining a communicative goal.

Tasks in SLA

As indicated by their name, the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) approaches are of the view that in the L2 classroom, conditions optimally similar to L1-Acquisition should be created wherein the learner would be given tasks to perform focusing mainly on meaning. It is argued that under such meaning-focused and contextually situated conditions, the L2 learner will be able to 'acquire' the target language ability, in a manner not much different from the way L1 is acquired. We use 'performance tasks' to refer to the SLA tasks to differentiate them from any routine language tasks normally assigned by language teachers. They are 'performance' tasks in the sense that through their performance, the assignee is, in fact, performing a real-life verbal communication act. For example, a performance task in an ESP situation, for medical students, is like being placed in a situation to feel the need to read a piece of medical text for the information they need on the topic, for nursing students, is like feeling the need to read a patient file, and for chemistry students is like desiring to write a lab report, etc. It is through such performance acts that the performer, by mainly focusing on meaning, will achieve higher levels of competency in language. In this meaning-focused performance process some focus-on-form would, of course, be allowed as pedagogic moves' or mediation; and we have been arguing all the way through in this paper that such mediation / pedagogic moves, if designed within the textuality domain, will assist the learner to perceive the textuality rather than mastering the grammaticality, to see through the relations among the language elements both within and across T-units, and to establish a possible message value for them co-textually and contextually. These strategies can enhance the language learners' text-handling and meaning construction ability while working on authentic performance-tasks.

Focus-on-form: Which form?

As it was also discussed at the outset above, due to a long-established misconception about the nature of language, which was (and mostly still is) associated with the code-system, the accuracy of the form or 'grammaticality' is assumed, by many, and is also tacitly accepted by even most language educationalists and linguists, to be a default referent for the concept of 'form'. But with the advent of discursual approaches, language and language proficiency are characterized much beyond the 'knowledge' of the 'code-system'; and the ability to engage in communication in real life (which would involve encoding one's intended meaning in a form appropriate to all the factors in the context of situation at hand, and decoding the message intended by the producer despite all the seemingly unrelated forms employed) would require much more than the knowledge of the code-system.

It is, of course, quite sensible not to deny the role of a more conscious awareness about the language code-system in L2 education for some learners, at certain age groups, and considering all the other special conditions which may apply. But this does not mean that teaching grammar and knowledge of the code system per se would lead to language competence because, as discussed above, declarative knowledge does not change into procedural ability. In case examples may be cited to argue against this view, they should be carefully investigated in terms of all the governing conditions possibly involved in each specific situation.

Textuality of a text and the T-unit bundles representing it

According to the discursual approach to language, meaning is not exchanged between the interlocutors through the text, and the text, rather than carrying the message, acts as a mediator or interface. It carries 'indices' showing the direction where the participants in interaction may turn to for the construction of a message, which may or may not be the same as intended by the

sender depending on the socio-semiotic information they share. Language use is, thus, not a matter of exchanging meanings / messages through text. It is rather a matter of 'negotiating' a message by engaging in a 'dialogic' interaction (cf. Bakhtin, 2010) between the conventional history and the situated socio-semiotic elements in the text.

As it was noted above, a text is not simply a 'bundle' of propositions (clauses). It was emphasized that unless a bundle of clauses assumes a specific CONFIGURATION referred to as TEXTUALITY, it cannot be perceived as representing an underlying discourse. Or rather, as soon as this bundle is underlain by an INTENT and is contextually situated, it is empowered by 'TEXTUALITY', changing from a 'Propositional Reservoir' into an 'Indexical Discursive Agency'. We would argue that it is the textuality of a text which empowers it with an 'indexical agency'; and it is only upon the perception of this textuality by the receiver that he/she is enabled to engage in processing the discourse represented by the text for possibly negotiating a message.

The interpersonal verbal transaction is here characterized to be mediated by text, which acts as an interface between the producer and receiver. As it was noted above, the text, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) converts the 'experiential world' into 'linguistic structures', each proposition being realized as a clause consisting of a process (verb) and the required participants and circumstantial items. The propositions presenting a discourse are naturally of differing hierarchical status. The text in its linear presentation of these hierarchically organized propositions should employ strategies to compensate for this contrast. T-unit (or a stretch of text occurring between two full-stops in writing), as a socio-psycho-linguistically- determined package, plays a crucial role in this linearization procedure (cf. Candlin & Lotfipoursaedi, 1983).

In other words, in this textualization process or rather the conversion of the 'experiential world' into 'linguistic structures' (or the manifestation of the discourse process through text), from among all potential propositions reflecting the experiential world, and based on the message and the communicative goal, some assume distinctive status in relation to a specific context of situation, and the discursive requirements and conditions at hand. These would then collate into packages on the basis of the discursive and textual factors which monitor the linear presentation of the textual hierarchy, where in each package (as a T-unit), a process(verb) is assigned as the LEAD (the main verb of the T-unit), while possibly some others serving under its textual LEADERSHIP.¹ The designation of the main verb as well as the verbs revolving around it in a T-unit and all other textual strategies are socio-cognitively determined.

Along with this characterization of the textuality representing the presentation discourse in a linearly organized text, we would argue that the T-unit is the corner-stone of this organization; and the perception of the constituent T-units in a text, as situated in their respective socio-cultural flora, would accordingly be conducive to the processing of the underlying discourse. As discussed before (cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2016), this characterization of the cognitive processes involved in the processing of a text, more than being a speculation, is experientially (in terms of the author's experience both as a language user and an L2 educator) witnessed. According to this intimate experience, no one can deny that the cognitive processing of a text (as the linear representation of discourse process), would proceed through the perception, by the receiver, of its organizational building blocks, i.e. the T-units. The perception of each T-unit would involve a few essential moves: recognizing the main verb of the T-unit, determining the verb form it belongs to, identifying the elements acting as its participants, etc. There is, of course, no need to say that in the actual real-life performance of these moves, the code elements are perceived to be coupled with their respective bundles of socio-cultural information and it is, in fact, through the perceiving of a text in terms of the above-named bundle of moves together with the situating of the moves in their respective socio-cultural flora that one would be able to negotiate 'a message'. Thus, textuality, as distinct from mere texture, can be viewed as a *potential* characteristic of a piece of

language which becomes *actual* when it is perceived to be coupled with a definite socio-cultural flora. This perception can be possible for those who possess the knowledge of the code, of the respective socio-cultural flora, and the ability to engage in discursive reasoning to arrive at the intended meanings using the indices in the code/ text.

Variations in T-unit composure

Similar to any variations in text, which would be reflective of variations in context, T-units in a text would also vary. The following include some of these variations:

- a) The number of words contained within the boundary of a T-unit. For example, in our example text below (on proteins), T-units 2 and 8 consist of 34 and 12 words respectively.
- b) Propositional density: Some lexical items are collocational (multi-word) and for this reason, when such elements are used, the numerical value added to their host T-unit cannot be of discursive (context-driven) nature as they are code-system-driven. Therefore, it can be argued that, more than *the number of words*, **the propositional density** should be seen as a true indicator of the context of situation. To calculate this, we suggest the following formula:

<the number of verbs (operating as the main verbs, pre-that verbs, or the first verb in V1 + to + V2 constructions) + the number of modifiers and qualifiers+ the number of circumstantials + any number of the above items possibly recurring within them>

For example, in the following T-unit:

For instance, the chemical reactions that split glucose into its component parts and then combine these with oxygen to form carbon dioxide and water while simultaneously providing energy for cellular function are all catalyzed by a series of protein enzymes.

Applying the above formula, the propositional density is calculated as follows:

- Main verb (are catalyzed)	1 item
- Modifiers (the / chemical/ component/ cellular/ protein/ a series of)	6 items
- Qualifiers (that split glucose into its parts/ combine these with oxygen)	2 items
- Circumstances (to form carbon dioxide and water/ providing energy for function/ by enzymes/ simultaneously/ all)	5 items
- Connectors (for instance/and/then/while)	4 items
TOTAL:	18 propositions

- c) Their main verb and its verb form (VF). For example, in T-unit 2, the main verb is 'pave the way for' with VF : < X pave the way for Y > , and in T-unit 8, the main verb is 'is' with VF : < X Be C > .

- d) The physical distance between the verbs and their participants, i.e. the number of words separating the verb from its participants. For example, the physical distance in T-unit A below is 2 (only two words: 'cartilage' & 'transplant' intervene the verb and its participant Y) and the physical distance in T-unit B is 1 (only one word 'should' intervene X and the verb BE).

Examples

(A) *The breakthrough paves the way for cartilage transplant operations for millions of people who suffer the most severe form of the bone disease, osteoarthritis, which leaves them unable to walk and in constant pain.]*

(B) *This means it should be "springy" enough to work in knee joint*

Perception of the textuality of a text: A requirement for processing that text

Having discussed textuality, as opposed to grammaticality, as an interface between the verbal interactants' discourse processes, characterizing it as representing the discourse producer's intent and being reflective of the factors in the context of situation involved, and having discussed SLA approaches where some focus-on-form is allowed, we would like to argue that such focus-on-form 'strategies' should be designed within the textuality domain which will assist the learner to *perceive the textuality* rather than *mastering the grammaticality*, to see through the relations among the language elements both within and across T-units, and to establish a possible message value for them co-textually and contextually. These strategies, or rather the SLA classroom mediation moves can enhance the language learners' text-handling and meaning construction ability while they are working on authentic performance-tasks.

As discussed before, a text functions as an interface between the producer (speaker/writer) and receiver (listener/reader). It consists of strategically composed packages referred to as 'sentences' or 'clause-complexes' (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) or T-units (Lotfipoursaedi, 2015) and, as discussed before, it is through such a 'socio-cognitively determined packages' (cf. Candlin & Lotfipoursaedi, 1983) that a linearly presented text is perceived to represent its underlying discourse. This process of 'perceiving' which we have been trying to characterize under the 'perception of textuality' is, in fact, an essential requirement for processing any text we receive in our verbal interactions. The following represents a speculative break-down of this perception process:

Upon the linear receiving of a text, its cognitive processing starts in terms of T-units as follows:

- (a) Identifying the CORE of the T-unit: its main verb and the accompanying participant roles. The main verb of the T-unit is identified (every T-unit has only one main verb except for the coordinating units which would carry more than one independent clauses)
- (b) The verb-form of this main verb is determined (all English verbs have been classified into six verb forms, cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2016)
- (c) The participant roles of this main verb are identified. The following possible participant roles have been defined for the verbs in English: Subject, Object 1,

Object 2, Complement, and Verbal Complement. These roles have been defined and exemplified in Lotfipoursaedi 2015, where symbols X, Y, Z, C, and VC have been used for these participant roles respectively. X, Y, Z are mostly nouns, C can be a noun, an adjective or an adverb and a VC is a verb in one of the following forms : infinitive with 'to', infinitive without 'to' and present or past participle. (For examples of each of these together with the details of the exceptional cases, see Lotfipoursaedi, 2016).

- (d) The ability to identify the Core of each T-unit (its main verb and participant roles X, Y, Z, C or VC) is the first step in its processing procedure. It is speculated that the initial pulse in the cognitive processing of a T-unit is ignited by identifying its main verb (situated as it is lexico-pragmatically in relation to its verb-form) and the nouns performing its required participant roles. But this can be a challenge in the case of longer T-units. The length of a T-unit can be due to the presence of pre- and post-modifying elements added to some core components as well as the presence of adverbial phrases. Such elements can intervene between the components of the T-unit core causing (pulse-ignition delay in the processing cycle). To tackle this challenge, the receiver should be able to recognize the intervening element.
- (e) Noun phrases consist of Head (H) and Pre-and Post-Modifying elements or (Modifier) + Head + (Qualifier)
- (f) The ability to identify the adverbials operating within the boundary of each T-unit. Structurally, four different types of adverbials have been defined (see Lotfipoursaedi, 2015).
- (g) Identifying the interpersonal elements or Verbal Modifiers: pre-that verbs, the first verb in V1 + V2 combinations, modals, hedging elements, etc.
- (h) Identifying the grammatical metaphors: The term 'grammatical metaphors' (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) is used to refer to cases where propositions are embedded within one another by deleting some of their grammatical indicators. Certain discourse situations would necessitate a specific outlook on the part of the producer towards special selected aspects of the context of situation which would be achieved in the textualization process through grammatical metaphors. Depending on the discourse genre and text-type, nominalizations and propositional embeddings may abound. For example, in expository and scientific texts, the existing order of social reality is challenged or defended, and in political discourse, where the agency and causation of certain propositions are required to be concealed, lots of nominalizations and other reduction of clausal structure are produced leading to longer noun groups (cf. Martin, 1985; Hart, 2014). As an example, consider the following set of propositions [*governments need to protect traditions / traditions are spiritual / traditions are place-based / places are indigenous*] and the way they are all reduced to a single noun group:

<the need for governments to protect indigenous place-based spiritual traditions>

Textuality-oriented focus-on-form pedagogic mediation: a few examples

The above-named are some aspects of what we have characterized under the operation for the perception of textuality of a text which was argued to be conducive to processing the text upon its reception. We believe when our learners are assigned a performance task for the purpose of engaging them in SLA activities, some focus-on-form activities, or rather, 'pedagogic mediation', can be designed within the frameworks suggested above which would enhance their perception. It

needs to be mentioned that these moves, *rather than being the goal of language education, are mediators for achieving the goal, which is the perception of the textuality of the text.*

All the aspects named under 'a - h' above, have already been extensively exemplified (see Lotfipoursaedi, 2016). As explained in the introduction of the book, our target learner population is the university ESP students who, despite having mostly been introduced to plenty of grammar at high school level, mostly lack genuine competence in handling a piece of English text relating to their field of study in the university. When they are assigned a popular textbook in their major field of study in English (for example, *Guyton's Physiology* or *Gray's Anatomy* for medical students, and similar resources to Nursing, Engineering, Psychology... students), and are encouraged to try to read the sections, pages or chapters of interest related to the topics they are studying in their subject-matter classes, they will come to realize that the English language education they have received during their high school program and the grammar rules they have practised so much have yet to provide them with an ability to handle texts especially those which 'their English teacher has not read for them before'. Unfortunately, the ESP courses in most EFL situations are offering the post-secondary students nothing much different from their pre-university (grammar-oriented) English courses except possibly for choosing a limited number of short mostly un-authentic texts on the topics somehow related to the students' field of study. I believe any ESP programs should rather plan to offer the students the opportunity to engage in handling the texts in their discipline enabling them to perceive the textuality of the authentic texts of their interest.

It does not, however, mean that the approach advocated here is only suitable for post-secondary ESP education. It can, of course, be employed for all-purpose EFL education at most levels with the textuality-oriented pedagogic moves being adopted accordingly.

But what is essential for launching this approach as its initial step is establishing an instructional meta-language for introducing the pedagogic moves. For example, upon engaging the learners in performing a reading task, when a pedagogic focus-on-form mediatory move asks them, for example, to determine the main verb of a T-unit, they would need to already be familiar with the meta-language of 'main verb' and 'T-unit'. The core of this meta-language has already been explicated with ample examples (cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2016), which may be made more cognitively accessible for junior learners if needed. As noted above, our approach was originally meant to address the EFL education issues at our post-secondary programs where the students mostly lack any competence to tackle pieces of English texts in their field of study despite the fact that they have been introduced to a host of complicated rules in English grammar during their pre-university education. But it is quite feasible for the system to be used for other EFL education programs if the meta-language is made cognitively more accessible for the target learner age-level.

(Example Text)

Proteins.

1/After water, the most abundant substances in most cells are proteins, which normally constitute 10 to 20 percent of the cell mass. 2/These can be divided into two types: structural proteins and functional proteins. 3/Structural proteins are present in the cell mainly in the form of long filaments that are polymers of many individual protein molecules. 4/A prominent use of such intracellular filaments is to form microtubules that provide the "cytoskeletons" of such cellular organelles as cilia, nerve axons, the mitotic spindles of mitosing cells, and a tangled mass of thin filamentous tubules that hold the parts of the cytoplasm and nucleoplasm together in their respective compartments.5/ Extracellularly, fibrillar proteins are found especially in the collagen and elastin fibers of connective tissue and in blood vessel walls, tendons, ligaments, and so forth. 6/The functional proteins are an entirely different type of

protein, usually composed of combinations of a few molecules in tubular-globular form. 7/These proteins are mainly the enzymes of the cell and, in contrast to the fibrillar proteins, are often mobile in the cell fluid. 8/Also, many of them are adherent to membranous structures inside the cell. 9/The enzymes come into direct contact with other substances in the cell fluid and thereby catalyze specific intracellular chemical reactions. 10/For instance, the chemical reactions that split glucose into its component parts and then combine these with oxygen to form carbon dioxide and water while simultaneously providing energy for cellular function are all catalyzed by a series of protein enzymes.

(off Guyton & Hall Textbook of Medical Physiology, 12th edition; p. 11)

As noted above, the familiarity of meta-language used here for the target learners is a pre-condition. The examples offered here would presuppose that familiarity based on the jargon introduced before (cf. Lotfipoursaedi 2016). The following are intended mainly as examples. Their level can naturally be raised or lowered in terms of difficulty depending on the learners' competence level:

1. Which T-units carry more than one main verbs?
2. Determine the main verb in each of the T-units.
3. Determine the X, Y, & C components of these verbs and specify their Head.
4. Specify the verbs which operate inside the Qualifiers (also specifying their X, Y, Z & C)
5. In which T-units, the X component is the first element in the Unit?
6. Determine the function (X, Y, Z, C, A or connector) of the initial elements in each T-unit.
7. Specify all the connectors used in the above text.
8. Specify words which refer to the concepts introduced before them.
9. Specify the deleted elements in the text.
10. Why do you think T-unit 1 should be the first unit in this text?
11. Which T-units add to (elaborate on) the theme introduced in the Unit before

The items above are only examples which can naturally be adjusted according to the student audience and the text-types involved. They may sound technical on the surface; but by raising the readers' consciousness about the functioning of the elements in a text, they are intended to make the textuality of the text at hand more transparent, which can lead to a smoother processing of the text. For example, by asking the readers to determine the main verb of a T-unit, their consciousness is raised about the fact that the verbs functioning within the boundary of a T-unit are not of equal status and they have to determine the 'main verb' status considering not only the two-dimensional relations among the lexical items but also the three-dimensional ones between the text and pre-text. By asking the readers to determine the Verb Form (VF) of the main verb and its participant elements, the reader will have to move beyond the single item at hand onto a wider scope of lexical relations in the text²; and by asking the readers to determine the Head (as opposed to Modifier and Qualifier) of the participant elements, they will be assisted to process the main verb of the T-unit faster by being able to locate its participant elements (having isolated them from the intervening modifying and qualifying items). In fact, as discussed before (cf. Lotfipoursaedi, 2016), the linear organization of a text and its linear reception by the receiver can

be an issue for processing the discourse behind the text. But our 'mediatory' hints which are all designed to raise the readers' awareness on the functioning of the text in representing its underlying discourse (i.e. the textuality) can tackle the issue³.

Concluding remarks

Reading can be an important SLA activity especially for tertiary level EFL and ESP courses, where, through an 'effective' performance of the activity, the students can achieve not only the true reading ability but also beyond. For this reason, we are of the view that if the students are engaged in performing the extensive, effective, and authentic reading activity, they will manage to acquire the required competence in handling texts in their field of interest. Effective reading means reading and understanding more than the lexico-grammar. It means being able to engage in visualizing the 'pre-text' and discourse while reading the text at hand. For this, as argued above, more than being sensitive to the grammaticality of the sentence, the reader should be able to perceive the textuality of the text: to see how a text represents the underlying discourse and the way any variation in the text is always functional and meaningful. Any SLA classroom mediation activities should, therefore, be textuality- oriented.

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¹All T-units contain only one main verb except for cases where the message would require more than one coordinating clauses. In such cases, more than one clause of equal status being connected to one another by 'or, and, but' will occur in a T-unit. For more details and examples see Lotfipoursaedi 2016.

² Some verbs can be of more than one VF and to determine the VF of a verb while reading a text, not only the co-text but also the context information should be available.

³ The textuality enhancing approaches advocated in this paper can, of course, be applicable to all language skills. But for two reasons only reading skill has mostly been implicated in the examples and discussions . Firstly, reading is the primary language skill in the post-secondary EFL and ESP programs in our country. Secondly, it has proved to be the best arena for implementing the textuality-oriented mediatory moves for raising the language learners' consciousness which can enhance the learners' ability in handling the other language skills as well.