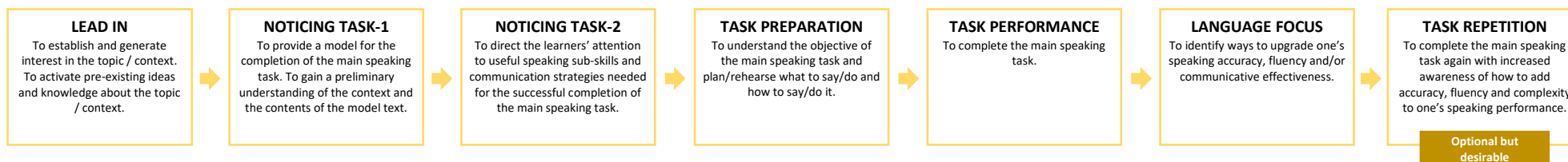


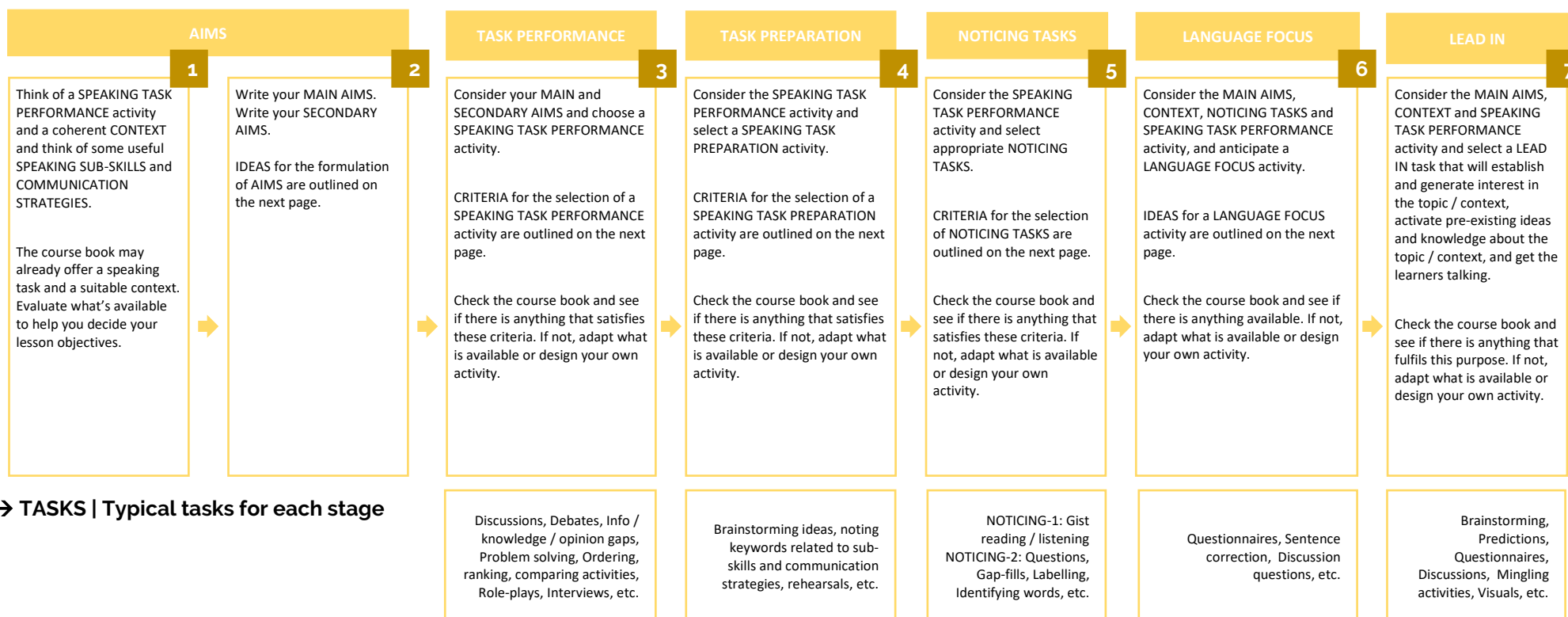
Planning a SPEAKING lesson using a TASK-BASED approach | THE PLANNING PROCESS

A task-based approach to language teaching is an approach that places the emphasis on communicative activities (i.e. tasks) whose focus is primarily on meaning and communicative effectiveness. In a task-based lesson, learners are required to complete communicative tasks without much language control from the teacher. In order to do so they have to express themselves using their own language knowledge and be able to understand each other solving communication problems using appropriate communication strategies. This approach is particularly useful in a speaking lesson as it encourages teachers and learners to focus more on existing language resources and how to upgrade them, rather than studying pre-selected language items and being asked to apply them mechanically.

→ LESSON STAGES | Sequence for the delivery



→ LESSON PLANNING STEPS | Recommended sequence for planning



Step 1 - EVALUATION

Think of a SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and a coherent CONTEXT (e.g. chatting with a friend about favorite books, ordering a meal in a restaurant, telling an anecdote about an embarrassing situation, etc.) and think of some useful (1) SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS and (2) COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES that learners will need to successfully maintain fluency and prevent / deal with communication breakdowns while performing the task. The course book may already offer a speaking task and a suitable context. Many course books also support speaking tasks with a MODEL monologue or dialogue (presented as a listening or reading activity): this may contain useful examples of speaking sub-skills and communication strategies which learners are encouraged to analyze and notice. Evaluate what's available to help you decide your lesson objectives.

Let's imagine that the course book offers a SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and a suitable CONTEXT, and a sample DIALOGUE (presented as a listening activity) which I have already evaluated... I have enough to start writing my aims.

Step 2 - AIMS

Write your MAIN AIMS. Make sure you clearly state the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and its corresponding COMMUNICATIVE OUTCOME, the CONTEXT and the SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS and COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES which you intend to emphasize.

E.g. To better enable learners to make a hotel booking over the phone and give (and collect) accurate personal details, room details, dates, etc. (SPEAKING TASK + CONTEXT + OUTCOME). To raise awareness of (1) questions and answers related to personal information and details of the room, (2) questions and answers used for the spelling of names, (3) expressions to check understanding and (4) expressions to ask for repetitions (1-2-3-4 SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS and COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES).

Write your SECONDARY AIMS. Consider the nature of the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and decide what additional skill(s) (DIFFERENT from SPEAKING SKILLS) language learners will need to be able to successfully perform the task.

E.g. To enhance listening skills by encouraging note-taking (while performing the speaking task) and review vocabulary related to hotel rooms.

Step 3 – TASK PERFORMANCE

Consider your MAIN and SECONDARY AIMS and select a suitable SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity. A purposeful SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity should (1) have a clear COMMUNICATIVE OUTCOME, (2) place the emphasis on the OUTCOME (as opposed to the use of pre-selected language items) but be sufficiently GENERATIVE (create the need to produce language), (3) reflect the SPONTANEOUS and UNPREDICTABLE NATURE of LANGUAGE (include problems, conflicts and unexpected events), (4) be INTERACTIVE (as speaking generally involves a speaker and one or more listeners), (5) be AUTHENTIC and relate to REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS, (6) be sufficiently FLEXIBLE to allow the REPETITION of the task itself and (7) offer a suitable level of COGNITIVE and LINGUISTIC CHALLENGE. Check the course book and see if there is anything that satisfies these criteria. If not, adapt what is available or design your own activity.

E.g. The course book offers a role-play activity in which a prospective guest has to make a hotel booking. The task is vague as there are no clear objectives and outcomes, neither for the guest nor the receptionist, and it looks too predictable. I need to adapt it. The SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity will simulate a telephone conversation as this will create more potential communication breakdowns and make it less predictable. The guest will be given a new identity with new personal details (e.g. name, surname, passport number, telephone number, etc.), a specific room type to book and dates for the booking. The receptionist will also be given a new name and a set of specific details (e.g. name, surname, passport number, telephone number, dates for the booking, etc.) to collect in order to complete the booking. The objective is for the guest to book a room and the receptionist to record all the required details correctly. I will create a set of role-play cards with different details for the guests and the receptionists. This will make the task less predictable. The task is also sufficiently flexible: swapping role-play cards or partners will ensure learners can play both roles and repeat the task without getting bored.

Step 4 – TASK PREPARATION

Consider the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and select a suitable SPEAKING TASK PREPARATION activity. A purposeful SPEAKING TASK PREPARATION activity should allow learners to: (1) understand the OBJECTIVE of the SPEAKING TASK and the ROLES, FUNCTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES, etc. they are expected to assume, (2) brainstorm INFORMATION, IDEAS, CONCEPTS, etc. needed during the SPEAKING TASK, and (2) REHEARSE (often just mentally or in the form of note-taking) what they need to SAY/DO in order to successfully complete the SPEAKING TASK. Check the course book and see if there is anything that satisfies these criteria. If not, adapt what is available or design your own activity.

E.g. The course doesn't offer a SPEAKING TASK PREPARATION activity. I need to design my own activity. I will distribute the ROLE-PLAY CARDS I have just created, instruct learners to consider their ROLES and OBJECTIVES, and mentally rehearse what they can say/do to achieve their task OBJECTIVES. I will also instruct learners to consider possible challenges and communication breakdowns, and allow them to write down some key words (not entire sentences) they can use as PROMPTS during the SPEAKING TASK to help them resolve these communication problems.

Step 5 – NOTICING TASK

Consider the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and select a suitable NOTICING TASK. A purposeful NOTICING TASK can be made of spoken or written text (i.e. a model dialogue or monologue) and should be divided into two smaller tasks: a first task designed to establish the CONTEXT of the model dialogue or monologue and IDEAS for the SPEAKING TASK (this is usually realized via GIST reading or listening); a second task designed to RAISE AWARENESS of useful SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS and COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES employed by the speaker(s) and the listener(s) to successfully complete the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity. Check the course book and see if there is anything that satisfies these criteria. If not, adapt what is available or design your own activity.

E.g. The course book offers a listening activity in which a guest makes a booking face-to-face at a hotel reception. Although the dialogue doesn't entirely match the AIMS of the lesson as it's a face-to-face booking instead of a phone booking and there seem to be no communication breakdowns between the guest and the receptionist, there are good examples of questions and answers related to personal information and details of the room, and questions and answers used for the spelling of names. It partially matches my AIMS. I will use it as it is, but I will need to design: (1) a first GIST listening task in which I will ask learners to decide if the guest and the receptionist are sufficiently POLITE to each other and what makes them sound so, (2) a second listening task in which learners will be given a list of expressions used by the guest and the receptionist for dealing with personal details and the spelling of names, and tick those they hear, (3) a final reflection activity in which I will ask learners to read the audio script of the recording, decide where communication breakdowns may happen and consider what can be said/done in case one of the speakers need to check that they understood correctly or didn't understand at all. This will ensure the NOTICING TASK is aligned with my MAIN AIMS and will give learners an opportunity to notice ways to upgrade their language and improve their fluency and communicative effectiveness.

Step 6 – LANGUAGE FOCUS

Consider the MAIN AIMS, CONTEXT, NOTICING TASK and SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity, and anticipate a LANGUAGE FOCUS activity. This stage of the lesson is difficult to plan as it will be based on the learners' performance in previous stages of the lesson, mainly in the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity. Activities generally focus on language-related feedback via (1) POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT of the SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS and COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES covered in previous stages of the lesson; and (2) DELAYED ERROR CORRECTION. Additionally, learners should be encouraged to reflect on the learning experience and identify (1) STRATEGIES to cope with the DEMANDS of the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity they are more aware of, (2) personal areas which showed IMPROVEMENT in relation to the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity, and (3) personal areas which can be FURTHER IMPROVED in relation to the SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity. Coursebooks are unlikely to offer dedicated feedback activities as language use during a speaking task is fairly unpredictable. However, it's useful to plan ahead some FEEDBACK FOCUS AREAS and make sure FEEDBACK is coherent with the AIMS of the lesson.

E.g. In the language focus stage, I will use performance data collected during the main SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity. This will be related to the SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS and COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES we analyzed in the NOTICING stage. I will give (1) POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT by listing 2 good expressions learners used, and (2) do DELAYED ERROR CORRECTION by listing 2 not so good expressions learners used. I will ask learners to reflect on ways to improve the 'not so good' expressions. I will also do DELAYED ERROR CORRECTION on pronunciation. Finally, I will wrap up the lesson by asking learners to discuss the following questions: What do you think you improved the most today? What would like to further improve? What expressions from today's lesson will you find the most useful outside the classroom?

Step 7 – LEAD IN

Consider the MAIN AIMS, CONTEXT and SPEAKING TASK PERFORMANCE activity and select a LEAD IN task that will establish and generate interest in the topic / context, activate pre-existing ideas and knowledge about the topic / context, and get the learners talking.

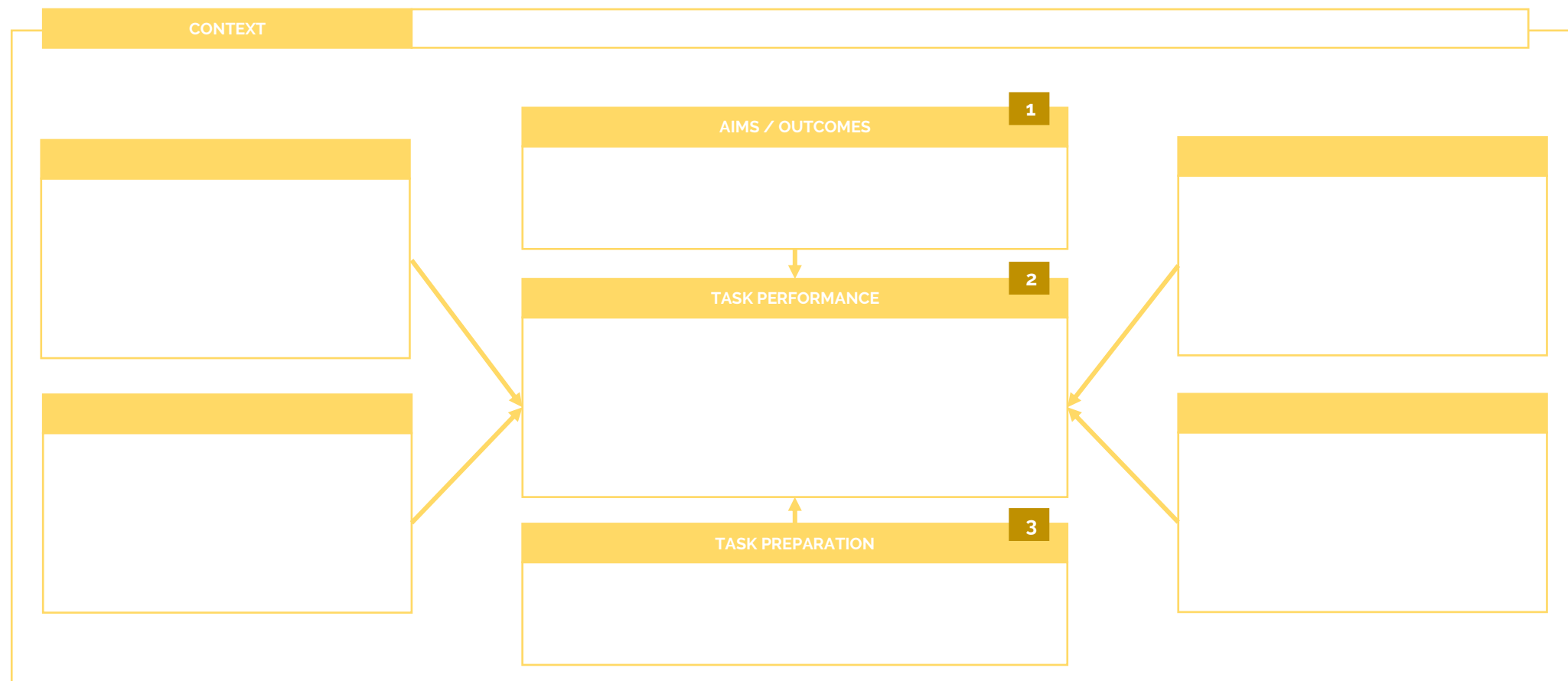
E.g. The course book offers a suitable LEAD IN. There's a picture of two guests at a hotel reception speaking to a receptionist, and a couple of discussion questions. I will use it as it is and have learners discuss these questions: Have you ever booked a hotel in English? What kind of information is a receptionist likely to require in order to process a booking? Would it be easier to book a room in person at the reception or over the phone? Why?

This is the end of the process. By starting our planning process with the formulation of AIMS and the TASK PERFORMANCE activity, we ensure that all other activities are coherent with and focused on the production of the intended outcomes. However, **the DELIVERY will follow the recommended framework sequence: LEAD IN > NOTICING TASK(s) > TASK PREPARATION > TASK PERFORMANCE > LANGUAGE FOCUS > TASK REPETITION (optional but desirable)**

THIS PROCESS is a RECOMMENDATION. As long as you start your plan with the MAIN AIMS and the TASK PERFORMANCE activity, you can follow ANY SEQUENCE. The important is not to lose sight of the lesson CONTEXT, OBJECTIVE(S) and OUTCOME(S) and build all the activities in such a way that they purposefully and coherently support each other.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS TBL SPEAKING | LESSON SKETCH

PLANNING PROCESS: start with AIMS, OUTCOMES & CONTEXT and the TASK PERFORMANCE activity. Plan the other activities in relation to these. Add/remove stages as needed.



DELIVERY SEQUENCE

