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Language-learning tasks: teacher intention and learner interpretation

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Abstract

Recent explorations in task-based pedagogy have pointed out that learning outcome is the result of a fairly unpredictable interaction between the

learner, the task, and the task situation. From the teacher's perspective, then, achievement of success depends largely on the degree to which teacher intention and learner interpretation of a given task converge. The narrower the gap between teacher intention and learner interpretation, the greater are the chances of achieving desired learning outcomes. It is thus important that we understand potential sources contributing to the mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation. The present study attempts to identify potential sources of mismatch by exploring the learner's and teacher's perceptions of the nature, the goals, and the demands of selected language-learning tasks, and comes out with a list of ten sources: cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional, and attitudinal. It is argued that a knowledge of potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation will help us sensitize ourselves to interpretive density of language-learning tasks and help us facilitate desired learning outcomes in the classroom.

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