

**AUTHENTICITY IN ELT TASK DESIGN:  
A CASE STUDY OF AN ESP PROJECT-BASED LEARNING MODULE**

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# **AUTHENTICITY IN ELT TASK DESIGN: A CASE STUDY OF AN ESP PROJECT-BASED LEARNING MODULE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Authenticity* has been viewed as an important issue for ELT and particularly for ESP in creating a communicative language environment (e.g. Breen 1997; Lee 1995; Mishan 2005; Dudley-Evan and St John 1998; Harding 2007) – in order that learners are exposed to ‘real English’ with ‘intrinsically communicative quality’ (Lee 1995) and *rehearse* the real-world target communication tasks they will have to perform in their future workplace (Nunan 2004:20). This echoes what is advocated in the current Hong Kong educational reform curriculum documents. This thesis explores the theoretical and practical issues concerning the notion of authenticity through a case study of a project-based learning (PBL) module in an ESP curriculum in the context of a Hong Kong vocational institution, and derives from the research findings a **3-level authenticity model** applicable for ELT/ESP task design.

This thesis has drawn on Bachman’s (1990) *dual notion of authenticity* in conjunction with Halliday’s triad construct of *context of situation* (Halliday 1978) as a conceptual framework for the characterization of the authenticity manifested in the PBL task series under investigation. In the light of Bachman’s *dual notion of authenticity* (that for a task to be authentic, it has to achieve both *situational* and *interactional authenticity*), the present study, on the one hand, examines the design features of the case PBL tasks through documentary analysis of the project brief and semi-structured interviews with practitioners in the specific purpose field to ascertain the extent to which the designed tasks are situationally authentic, while on the other hand, investigates the authenticity of the learners’ interaction with the task features (i.e. the interactional authenticity) by eliciting the learners’ accounts of their engagement with the tasks through retrospective focus group interviews, in conjunction with an analysis of the discourses produced by the learners in performing the tasks. The research findings show that task design is essentially the **construction of a Context of Situation (CoS)** which realizes situational authenticity of two different levels. An investigation into the interactional authenticity reveals both authentic and unauthentic aspects of the learners’ interaction with the constructed CoS, which has in turn shed light on a third level of authenticity to be added to the *CoS model* applicable for ELT/ESP task design.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CLA	Communicative Language Ability
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CoS	Context of Situation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
PBL	Project-based Learning
PPP	Presentation-Practice-Production
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBL	Task-based Learning
TLU	Target Language Use

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1. Outline of the Research Issue

In an effort to provide second language learners with learning situations which embrace the complexities of the nature of language and language learning, *authenticity* has been routinely called for in ELT (English Language Teaching) and particularly in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) for creating a communicative language environment (Widdowson 1978; van Lier 1998; Amor 2002; Breen 1997; Lee 1995; Nunan 2004; Mishan 2005; Dudley-Evan and St John 1998; Harding 2007) – in order that learners are exposed to ‘real English’ with ‘intrinsically communicative quality’ (Lee 1995: 324) and rehearse the real-world target communication tasks they will have to perform in their future workplace (See Nunan’s (2004:20) rehearsal rationale to be explicated in Chapter 2). Thus, the issue of authenticity is highly pertinent in the context of ESP in that the use of authentic trade-related materials and real-world workplace tasks in the second language classroom exposes the learners to *real* English they need in their future workplace and gives them opportunities to rehearse the *real-world* target communication tasks they will have to perform. Harding (2007: 11) stresses the importance for ESP teachers to make use of authentic materials from the specific purpose subject matter, make tasks as authentic as possible and ‘bring the classroom into the real world and bring the real world into the classroom’. Theories of language acquisition emphasise the need for practice in the context of ‘real operating condition’ (Johnson 1988), i.e. ‘learners need the opportunity to practice language in the same conditions that apply in real-life situations’ (Ellis 2003:113). It is suggested that ‘authenticity is the link between the

classroom and the outside reality' (Canado and Esteban 2005:37), and that 'the more authentically the classroom mirrors the real world, the more real the rehearsal will be and the better the learning and transfer will be' (Arnold 1991:237).

However, although the definition of authentic texts is clear, authenticity in terms of language learning tasks appears to be elusive (Mishan 2004:1). Despite the emphasis on the importance of authenticity by ELT/ESP teachers and curriculum developers (this is even explicitly stipulated in the syllabus of the case curriculum in the present study), to what extent is authenticity achievable in practice in the second language classroom? It is often criticized that many so-called communicative classrooms, despite incorporating tasks which form part of a 'communicative' teaching repertoire, actually fail to incorporate authenticity into the language learning tasks (Galien and Bowcher 1994; Ellis 2003). On the other hand, as Lewkowicz (2000:45) points out, 'despite the importance accorded to authenticity, there has been a marked absence of research to demonstrate this characteristic,' and that 'such discussions [on authenticity] need to be empirically based to inform what has until now been a predominantly theoretical debate.' (Lewkowicz 2000:53)

The present study explores the way and the extent to which authenticity is achieved in practice by means of a series of tasks designed for a project-based learning (PBL) ESP module, as projects are often seen as 'a collection of sequenced and integrated tasks' (Nunan 2004:133) that are designed to maximize authenticity (Beckett and Miller 2006). As Beckett and Miller (2006: 28) point out, PBL is most pertinent to 'authenticity' – 'authenticity of students' experience and the language that they are exposed to and use'. However, few, if any, studies have elaborated on the nature of

authenticity of PBL in practice (Beckett and Miller 2006: 28). In the light of Bachman's dual notion of authenticity (that for a task to be authentic, it has to achieve both *situational authenticity* and *interactional authenticity*), the present study aims to characterize the nature of authenticity that is manifested in a task series designed for an ESP module. (Drawing on Bachman (1990), a 'language learning task is situationally authentic if it matches a situation found in the real world and it is interactionally authentic if it results in patterns of interaction similar to those found in the real world' (Ellis 2003: 339). A detailed definition of *situational authenticity* and *interactional authenticity* is to be explored in detail in 2.5.3.) This study, on the one hand, examines the design features of the PBL tasks and looks into the extent to which they are *situationally authentic*, while on the other hand, seeks to look beyond the situational authenticity manifested in the task design features to investigate the authenticity of the learners' engagement with the tasks (i.e. the *interactional authenticity*). Thus, the main research question for the present study is:

To what extent is *authenticity* (in terms of situational and interactional authenticity) achieved in the tasks designed for the ESP project-based learning (PBL) module under investigation? What is the nature of this authenticity that is manifested? What implications does this authenticity have for ELT/ESP task design?

## **1.2. Context and Purpose of the Research**

With the paradigm shift in education from teacher-centred to student-centred learning, the school is no longer viewed as a place where teachers 'transmit' knowledge to students. Instead, the school is to create conditions whereby students 'construct' their knowledge and skills (Nunan 1999:4). This changing conception of education has

profound implications for second language teaching, and it is in line with modern linguistic theories and findings of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research which underlie the paradigm shift from structural language teaching to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): language should no longer be viewed as a system of grammatical items to be ‘taught’ or ‘transmitted’ to students. Instead the second language classroom should be created as a communicative environment to facilitate students’ acquisition of the target language (Nunan 1999:4).

This paradigm shift has raised to prominence the issue of ‘authenticity’, which is believed to have a significant role to play in creating a communicative environment for language learning by bringing ‘real English with intrinsically communicative quality’ (Lee 1995: 324) into the second language classroom. Indeed, the notion of authenticity has spawned considerable amount of discussion within the field of second language learning and teaching in the past three decades, but no comprehensive definition of the notion has yet been reached and the terms ‘authentic’ and ‘authenticity’ remain elusive (Mishan 2005:1). Studies on authenticity have traditionally been confined to the discussion of texts (e.g. Swaffar 1985, Little et al 1998, Wong et al 1995, etc.), although more recent studies also focus on the authenticity of *tasks* (Guariento and Morley 2001, Mishan 2005, etc.) and learner authenticity (Lee 1995). Since the publication of Widdowson’s *Explorations in applied linguistics* (1979), some have come to view authenticity as a property not of spoken and written texts themselves, but of the uses people put them to:

It is probably better to consider authenticity not as a quality residing in instances of language but as a quality which is bestowed upon them, created by the response of the receiver.

Authenticity in this view is a function of the interaction between the reader/hearer and the text

which incorporates the intentions of the writer/speaker... Authenticity has to do with appropriate response. (Widdowson 1979:166)

In fact, his notion of authenticity has also been central to much of the discussion on communicative language testing. Bachman (1990) reminds us of Widdowson's point that authenticity is a function of the interaction between the language user and the text (language input), and proposes a dual view of authenticity: situational authenticity and interactional authenticity (to be explicated in 2.5.3). He describes the preoccupation with authenticity as 'a sincere concern to somehow capture or recreate in language test tasks the essence of language use' (Bachman 1990:300) and maintains that authenticity is an important way of ensuring that language test tasks reflect language use in the target domain. Indeed, to 'capture or recreate the essence of language use' and ensure that what is practised in second language classroom 'reflects language use in the real world' is also a major concern in second language learning (Galien and Bowcher 1994).

Building on previous discussions on the role of authenticity in ELT, the present study revisits the notion of authenticity and attempts a multi-dimensional exploration of the notion by drawing on Bachman's dual view of authenticity (1996) in conjunction with Halliday's (1978) triad construct of *context of situation* – the emergent insights of which constitute the conceptual framework for a case study of ESP task design for a project-based learning (PBL) module in a vocational institution. This study explores how 'authenticity' is a potentially useful notion for the conceptualization and realization of task design processes in ESP (and ELT in general).

Through a case study of a project-based learning (PBL) module of an ESP curriculum at a Hong Kong vocational institution, this research aims to explore and characterize



the nature of authenticity manifested in the task design and the learner's interaction with the tasks. The issue of authenticity is either explicitly or implicitly stipulated in the syllabus of this case ESP curriculum, 'Authentic materials and simulated workplace situations are adopted to facilitate the teaching and learning of the four skills, grammar, vocabulary and a variety of text types which provide meaningful contexts for the learning and purposeful use of specific language items' (IVE2007). On the other hand, projects are often seen as 'a collection of sequenced and integrated tasks' (Nunan 2004:133) that are designed to maximize authenticity (Beckett 2006). As Beckett (2006) points out, project-based learning (PBL) is most pertinent to 'authenticity' – 'authenticity of students' experience and the language that they are exposed to and use'. However, few, if any, studies have elaborated on the nature of authenticity of PBL in practice: 'Although the topic of authenticity has prompted spirited discussions, few have made direct reference to PBL.' (Beckett and Miller 2006: 28)

Thus, this case makes a good candidate for the investigation into how authenticity, as stipulated in the syllabus and is supposed to be present in project-based learning (PBL), is manifested in practice – how authenticity is designed and incorporated into actual ESP tasks that are used in practice in the second language classroom, and the nature of the authenticity of the output of the designed tasks and the processes these tasks elicit, i.e. the authenticity reflected in the learner's interaction with the tasks. To borrow Bachman's dual notion of authenticity (1990), what is the nature of the situational authenticity and interactional authenticity that is manifested in practice?

It is expected that the exploration and characterization of authenticity as manifested in the PBL module under investigation in the present study will provide insights into the complexity of what is meant by ‘authenticity’ according to the discussion in the literature review in Chapter 2 and will have implications for how the notion of authenticity can be used for practical task design for ELT, which will contribute to developing a model of authenticity well suited to capturing the complex reality of ESP/ELT task design.

### **1.3. Pertinence of the Present Study to the Hong Kong Educational Context**

The present research, which explores the issue of authenticity in ELT task design through a case study of a PBL ESP module, is highly pertinent to the Hong Kong educational context and addresses the following issues stipulated in the current Hong Kong educational curriculum documents.

#### *1.3.1. The Paradigm Shift from Teacher-centred to Student-centred Education*

*Advocated in the ‘Hong Kong Educational Reform Proposals: Education Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’*

As discussed in 1.2, the paradigm shift in education from teacher-centred to student-centred learning means the change of the role of the school from ‘the transmission of knowledge to students’ to ‘the facilitation of the students’ construction of their knowledge and skills’ (Nunan 1999:4). It is exactly what is explicitly advocated in the ‘Hong Kong Educational Reform Proposals: Education Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ – that the role of an educator is changed ‘from someone who transmits

knowledge to someone who inspires students to construct knowledge' (HK Education Commission 2000: 15). This changing conception of education is in line with modern linguistic theories and findings of SLA research and thus also underlies the paradigm shift from structural language teaching to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): language should no longer be viewed as a system of grammatical items to be 'taught' or 'transmitted' to students. Instead the second language classroom should be created as a communicative environment to facilitate students' acquisition of the target language (Nunan 1999:4). This provides the rationale for task-based language learning, a framework within which the present research works. (A critical review of the theoretical and practical issues concerning task-based language learning will be given in Chapter 2).

*1.3.2. The Recommendation of TBL (Task-based learning) for ELT by the Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council (CDC 2000:3)*

The present study explores the issue of authenticity in ELT *task* design, and thus operates within the task-based learning (TBL) framework. Indeed, the Hong Kong Government strongly recommends TBL for ELT, emphasizing that the ultimate aim of TBL is to develop the students' communicative competence:

The task-based approach to language learning places emphasis on learning to communicate through purposeful interaction in the target language .... Learners are encouraged to activate and use whatever language they already have in the purpose of completing a task. The use of tasks will also give a clear and purposeful context for the teaching and learning of grammar and other language features as well as skills. (CDC 2000:3)

Thus, the present research on authenticity in task design is of particular relevance to the Hong Kong educational context amid the strong advocacy of TBL for ELT by the Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council, as it is expected that the exploration and characterization of authenticity in the present case study will have implications and provide insights into how the notion of authenticity can be used for practical ELT task design within the TBL framework, and thus will have high applicability to the Hong Kong ELT context.

### *1.3.3. The Explicit Statement of TBL and 'Authenticity' in the Hong Kong Vocational ELT Syllabuses*

Indeed, task-based learning and the issue of authenticity is either explicitly or implicitly stipulated in the syllabuses of the vocational ELT or ESP curricula of the leading Hong Kong vocational education institution, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education: 'Authentic trade-related materials should be used for teaching and learning as far as practicable,' 'This module uses a task and scenario-based approach to language learning.' (IVE2005); 'Authentic materials and simulated workplace situations are adopted to facilitate the teaching and learning of the four skills, grammar, vocabulary and a variety of text types which provide meaningful contexts for the learning and purposeful use of specific language items' (IVE2007). Thus, the present study, which explores the issue of authenticity in task design, is of particular relevance and has high applicability to the context of Hong Kong vocational ELT or ESP.

Thus, the present research is conducted against the backdrop of the issues stipulated in the current Hong Kong educational curriculum documents as discussed above.

#### **1.4. Background Information Regarding Specific Context of the Present**

##### **Study**

In the context of the vocational institutions in Hong Kong, ESP courses are run by the language centre, while trade courses are run by the respective parent departments. In other words, the language centre runs ESP courses for students from parent departments such as the Department for Business Administration, the Department of Fashion and Textiles, the Department of Information Technology, etc. The case PBL module chosen for the present study is one run by the language centre for students from the Department of Fashion and Textiles undertaking a Higher Diploma for Fashion Design and Product Development at a local vocational institution. This chosen case is a PBL (project-based learning) module which complements other modules in the ESP curriculum. This PBL module, which is run during the final year of a Higher Diploma programme in Fashion Design and Product Development, serves to allow the students (who are L2 learners of English) to consolidate the language repertoire they have acquired from earlier language modules in the ESP curriculum. Students of this ESP curriculum are studying for a 2-year higher diploma in the specialism Fashion Design and Product Development. The ESP curriculum is a built-in component (2 hrs per week throughout their 2-year study) of their higher diploma course, and is composed of four 30-hr modules, one of which being the PBL module under investigation. Students undertaking this higher diploma course have completed secondary seven education. This PBL module went largely unsupervised, except that some class activities and learning materials were directed at providing language

assistance for the learners at different stages of the module. Learners' linguistic errors were dealt with by the teacher in a separate post-task session. This kind of PBL module is typical in the ESP curriculum for the final year higher diploma students from all disciplines (not only for students of Fashion Design) in the context of vocational education, i.e. students undertaking a Higher Diploma in Business Administration or in Information Technology, etc. also have to take a similar ESP PBL module in the final year of their studies.

### **1.5. Current ESP Provision and Stakeholders' Needs**

As mentioned in the previous section, in the context of the vocational institutions in Hong Kong, ESP courses are run by the language centre, while trade courses are run by the respective parent departments. The ESP modules are usually built-in components of Diploma/Higher Diploma programmes in different trade disciplines.

In Hong Kong, English is both an official and international language, which plays a significant role for international business communication in today's world of globalisation. One's English proficiency and skills to communicate in the workplace are crucial to one's career success in the business world. This is recognized by various stakeholders (students, teachers, employers, etc.) of the Diploma/Higher Diploma programmes in different trade disciplines (Assessment Report IVE 2009). The role of English is highly important for practitioners in the fashion industry (the specific purpose field chosen for the present study), who have to communicate and sell design ideas to clients in the international fashion business context. On the other hand, employers are generally not satisfied with the graduates' English proficiency in workplace communication (Assessment Report IVE 2009:35). Moreover, students and

trade departments are demanding more trade-specific authentic materials and tasks to be used for ESP modules (Assessment Report IVE 2009:35). These specific needs from various stakeholders have added to the rationale for the present study on authenticity in ESP task design.

## 1.6. Research Questions

Following the purpose of the research as discussed in 1.2, the main research question is formulated as follows:

- To what extent is authenticity achieved in the tasks designed for the ESP project-based learning (PBL) module under investigation? What is the nature of the authenticity that is manifested? What implications does this authenticity have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?

In the light of the discussion in the literature review in Chapter 2 that authenticity is a dual notion (that for a task to be authentic, it has to achieve both *situational* as well as *interactional* authenticity), the main research question is fractured into two specific research questions:

Specific Research Questions:

1. To what extent are the PBL tasks *situationally authentic*? How is *situational authenticity* realized in the design features of the PBL tasks?

2. In what way in practice do the task characteristics of the PBL tasks engage the learners? To what extent is the learners' interaction with the PBL tasks authentic? What is the nature of the *interactional authenticity* manifested, and what implications does it have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?

### **1.7. Project-based Learning (PBL) in ELT and Authenticity**

Project-based Learning (PBL) in ELT is often seen as a form of language learning with an embedded element of assessment (Beckett and Miller 2006, Spence-Brown 2001, Stoller 2006)

[In doing project work], students should be given ongoing feedback, in the form of formative and summative assessment, so that they can evaluate their own learning, progress, and attainment of process- and product- oriented goals. (Stoller 2006:35)

According to Nunan (2004:133), projects can be thought of as 'maxi-tasks', that is 'a collection of sequenced and integrated tasks that all add up to a final project'. He quotes an example of a simulation project 'buying a new car', which might include the following subsidiary tasks:

1. evaluating available options and selecting a suitable model based on price, features and so on
2. selecting an appropriate car firm from a series of classified advertisements
3. arranging for a bank loan through negotiation with a bank or finance house
4. role-playing between purchaser and salesperson for purchase of the car

(Nunan 2004:133)



Thus, PBL is a form of task-based learning which ‘entails elaborate sets of sequenced tasks during which students are actively engaged in information gathering, processing, and reporting, with the ultimate goal of increased content knowledge and language mastery’ (Beckett 2006: 21). PBL has often been equated with in-class group work, out-of-class activities, cooperative learning, task-based learning and a vehicle for fully integrated language and content learning (Stoller 2006:21). PBL has also often been associated with the notion of authenticity:

The most commonly reported positive outcome of project work is linked to the authenticity of students’ experience and the language that they are exposed to and use. While engaged in project work, students partake in authentic tasks for authentic purposes ... Because projects are planned around gathering, processing, and reporting of “real” information related to the project theme, practitioners report that students complete their projects with increased content knowledge. (Stoller 2006:26)

It is also suggested that the tangible end product associated with project work, often shared with a *real* audience, leads students to take their ‘formal accuracy more seriously’ (Skehan 1998:274).

The following quotation from Fried-Booth (2002) about PBL also relates to the idea of task authenticity and learner authenticity:

Project work is student-centred and driven by the need to create an end-product. However, it is the route to achieve this end-product that makes project work so worthwhile. The route to the end-product brings opportunities for students to develop their confidence and independence and to work together in a real-world environment by collaborating on a task. (Fried-Booth 2002:6)

However, despite the pertinence of PBL to authenticity, few, if any, studies have elaborated on the nature of authenticity of PBL in practice: ‘Although the topic of

authenticity has prompted spirited discussions, few have made direct reference to PBL'. (Beckett and Miller 2006: 28) Thus, 'there is a pressing need for more empirical research on PBL in the context of L2 and FL instructions, and on its various configurations and component parts (e.g.... tasks, process, product, procedures, assessment, etc.), more specifically' (Stoller 2006:35) in relation to the notion authenticity.

It has to be noted that project work is viewed not as a replacement for other teaching methods, but rather as an approach to learning which complements mainstream methods. (Beckett and Miller 1996)

The case chosen for the present study is a PBL module which complements other modules on workplace writing and workplace oral interactions in the ESP curriculum. This PBL module, which is to be run during the final year of the students of the Higher Diploma course, serves to allow the L2 learners to consolidate the language repertoire they have acquired from earlier language modules in the ESP curriculum.

### **1.8. Significance of the Present Study**

The present study, which aims to explore how authenticity is a potentially useful notion for the conceptualization and realization of practical ELT task design, has both theoretical and practical significance for the field of ELT (and ESP in particular). First, as discussed in 1.2, this study is a response to the incompleteness of previous discussions on the 'elusive' definition of authenticity in terms of language learning tasks (Mishan 2004:1) and the lack of empirical research done on the extent to which

authenticity is achievable in the second language classroom (Beckett and Miller 2006:28) despite the wide recognition of the vital role of authenticity in ELT/ESP discussed in literature. As Lewkowicz (2000:45) points out, ‘despite the importance accorded to authenticity, there has been a marked absence of research to demonstrate this characteristic,’ and that ‘such discussions [on authenticity] need to be empirically based to inform what has until now been a predominantly theoretical debate.’ (Lewkowicz 2000:53) Thus, the present study will contribute to filling this gap in the existing literature. Second, as discussed in 1.3, the present study is highly pertinent to the Hong Kong educational context as it addresses various interrelated issues stipulated in the current Hong Kong educational curriculum documents, with regard to the paradigm shift to student-centred learning, the advocacy for task-based language learning, and the incorporation of ‘authenticity’ in ELT and especially ESP curricula. The derivation by the present study from empirical data of an ‘authenticity’ model for ELT/ESP task design underpinned by theories of language and second language learning will definitely be of practical value to the current ELT context of Hong Kong. Third, as Harding (2007:7) points out, it is important particularly for ESP teachers to focus on the learner’s specific needs instead of following any ‘off-the-shelf’ course book, as ‘support materials are hard to find, limited, and often too sector specific’. In this connection, a task design model like the one to be derived from the present study will be beneficial and serve as a practical guide for any ELT/ESP teachers and task designers who have to design authentic language learning tasks to meet the specific language needs of their learners instead of relying on any ready made textbooks.

### **1.9. Chapter Outlines of the Rest of the Thesis**

To set the stage for the investigation into authenticity in ELT/ESP task design, the literature review in Chapter 2 begins with an examination of the theoretical issues and methodological considerations concerning task-based language learning (TBL), including the rationale for communicative language teaching (CLT), the traditional PPP (presentation, practice, production) paradigm and its criticisms, TBL as an alternative to PPP, Ellis' (2003) and Willis' (1996) frameworks of TBL, etc.. It also explores some key issues concerning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the prevailing role of authenticity in ESP. It then revisits the notion of authenticity in ELT by examining its various dimensions, from the traditional focus on the discussion of 'authentic texts' to the recent studies of the 'authenticity of tasks' and 'learner authenticity' (i.e. the learner's involvement with the tasks). It then draws on Bachman's *dual notion of authenticity* in conjunction with Halliday's triad construct of *context of situation* to derive a conceptual framework for the characterization of authenticity for the present study. Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the epistemological issues concerning qualitative research and explains how the present study is located within the interpretive paradigm. This chapter continues with an explication of the research design, including the selection of the case and sampling of subjects for the present study, the research methods for the present study (namely documentary and discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and unstructured observations), ways of achieving trustworthiness for the study, the ethical issues concerned, as well as the data analysis methods.

Chapter 4 reports on the research findings and discusses the data analysis to address the first specific research question concerning situational authenticity manifested in the design features of the PBL task series under investigation. Chapter 5 reports on the

research findings and discusses the data analysis to address the second specific research question concerning interactional authenticity. It provides a detailed description and characterization of the extent to which the PBL tasks engage the learners in practice. This Chapter concludes with the implications of the research findings on interactional authenticity for enhancing situational authenticity in task design discussed in Chapter 4.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 6, summarises the main findings and states how the findings address the research questions set out in Chapter 1. It discusses and evaluates the implications and significance of the research findings for ESP task design and how this contributes to the literature of authenticity and task design in ELT in general. It ends with suggested issues for further research building on the present study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

To set the stage for the investigation into authenticity in ELT task design, the literature review in this Chapter begins with an examination of the theoretical issues and methodological considerations concerning task-based language learning (TBL), including the rationale for communicative language teaching (CLT), the traditional PPP (presentation, practice, production) paradigm and its criticisms, TBL as an alternative to PPP, Ellis' (2003) and Willis' (1996) frameworks of TBL, etc. It also explores some key issues concerning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the prevailing role of authenticity in ESP. Against the backdrop of the TBL paradigm, this chapter then revisits the notion of authenticity in ELT by examining its various dimensions, from the traditional focus on the discussion of 'authentic texts' to the recent studies of the 'authenticity of tasks' and 'learner authenticity' (i.e. the learner's involvement with the tasks). It draws on Bachman's *dual notion of authenticity* in conjunction with Halliday's triad construct of *context of situation* in Systemic Functional Linguistics to derive a conceptual framework for the characterization of authenticity for the present study.

### **2.2 Authenticity and Task-based Language Learning**

Studies on authenticity have traditionally been confined to the discussion of texts (e.g. Swaffar 1985, Little et al 1998, Wong et al 1995), but more recent studies focus on the

authenticity of tasks (Guariento and Morley 2001, Mishan 2005). As McGrath (2002:12) puts it, ‘the narrow concern with text authenticity that characterized the early years of the communicative movement has since given way to a concern for the nature of tasks.’ Widdowson (1978) argues that it is the relationship between the learner and the input text, and the learner’s response to it, that should be characterized as authentic, rather than the input text itself. ‘Authenticity, in other words, is a factor of the learner’s involvement with the **task**’ (Mishan 2005: 70). Clarke (1989: 75) makes a similar point by suggesting that ‘teaching materials should reflect the authentic communication purpose of the text by ensuring appropriacy of task’. Mishan (2005:67) points out that ‘a pedagogical paradigm that has been increasingly associated with [authenticity] is the **task**’ and that ‘the marriage of the authentic text and the task model is a felicitous one, in that both derive from the “real-world”.’ Thus, setting the stage for the investigation into authenticity in ELT task design for this study necessitates the exploration of some of the theoretical issues underlying task-based language learning.

### **2.3. Setting the Stage for the Discussion on Authenticity in Task Design: Theoretical Issues and Methodological Considerations Concerning Task-based Language Learning**

The increasing emphasis on the importance of creating an ‘environment’ for the construction of knowledge within the wider context of education as discussed in Chapter One has profound impact on second language teaching, since this conception of education is also in line with modern linguistic theories and findings of second language acquisition (SLA) research which underlie the paradigm shift from structural

language teaching to communicative language teaching (CLT) (Nunan 1999:4): language should no longer be viewed as a system of grammatical items to be ‘taught’ to students. Instead, it is a system for communication (especially following Hymes’s (1971) formulation of communicative competence that knowing a language includes, in addition to knowing grammatical rules, the knowledge of how language is used appropriately to achieve particular communicative goals), and the second language classroom should be created as a communicative environment to facilitate students’ language acquisition.

### **2.3.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

As will be seen in the following sections, modern linguistic and second language learning theories seem to suggest that ‘natural exposure’ has a crucial role to play in the language acquisition process, be it first or second language acquisition. Proponents of Communicative Language Teaching (e.g. Prabhu 1987) argues that acquisition arises out of communicative activities within a natural exposure to the target language, and what is required is the provision of opportunities for learners to communicate naturally.

The development of competence in a second language requires not systematization of language input or maximization of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication. (Prabhu 1987:23)

It is argued that, given sufficient exposure and opportunities to use the target language, grammar ‘will take care of itself’ (Corder 1981) – learners will discover elements of L2 grammar and reach conclusions which make sense in terms of their own systems’ (Willis 1996: 12) (although Willis suggests incorporating a form-focused component within the task-based learning framework, which is to be discussed in later sections).



### **2.3.2 Chomsky's Universal Grammar (1986) and SLA**

Chomsky (1986) proposes Universal Grammar (UG) to account for the logical problem of language acquisition (i.e. the gap between linguistic competence and naturalistic input data) (Baker and McCarthy 1981). He suggests that the reason why children so speedily master the complex structures of language is that they have innate knowledge of certain principles that guide them in developing the grammar of their language. He argues that the acquisition of a language is only possible if it is guided by some kind of innate structure, which he calls UG. Thus, UG is a theory of linguistics postulating principles shared by all languages, thought to be innate to humans.

In Chomsky's view, linguistic theory is 'concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly ....', and competence is the intrinsic tacit knowledge that underlies actual performance (Chomsky 1965: 3-4). Some have questioned the validity of Chomsky's rigid distinction between linguistic competence and performance, and postulated a more socially oriented communicative competence (Hymes 1971). Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence has been criticized for its exclusive attention to purely formal linguistic elements. Discourse analysis and sociolinguistics have added an essential pragmatic and sociocultural dimension by pointing out that what the native speaker has is not merely linguistic competence, but sociolinguistic communicative competence, which will be further discussed in 2.7.

Though downplaying language use and linguistic performance (as opposed to linguistic competence), Chomsky's stance recognizes language as something 'in-there' to be 'developed', and 'natural exposure' serves to trigger language acquisition (by activating the principles and setting the parameters of UG). Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers like White (1989) and Rutherford (1989) have observed strong resemblance between L1 acquisition and SLA in terms of the 'logical problem' and posit that the L2 learner appears to have internalized complex and subtle knowledge of the L2 not obviously available in the input. Recognising this strong resemblance lends support to the availability of UG in SLA. Since language acquisition is a function of the interaction between UG and naturalistic input, the pedagogical implication is that the main role of the second language classroom is to provide for learners the 'natural exposure' to trigger language acquisition. This rationalist 'in-there' belief about the nature of language has informed a 'use-to-learn', 'process-oriented' second language classroom.

### **2.3.3 Krashen's Second Language Learning Theory (1985)**

Although his theory has been criticized on various grounds (e.g. his non-interface position between acquisition and learning), Krashen has nevertheless formulated an 'overall theory' (Krashen 1985) of SLA with important implications for language teaching. He was able to package his ideas in a coherent way that brings together research findings from a number of domains through a set of five basic hypotheses, namely, the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

It is not the aim of this section to give a detailed analysis of Krashen's theory. Rather, reference here would be made to various aspects of his theory which have shed light on task-based learning (TBL) in relation to the issue of authenticity to be discussed in later sections.

#### *2.3.3.1. The Role of Natural Exposure for Second Language Acquisition*

Like Chomsky, Krashen also emphasizes the role of natural input for language acquisition. Krashen argues that second language learners have two distinct ways of developing L2 competence: acquisition and learning. Acquisition is 'a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their L1', while learning is 'a conscious process that results in "knowing about" language' (Krashen 1985). Acquisition comes about through meaningful interaction in a natural communication setting when the L2 learner is primarily concerned with meaning, not with form. On the other hand, 'learning has only one function, and that is as a Monitor or editor' and 'makes changes in the form of our utterance, after it has been produced by the acquired system.' Krashen maintains a non-interface position that 'learning does not "turn into acquisition.'" (Krashen 1982) Thus, to Krashen, as phrased by Mishan (2005),

Acquisition is conceived as a gradual analysis and absorbing of an internal grammar through exposure to [naturalistic] comprehensible but not [artificially] systematized input. (Mishan 2005:22)

In fact, Krashen's acquisition-learning distinction is not clearly defined and it is impossible to determine which process is operating in a particular case, and hence, as McLaughlin (1987:56) criticized, a central claim of the theory that 'learning'

cannot become ‘acquisition’, cannot be tested empirically. On the other hand, contrary to Krashen’s non-interface position that explicit knowledge cannot convert into implicit knowledge, researchers like Ellis (1994, 2003) and Willis (1996) argue for an interface position, according to which explicit knowledge facilitates the development of implicit knowledge – explicit knowledge serves to prime attention to form in the input and thereby to activate the processes involved in the acquisition of implicit knowledge (Ellis 2003:106).

However, despite the controversy over the interface/non-interface positions, these theories are nevertheless consistent with TBL that acquisition comes about through meaningful interaction in a natural communication setting when the L2 learners is primarily concerned with meaning, although they differ as to the value of a form-focused component within the TBL model. More discussions on this ‘form’ versus ‘meaning’ debate will be given in section 2.3.8.

#### *2.3.3.2 Natural Order Hypothesis – Learner’s ‘In-built Syllabus’*

Based on a series of investigations, Krashen hypothesizes a ‘natural sequence’ in the acquisition of L2 grammar. Researchers found that learners, regardless of their L1 background, appeared to acquire a set of grammatical items in English in more or less the same order (Dulay and Burt 1973, 1974), and that this natural order of acquisition could hardly be altered through instruction. Krashen concluded that this ‘natural’ order of acquisition is the result of the acquired system operating free of conscious grammar, i.e. the Monitor. Thus, irrespective of what they are taught, learners just follow their own ‘built-in syllabus’ when acquiring the grammatical properties of a

language. This may not serve as sufficient evidence against a pre-determined structural syllabus, but the fact that learners in the class are not homogeneous and are at different stages of their interlanguage adds to the argument against a pre-determined structural syllabus. Hence, as McLaughlin (1989:23) suggests, rather than using the data from research as a basis for the grading of grammatical items to be presented in the classroom, the research on interlanguage suggests another approach:

The progressive elaboration of the interlanguage system of the learner is a response to his developing need to handle even more complex communication tasks. If we can control the level of these correctly, the grammar will look after itself. Instead then, of grading the linguistic material that we expose the learner to, we should consider grading the communicative demands we make on him, thereby gently leading him to elaborate his approximative system. (Corder 1981:36)

#### *2.3.3.3 The Role of Affective Factors in SLA*

Krashen is able to incorporate the role of affective factors in his SLA theory by postulating the Affective Filter Hypothesis. To him, natural exposure and comprehensible input are a necessary but not sufficient condition for successful acquisition. Affective factors also play a significant role in SLA:

Input is the primary causative variable in SLA, affective variable acting to impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device. (Krashen 1982)

And the affective factor is defined as:

... that part of the internal processing system that subconsciously screen incoming language based on what psychologists call 'affect': the learners' motives, needs, attitude, and emotional states (Krashen 1982:52)

Thus, as McLaughlin (1988) observes, the affective filter limits what it is that the learner attends to, what language input will reach the Language Acquisition Device, and how quickly the language will be acquired.

Although the Affective Filter Hypothesis has been criticized as ‘vague in its origin and function’ and ‘bears no detailed linguistic scrutiny’ (McLaughlin 1988:56), it nevertheless attempts to capture the relationship between affective variables and the process of SLA, which most SLA researchers would admit to be playing a critical role (e.g. Dornyei 1996, 1998, 2002, Gardner 2001).

#### **2.3.4. Traditional PPP Paradigm and Its Criticisms**

As pointed out by Willis (1994:23), classroom experience tells us (and this is also well supported by the Natural Order Studies (Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974)) that ‘learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach in PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) lessons. They usually get things right in lessons then wrong when control is removed: They also seem to learn things we don’t mean to teach them.’

The PPP methodology views language as a list of items that can be acquired sequentially as ‘accumulated entities’ (Rutherford 1987:45). Long and Crooks (1992:89) argue that this practice is incompatible with findings of SLA research because it presents linguistic forms separately and attempts to elicit immediate target-like mastery of these forms. SLA research shows that L2 learners have to go through their interlanguage before they arrive at the target form. Thus, SLA is a ‘process’ that is incompatible with teaching seen as the presentation and practice of a series of

‘products’(Ellis 2003:29). This echoes Willis (1994:26) that ‘the stress on learning bits of grammar “correctly” from the start inhibits experimentation and risk-taking – both of which are essential for interlanguage development.’

PPP is further condemned by advocates of the strong version of CLT who claim that language is acquired through communication (Howatt 1984) and that learners do not first acquire language as a structural system and then learn how to communicate using this system, but rather actually discover the system itself in the process of learning how to communicate – ‘use-to-learn’ rather than ‘learn-to-use’. In this sense, PPP runs counter to the rationalist ‘in-there’ hypothesis. In addition, Nunan (1988) maintains that dividing language into discrete units of whatever type misrepresents the nature of language as communication.

### **2.3.5. Task-based Learning (TBL) as an Alternative to PPP**

Task-based language learning seems to offer an alternative which is theoretically underpinned by SLA research. The view that language acquisition arises out of communicative activities within a natural exposure (as argued in the previous sections) and what is required is the provision of opportunities to communicate naturally has made apparent the role of *tasks*, since tasks constitute the means by which learners communicate genuinely in the second language classroom.

Proposals for task-based language learning come out of the recognition that it is not feasible to specify what learners would learn in linguistic terms. As Prabhu (1987) argues, it is necessary to abandon the pre-selection of linguistic items in any form, and

instead specify the content of teaching in terms of holistic units of communication, i.e. *tasks*, and thus to teach ‘through communication’ rather than ‘for communication’. Thus, TBL provides opportunities for holistic and experiential language learning.

The Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council defines task-based language learning as follows:

The task-based approach to language learning places emphasis on learning to communicate through purposeful interaction in the target language.... Learners are encouraged to activate and use whatever language they already have in the purpose of completing a task. The use of task will also give a clear and purposeful context for the teaching and learning of grammar and other language features as well as skills. (CDC 2000:3)

### **2.3.6. Ellis’ Framework for Describing Tasks (2003)**

As Ellis (2003:2) points out, ‘it should be acknowledged from the start that in neither research nor language pedagogy is there a complete agreement as to what constitutes a task, making definition problematic’. He deliberately draws the distinction between ‘tasks’ and ‘exercises’: ‘tasks’ are activities that call for primarily meaning focused language use, while ‘exercises’ are activities that call for primarily form-focused language use:

The distinction between meaning-focused and form-focused is also intended to capture [a] key difference between a task and an exercise relating to the role of the participants. Thus, a ‘task’ requires the participant to function primarily as ‘language users’ in the sense that they must employ the same kinds of communicative processes as those involved in real-world activities.... In contrast, an ‘exercise’ requires the participants to function primarily as ‘learners’. (Ellis 2003:3)



He identifies six criterial features of a task:

- a. A task is a workplan for learner activity.
- b. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
- c. A task involves real-world processes of language use.
- d. A task can involve any of the four skills.
- e. A task engages cognitive processes such as selecting, classifying, ordering, reasoning, evaluating information, etc..
- f. A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome.

Drawing on these criterial features, Ellis develops a framework for describing tasks as follows:

**Table 2.1 Framework for describing tasks (Ellis 2003: 21)**

Design feature	Description
1. Goal	The general purpose of the task, e.g. to practise describing objects concisely; to provide an opportunity for the use of relative clauses.
2. Input	The verbal or non-verbal information supplied by the task, e.g. pictures; a map; written texts.
3. Conditions	The way in which the information is presented, e.g. split vs. shared information, or the way in which it is to be used, e.g. converging vs. diverging.
4. Procedures	The methodological procedures to be followed in performing the task, e.g. group vs. pair work; planning time vs. no planning time.
5. Predicted outcomes:  Product   Process	<p>The 'product' that results from completing the task, e.g. a completed table, a route drawn on a map, a list of differences between two pictures. The predicted product can be 'open', i.e. allow for several possibilities, or 'closed', i.e. allow for only one 'correct' solution.</p> <p>The linguistic and cognitive processes the task is hypothesized to generate.</p>

‘Goal’ refers to the objective of the task, and can be specified in terms of what aspect(s) of communicative competence the task is intended to contribute to. The distinction between ‘input’ and ‘condition’ reflects the need to distinguish between the kind of input data that a task provides, for example, whether it is verbal or non-verbal or both, and the way in which the data are presented, for example, whether the data are split among the task participants or shared by them. These constitute two quite distinct tasks variables. ‘Procedures’ concern the methodological options available for implementing tasks. Finally, since a task must have a clearly defined communicative outcome, ‘product outcomes’ are specifiable, while ‘process outcomes’, i.e. what actually transpires when participants perform a task, is much more difficult to predict, ‘as the language and cognitive behaviour elicited by a task are to a certain extent dependant on particular participants and cannot be reliably predicted’. Yet, as Ellis points out, ‘ in language pedagogy, tasks are devised with the expectation that they will generate specific process outcomes. It seems important, therefore, to include “predicted outcomes” as a component in any descriptive framework.’

### **2.3.7. Willis’ TBL Framework (1996)**

Willis’ TBL framework (1996) addresses four key conditions for language learning. She posits that despite differences in learning styles of individuals, there are three basic conditions for natural language learning, which combined with a fourth, focus on form, provide an optimum learning environment:

- i) **Exposure** to a rich but comprehensible input of real language
- ii) Opportunities for real **use of language** to do things (i.e. exchange meanings) – chances for learners to experiment and test hypothesis

- iii) **Motivation** to process the exposure and a need or desire to use the language
- iv) **Focus on language** – in order to prevent fossilization, learners need chances to reflect on language and try to systematize what they know

Willis' TBL framework comprises three stages: 'pre-task', 'task-cycle' (during task) and 'language focus' as follows:

#### **Pre-task Phrase**

Teacher explores the topic with the class, highlights useful words and phrases, and helps learners understand task instructions and prepare.

#### **Task Cycle**

Task	Planning	Report
Students do the task, in pairs or small groups. Teacher monitors from a distance, encouraging all to attempt at communication, not correcting.	Students prepare to report to the whole class how they do the task. Teacher stands by to give language advice.	Some groups present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare results. Teacher act as a chairperson, and then comment on the content of the reports.

#### **Language Focus**

Analysis	Practice
Students examine and then discuss specific features of the text or transcript of the recording.	Teacher conduct practice of new words, phrases, and patterns either during or after the Analysis.

To Willis, the main goal of the 'task' stage is to develop fluency and to promote the use of communication strategies, and the 'post-task' stage (language focus) is needed to 'avoid the risk of learners achieving fluency at the expense of accuracy'.

Willis' TBL framework is like the PPP procedure (from accuracy to fluency) turned up-side down (i.e from fluency to accuracy). 'The language focused work comes after the task cycle, when learners have had direct experience of the language in use and have become aware of what they as individuals, need to learn.' (Willis 1994)

### **2.3.8. The Need for a Form-focused Component within the TBL Framework**

Advocates of the strong version of CLT maintain that learners should rely entirely on 'natural acquisition' through use and that it is not necessary to focus on form (Howatt 1984). However, in recent years, it has been criticized that this mode of language learning is developing fluency at the expense of accuracy, and it is widely accepted that there is value in a form-focused component within the TBL framework (Willis 1994, Long 1988, 1991, Ellis 2003, VanPatten 1996, Lightbown and Spada 1993)

Classroom data from a number of studies offer support for the view that form-focused instruction and corrective feedback provided within the context of a communicative program are more effective in promoting second language learning than programs which are limited to an exclusive emphasis on accuracy on the one hand or an exclusive emphasis on fluency on the other. (Lightbown and Spada 1993)

Whereas Prabhu views language acquisition as an implicit process that takes place when learners are grappling with the effort to communicate, Long (1985) emphasizes the need for learners to attend to form consciously while they are communicating – what he calls 'focus on form', and that tasks have to be designed in ways that will ensure a primary focus on meaning but also allow for incidental attention to form. In fact, several studies suggest that learners can achieve clear gains in accuracy as a result of being taught a structure, especially if the type of form-focused instruction is planned in accordance with what is known about acquisitional processes (Harley 1989,

White 1991, VanPatten and Cardiano 1993). This form-focused component also serves as a kind of consciousness-raising that facilitates the learners to

Reconcile their new findings with their current interlanguage, that is, 'noticing the gap' between their understanding of the use of a particular feature, and examples of its use by native speakers. This leads to revision of their interlanguage towards a more native-like form and eventually towards acquisition of the form. (Mishan 2005:38)

There is substantial evidence that instruction of the focus-on-form kind can influence the accuracy with which learners use the target features, even in unplanned language use (Ellis 2002), thus lending support for a form-focused component within the TBL framework.

### **2.3.9. Authenticity as 'Natural Exposure': A Link between Communicative Language Learning (CLT), Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

A review of literature in the foregoing sections has provided the rationale for TBL (task-based learning). The theoretical issues reviewed on the views of major rationalists and SLA researchers all point to the crucial role of natural exposure in the language acquisition process – exposure to input of real language, real context, and genuine needs to communicate. This has informed a 'use-to-learn' approach to second language learning which is in line with the basic tenet of CLT that acquisition arises out of communicative activities within a natural exposure to the target language, and what is required is the provision of opportunities for learners to communicate naturally. On the other hand, according to Skehan (1998a), practice in processing

input serves to develop the learner's ability to comprehend the target language, while production enables learners to practise what they already know, thus helping them to automatise their discourse and linguistic knowledge. There is a question of what kind of practice is required to achieve automatisisation of linguistic knowledge. Cognitive theories of language acquisition emphasise the need for practise in the context of 'real operating condition' (Johnson 1988). That is, 'learners need the opportunity to practice language in the same conditions that apply in real-life situations' (Ellis 2003:113).

Pertinent to the present study comes the question: How do we incorporate this 'natural exposure' and the 'real operating conditions' into the tasks designed for second language learning? Indeed, a catchword that best captures the essence of this 'natural exposure' and 'real operating conditions' is *authenticity*. As Shomoossi and Ketabi (2007:150) points out, 'throughout the history of ELT, *authenticity* is taken as being synonymous with genuineness, realness and naturalness.'

Indeed, authenticity, which well captures the essence of SLA and CLT as discussed, also inexplicably links to ESP in creating a communicative language environment (Mishan 2005; Dudley-Evan and St John 1998; Douglas 2000, Harding 2007) – in that the use of authentic trade-related materials and real-world workplace tasks in the second language classroom exposes the learners to *real* English they need in their future workplace and gives them opportunities to rehearse the *real-world* target communication tasks they will have to perform. Thus, here we see that authenticity has provided a clear and logical link between SLA, CLT and ESP within the TBL framework.

## **2.4. Defining English for Specific Purposes – ESP as an Area of ELT**

Since the present study deals with a case study of task design for an ESP module, it is necessary to present a working definition of ESP at the outset of the study.

According to Barnard and Zemach (2003), ESP is an umbrella term that refers to the teaching of English to students who are learning the language for a particular work or study-related reason. ESP covers a wide range of content areas such as business, medicine, the law, engineering, history, and art and design, and in fact, any area of contemporary academic or professional life in which English is needed. The learners' purposes and needs for learning English play a crucial role in ESP.

The only feature common to all types of ESP course is the selection of the content and teaching approach according to the perceived needs of the learners. Consequently, needs analysis generally plays a more pivotal role in ESP than in EGP (English for General Purposes). (Barnard and Zemach in Tomlinson 2003:306)

The two main areas of ESP are:

- English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), concerned with enabling a learner to function in English in a particular job or profession.
- English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which provides learners with the language skills for pursuing a tertiary-level course taught in English, and/or presenting, researching, and publishing in academic settings.

As Barnard and Zemach point out, ESP should not be regarded as a discrete division of ELT, but 'simply an area (with blurred boundaries) whose courses are usually more focused in their aims and make use of a narrower range of topics, ... and that all areas of ESP share a common basis in general English.'

Munby (1978:2) defines ESP courses as ‘those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communicative needs of the learner’. Hutchinson and Waters (2002:19) makes this clearer by stating:

ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product. ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. Understood properly, it is an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need.

(Hutchinson and Waters 2002:19)

Thus, it can be concluded that ESP was conceived as an approach to ELT which is characterized by prioritizing learner needs.

Dudley-Evans and St John (1997: 4-5) define ESP in terms of ‘absolute’ and ‘variable’ characteristics as follows:

#### Absolute Characteristics

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners.
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.
3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

#### Variable Characteristics

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines.
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English.
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level.
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.



5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

Anthony (1997:2) agrees that the division of ESP into absolute and variable characteristics, in particular, is ‘very helpful in resolving arguments about what is and what is not ESP’ in that ‘ESP can but is not necessarily concerned with a specific discipline, nor does it have to aim at a certain age group or ability range’. He highlights a statement made by Hutchinson and Waters (1987:19) that ‘ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning’.

The present study deals with an English module in the specialism of Fashion Design and Product Development (as explained in 1.4) which prepares students for their future job in the specific purpose field, and thus is regarded as an ESP, and to be more specific, EOP course. However, it has to be emphasized that most of the points addressed in the present study are of equal relevance to the teaching of English for General Purposes (EGP)/ General English, and as McDonough and Shaw (1993) argue, both ESP and EGP courses are expected to pay detailed attention to learner needs and expectations, and to respond to them as efficiently and effectively as possible.

## **2.5. Authenticity and Key Issues in English for Specific Purposes (ESP)**

Section 1.5 has already discussed a working definition of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the context of the present study. Lorenzo Fiorito (2005:1) points out that the most important difference between General English and ESP lies in the learners and their purposes for learning English. ESP students are usually learners

‘who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job-related functions’. An ESP program is therefore built on ‘an assessment of purposes and needs and the functions for which English is required’. ESP focuses more on language in *context* than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world. Instead, it is integrated into a specific purpose subject matter area for which the learners are to be equipped with English to communicate.

Fiorito (2005:3) stresses that ‘English should be presented in authentic contexts to make the learners acquainted with the particular ways in which the language is used in functions that they will need to perform in their fields of specialty or jobs’. Indeed, *authenticity* has always been viewed as an important issue in ESP. Canado and Esteban (2005), in their discussion of the teaching of ESP, emphasize that ‘authenticity is the link between the classroom and the outside reality,’ and quote Arnold (1991: 237) that ‘the more authentically the classroom mirrors the real world, the more real the rehearsal will be and the better the learning and transfer will be’. They suggest that ‘although authentic materials are a very rich source for the selection of teaching materials in the field of ESP in general and of Business English in particular, the ultimate purpose should be authentic communication between the text (oral or written) and its recipient as a result of the interpretation brought to the text by the latter’ (Canado and Esteban 2005:1) and stress that what prevails in the communicative use of authentic trade-related texts in the ESP classroom is the ‘*authenticity of response*’. This is very much in line with the dual notion of

authenticity (*genuineness* as opposed to *authenticity*, and *situational authenticity* as opposed to *interactional authenticity*), which is to be explored and elaborated in the next section of this Literature Review chapter. As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) put it:

Authenticity thus lies in the nature of the interaction between the reader (or hearer) and the text. Part of the process of needs analysis for ESP is finding out exactly how learners use different sources so that activities in the ESP class can reflect what happens in real life. (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998: 28)

Canado and Esteban, drawing on Morrow (1977), point out that *context* and *target situation* is a necessary point of departure for the evaluation of authenticity in ESP, and that it is essential to determine whether *topic*, *function*, *channel*, and *audience* match the situation for which the text is going to be used in the ESP classroom. Indeed, the analysis of the target situation is a fundamental component for assessing the language needs of the ESP learners, which focuses on identifying the learners' language requirements in the occupational or academic situations they are being prepared for (West 1994). Thus, it refers to the tasks and activities that the learners will be using English for the target situations (Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998:124). This correspondence between the tasks to be performed in the ESP classroom and those in the target language situation will again be further explored in the next section.

Another key issue concerning ESP has to do with the need for the collaboration between the ESP teacher and the trade-content teacher (Hutchinson and Waters 1982: 56; Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998: 43; Almagro and Vallegro 2002). This addresses the limitations of ESP professionals in the content area of their students. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998: 43-48) acknowledge the importance of such a joint effort and recognize three stages upon which this joint work can take place: cooperation,

collaboration, and team teaching. At the cooperation stage the ESP teacher takes the initiative and enquire about the students' field of specialism to design an appropriate trade-specific English programme. The collaboration stage plans for a more direct involvement of the trade subject teacher to validate the ESP syllabus content by devising common materials, while the team-teaching stage involves a conjoined work in the classroom, where each teacher provides his/her own expertise in the field. This kind of collaboration between the ESP teacher and the trade-content specialist will also be duly addressed in the present study.

## **2.6. Genre Analysis in ESP**

Genre is often defined as 'a distinctive category of discourse of any type, spoken or written' (Swales 1990:33) that serves as 'responses by speakers or writers to the demands of a social context' (Johns 2002:3). In the ESP tradition, genre is often defined as structured communicative events engaged in by specific discourse communities whose members shared broad communicative purposes (Swales 1990). The most influential ESP genre analysis framework, established by Swales (1990), is characterized by the analysis of 'move', often defined as a 'bounded communicative act designed to achieve one main communicative objective,' and the lexico-grammatical realizations of a move (Swales and Feak 2000:35). Genre analysis emphasizes the dynamic nature of genres in which writers manipulate genre structures depending on the situation and the purpose of writing (Bhatia 1993). In other words, the text is a function of the interaction between the writer and the context of situation. Within genre analysis, a text is analysed in terms of the rhetorical moves. Essentially, a move in a text is a functional unit, used for some identifiable rhetorical purpose. In analyzing the discourse produced by the

learners in interacting with the task features in the present study, the genre analysis framework will be drawn upon to complement the Context of Situation conceptual framework.

## **2.7 Authenticity Revisited: Towards a Dual Notion of Authenticity**

### **2.7.1. Genuineness and Authenticity**

Having examined in 2.3 how a range of SLA theories have informed (or rather justified) task-based learning as a framework for creating a facilitating language learning environment, I will now discuss how the notion of *authenticity* comes to be incorporated into the design of *tasks* in achieving the ‘natural exposure’ for second language learning.

Studies on authenticity have traditionally been confined to the discussion of texts (e.g. Swaffar 1985, Little et al 1988, Wong et al 1995). In fact, in applied linguistics, the term ‘authenticity’ originated in the mid 1960s with a concern among materials writers such as Close (1965) and Broughton (1965) that language learners were being exposed to texts that were not representative of the target language they were learning. As Lewkowicz (2000:45) puts it, ‘authenticity at the time was seen as a simple notion distinguishing texts extracted from ‘real-life’ sources from those written for pedagogical purposes’. Authentic materials/texts are defined as those which are not designed with the purpose of language teaching but are intended for real life communication:

[Authentic texts] refers to those which are used in genuine communication in the real world, and not specifically prepared for the teaching and learning of language. Examples of such materials include written and audio-visual materials from the media, materials used in the professions, and even textbooks of other subjects.

(Wong et al 1995: 318)

It has been argued that authentic texts provide ‘the essential predications of language proficiency: linguistically authentic comprehensible input presented in a fashion which allows students to practise decoding message systems rather than individual words’ (Swaffar 1985:17), and make ‘a vital connection between the classroom and the real world’ (McGrarry 1995:3). A detailed discussion on the use of authentic materials will be presented in 2.9.

While studies of authenticity have traditionally been on the discussion of texts, recent studies also focus on the authenticity of tasks (Guariento and Morley 2001, Mishan 2005). Since the publication of Widdowson’s *Explorations in applied linguistics* (1979), authenticity has come to be viewed as a property not of spoken and written texts themselves, but of the uses people put them to:

It is probably better to consider authenticity not as a quality residing in instances of language but as a quality which is bestowed upon them, created by the response of the receiver.

Authenticity in this view is a function of the interaction between the reader/hearer and the text which incorporates the intentions of the writer/speaker... Authenticity has to do with appropriate response. (Widdowson 1979:166)

He makes a distinction between the terms *genuineness* and *authenticity*:

Genuineness is a characteristic of the passage itself and is an absolute quality. Authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response. (Widdowson 1978:80)

Texts are genuine if they are taken from the real world rather than contrived for language learning. Taylor (1994) writes in favour of such a distinction:

This is a helpful distinction to make, making clear that there is a difference between instances of language (texts) and the use to which they are put by particular people in particular situations ... No doubt the failure to distinguish between genuineness and authenticity in this way has contributed to the confusion in the authenticity debate. (Taylor 1994:7)

Thus, as Amor (2002) puts it, authenticity has more to do with the learner's mental make-up and world of experience than simply genuineness of texts and tasks. As Lee (1995) observes,

[Some teachers] seem unaware that authentic materials can appear 'unauthentic' to learners, just as unauthentic materials can appear 'authentic'. In practice, the extent to which materials appear authentic to learners seems to depend very much on how they are presented to them. (Lee 1995:323)

This coincides with what Mishan (2005) argues about the authenticity of tasks:

Tasks may be more or less 'real' to different learners and thus induce greater or lesser involvement depending on individual needs, interests and motivation. For instance, the apparently inauthentic task of reading through and marking up a technical manual may be keenly authentic to certain learners (Based on my experience in 1992 of using the Boeing manual with Ukrainian pilots who were being trained to fly Boeing aircraft at nearby Shannon airport.). This suggests that we have to be aware that task authenticity is in great measure a factor of *task authentication* – it depends on the learner's response to it. (Mishan 2005:71)

Related to this is what Lee (1995) proposes as *learner authenticity*, which refers to the learner's interaction with the input materials in terms of appropriate responses and positive psychological reaction. Viewing from this perspective, authenticity is rather a 'relational' notion – something relative, as constructed by the learner, as opposed to the 'genuineness' as an absolute quality. As Clarke (1989:36) points out, 'The notion of authenticity itself has become increasingly relative, being increasingly related to specific learner needs [and context] and less and less concerned with the "authentic"

nature of the input materials themselves.’ van Lier (1996) suggests that authenticity is a different category from the simple question of selecting genuine texts. He elaborates this by giving an invented example of

an interaction in which a dentist asks a patient: “Who are the Dodgers playing this Saturday?” The patient is unable to move or speak and is only able to produce an “Ungh” sound. van Lier calls the exchange defective because the question is not “authentic”. After all, the dentist knows the patient cannot answer. However, the covert intention is to relax the patient and this *authenticates* the dentist’s question. (cited in Amor 2002:148 )

Since the intention of the speaker and the interpretation by the hearer pertain to the context in which the utterance was made, here it is through the *context of situation* (Halliday 1978) that what seems to be an unauthentic question is ‘authenticated’. van Lier (1986) takes it one step further to suggest that authenticity is not primarily ‘a product, or a property of language or even language use, but is rather a process of authentication’, and concludes that ‘authenticity is the results of acts of authentication, and therefore authenticity and authentication are two sides of the same coin.’ It is through context that language use is authenticated. In this sense, authentication can be seen as the process in which the language learner interacts with the context of situation.

### **2.7.2. Authenticity and *Context of Situation* in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1978)**

In defining authenticity, it is important to note that where authentic communication takes place, there is always a *context of situation* (Halliday 1978). Halliday explains linguistic phenomena in terms of the social system. He views the linguistic system as a potential from which linguistic choices are made according to the context of



situation in which the speaker, or writer, finds him/herself. Within his systemic functional (SF) linguistic model, language is viewed as a social semiotic resource people use to accomplish their purposes by expressing meanings in context. SF theory states that particular aspects of a given context (such as the topics discussed, the language users and the medium of communication) define the meanings likely to be expressed and the language likely to be used to express those meanings (Chapelle 1998: 1) Language assumes meaning when seen in relation to the *Context of Situation*, which has three parameters: *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*. Halliday (1978: 221) explicates this triad construct as follows:

**Field:** The kind of language we use varies according to what we are doing. One aspect of the *field* of discourse is simply the subject matter: we talk *about* different things, and therefore use different words for doing so. In fact, ‘what we are talking about’ has to be seen as a special case of a more general concept, that of ‘what we are doing’, or ‘what is going on, within which the language is playing a part’. The ‘field’, therefore, refers to what the participants in the context of situation are actually engaged in., and the nature of the social action that is taking place.

**Tenor:** The language we use varies according to the level of formality, of technicality, and so on. What is the variable underlying this type of distinction? Essentially, it is the role relationships in the situations in question: who the participants in the communication group are, and in what relationship they stand to each other (Halliday 1978: 221). Thus, *tenor* answers the question ‘Who are participating and what is their relative status or power?’

**Mode:** Essentially, it is about what function language is being made to serve in the context of situation; this is what underlies the selection of a particular rhetorical channel – fundamental to it is the distinction between speaking and writing (channel), but also what is its specific role in the goings-on to which language is contributing? To persuade? To soothe? To sell? To control? To explain?... Thus, *mode* refers to what role language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, etc..

Thus, **Field** refers to the ongoing activity in the context of situation, or the subject matter in which the participants are involved, and the nature of the social action that is taking place. **Tenor** refers to the interrelations among the participants (status and role relationships). **Mode** refers to the role that language is playing in the situation, which includes what the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation. It also includes the ‘symbolic organization of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like’ (Halliday and Hasan 1985:12) Together these three parameters or dimensions of the context of situation determines the **register**, or type of language that is likely to be used in the text. Indeed, the notion of register explains the impact of the dimensions of the context of situation of a language event on the way language is used. These three dimensions, i.e. field, tenor, and mode, explain why, for example, we will not use

language in the same way to write as to speak (mode variation), to talk to our boss as to talk to our lover (tenor variation), and to talk about linguistics as to talk about jogging (field variation) (Eggins 1994: 9)

Within the systemic functional linguistic model, Halliday (1978) identified three meta-functions of language: *ideational* (experiential and logical), *interpersonal*, and *textual*. The *ideational* function enables us to make sense of our experience and to describe how things are related. Halliday describes this function as ‘expressing the speaker’s experience of the external world, and his own internal worlds, that of his own consciousness’ (Halliday 1978:45). The ideational is a mental representation of what the producer intends to communicate and it is within this component that the relationship between language and thought is explored in considerable detail. (Jones 2005:5). The *interpersonal* function encodes relationships among people in social situations. Language is a major means through which individual take part in the world, interact with others, negotiate roles and identities, and establish and maintain rapport. The interpersonal describes how meaning is exchanged through the selection of language reflecting the relationship between the participants: the addressor and the addressee. The *textual* function allows us to organize ideational and interpersonal meanings into a coherent text. The textual is the message that is actually produced through the channel and mode demanded by the situation. It is through these three meta-functions that Halliday emphasizes the ontogenetic nature of language use (Jones 2005:5). The three meta-functions are activated by the three contextual components or parameters – *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*, which combine to describe the whole context of situation. *Field* refers to the ‘text-generating’ activity and activates the *ideational*. *Tenor* refers to the role-relationships of the participants and activates

the *interpersonal*. *Mode* refers to the rhetorical modes being adopted by the participants and activates the *textual*. Thus, ideational meanings realize *field*, interpersonal meanings realize *tenor*, and textual meaning realize *mode*. These three parameters together constitute the ‘register’ of a text – both spoken and written – and define the context of situation (Halliday and Hasan 1985).

An important aspect of Halliday’s interpretation of context of situation is that *field*, *tenor*, and *mode* make up the ‘conceptual framework for representing the social context as the semiotic environment in which people exchange meanings’ (Halliday 1978: 110). Meanings are exchanged through language within a context of situation. Without the context of situation, much of the meaning is lost. Thus, as Galien and Bowcher (1994: 110) point out, ‘In order to define authenticity, utilizing the conceptual framework of *context of situation* is crucial’. In defining authenticity, it is important to note that where real-life communication takes place, there is always a context of situation. The context of situation determines the linguistic choices in relation to the subject matter, the activities taking place (Field), the statuses and roles of the participants (Tenor), and the role that language is playing in that situation – the channel or medium and function of language (Mode).

In the present study, Halliday’s triad construct of *context of situation* provides a multi-dimensional framework for the characterization of both the situational as well as interactional authenticity of the PBL tasks under investigation.

### **2.7.3. Authenticity as a Dual Notion: Situational Authenticity and Interactional Authenticity**

As discussed in section 2.7.1, since Widdowson's proposed distinction between genuineness and authenticity, authenticity has come to be viewed as a property not of spoken and written texts themselves, but of the uses people put them to – Texts are genuine if they are taken from the real world rather than contrived for language learning, and discourse is authentic when language users engage their 'language capacity' to interact with a text (Ellis 2003:305). In fact, Bachman (1990) makes a similar distinction in the context of language assessment, and proposes a dual notion of authenticity: situational authenticity and interactional authenticity. A test task is **situationally authentic** if its task characteristics correspond to those of a target language use (TLU) context. 'For a test task to be perceived as situationally authentic, the characteristics of the test task need to be perceived as corresponding to the features of a target language use situation' (Bachman 1991: 690). (A framework of task characteristics will be discussed in 2.5.4.) On the other hand, **interactional authenticity**, as Bachman (1991:691) puts it, 'is essentially Widdowson's (1978) definition of authenticity (as opposed to genuineness) and is a function of the extent and the type of involvement of the L2 learner's language ability in accomplishing a test task'. While the focus of situational authenticity is on the relationship between the task characteristics of the test task and those of the TLU tasks, interactional authenticity resides in the interaction between the test taker and the test task. Thus, interactional authenticity also corresponds to what Lee (1995) proposes as '*learner authenticity*', which refers to the learner's interaction with the input materials in terms of appropriate responses and positive psychological reaction. *Interactional authenticity* in this way also encompasses Van Lier's (1996) notion of '*authentication*', which can be seen as the process in which the language learner

interacts with the context of situation as discussed in section 2.7.1. Bachman argues that for a test task to be authentic, it has to *achieve both situational and interactional authenticity*. As Douglas (2001:48) puts it, ‘mere emulation of a target situation in the test is not sufficient to guarantee communicative language use’:

Authenticity does not lie only in the simulation of real-life texts or tasks, which I refer to as situational authenticity, but also in the interaction between the characteristics of such texts and tasks and the language ability of the [learner]. In other words, authenticity is not a property of spoken and written texts themselves, or even of the tasks associated with various professions, vocations, and academic fields. Rather, authenticity is achieved only when the properties of the communicative situation established by the [task characteristics:] rubric, prompts, and input data are sufficiently well-defined to engage the [learner’s] specific purpose language ability.

(Douglas 2000:88)

As Bachman describes, the preoccupation with authenticity reflects ‘a sincere concern to somehow capture and recreate in language [learning tasks] the essence of language use.’ (Bachman 1990:300) Although Bachman proposes this dual notion of authenticity in the context of language test tasks, this duality view of authenticity is of equal pertinence to language learning tasks. Indeed, Ellis (2003), in discussing task-based learning and teaching, borrows this dual notion and defines authenticity as follows:

A pedagogical task is situationally authentic if it matches a situation found in the real world and it is interactionally authentic if it results in patterns of interaction similar to those found in the real world. (Ellis 2003:339)

The present study also draws on this dual notion in its investigation into authenticity in ESP task design.

#### **2.7.4. Framework of Task Characteristics in Ascertaining Authenticity (Bachman and Palmer 1996; Douglas 2000)**

In the context of language testing, Bachman (1990) defines situational authenticity as *‘the degree of correspondence between a given test task to the features of a TLU task’*.

Bachman and Palmer (1996:44) define ‘target language use (TLU) domain’ as a set of specific language use tasks that the test taker is likely to encounter outside of the test itself, and to which we want our inferences about language ability to generalize.

To ascertain the degree of situational authenticity of test tasks, i.e. the correspondence between the test task and TLU task, Bachman and Palmer (1996) propose a framework of ‘task characteristics’. This framework provides a systematic way of matching tasks in terms of their setting, rubrics, input, the outcome the tasks are expected to give rise to, and the relationship between input and response.

Douglas (2000) further develops this framework in the analysis of specific purposes TLU situations and test task characteristics for ascertaining their correspondence, i.e. the authenticity of test tasks for LSP (Language for Specific Purposes). The framework identifies the task characteristics as characteristics of *rubric, input, the expected response, the interaction between input and response, and assessment*.

1. **rubric** – Rubric refers to the objective of the task, the procedure for responding, the task’s structure and format, the time available for completing it, and the evaluation criteria. Douglas notes that characteristics of the rubric are usually

implicit in a TLU situation, residing in the participant's background knowledge, but the rubric needs to be made explicit in a test task.

2. **input** – Input refers to the specific purpose materials that the language users process and respond to. In a test task, the input is the primary means by which features of context are established:

...features of the context and contextualisation cues are realized in language tests as task characteristics, and it is by means of information contained in the test input that test takers are able to orient themselves and engage an appropriate discourse domain.

(Douglas 2000:55)

(The term discourse domain, as defined by Douglas, will be explicated later.)

Input materials can be visual, or aural, or both, and may even be physical objects.

Douglas suggests that there are two aspects of the input: **prompt** and **input data**.

The term **prompt** refers to 'the contextual information necessary for the language user to engage in a communicative task: establishing the setting, participants, purpose, and other features of the situation' (Douglas 2000:55). The term **input data** refers to the visual or aural materials or the physical objects that the task participants must process in undertaking the task.

3. **the expected response** – The expected response refers to what the task designer intends the task taker to do in response to the situation they have attempted to set up by means of the rubric and input. The format of the expected response may be spoken or written or a physical action or some combination of these. A key aspect of the expected response is the nature of the language and specific purpose background knowledge that the task taker is expected to produce.
4. **the interaction between input and response** – Bachman and Palmer (1996) identify three dimensions of interaction between the input and response: **reactivity**, **scope**, and **directness**. **Reactivity** refers to the degree to which the input can be



modified as a result of the task taker's response, and thus ranges on a continuum between reciprocal and non-reciprocal. For example, in a conversation, the interaction between the input and response is often highly reciprocal, whereas when speaking into a telephone answering machine, when reading a text or listening to a taped message, the interaction between input and response is closer to the non-reciprocal end of the reactivity continuum. **Scope** refers to the amount or variety of input that the participant must process in order to complete the task, and thus varies on a continuum between narrow and broad. **Directness** refers to the degree to which the response depends on the input as opposed to the language user's own specific purpose background knowledge. The task may require a 'direct' response, where the response is highly dependent on the input, or an 'indirect' response, where the task taker relies more on specific purpose background knowledge.

5. **Assessment** – Assessment refers to the criteria that are used to evaluate task performance. As the tasks under investigation in the present study is of PBL nature and thus has an embedded assessment element (as explicated in 1.6), it necessitates the inclusion of *assessment* as a task characteristic. Douglas emphasizes the need to establish '*indigenous assessment criteria*', defined by Jacoby (1998) as referring to the criteria that are used by the participants in the TLU situation in assessing the communicative performance of apprentices in academic and vocational fields. Rather than relying on external rating scales or handbooks, professionals in TLU contexts 'typically call upon a rich inventory of tacitly known criteria in order to determine whether and to what extent some particular performance is competent or falls short of the mark (Jacoby and

McNamara 1999). These indigenous assessment criteria reflect what it means to know and use a language in the specific purpose TLU contexts.

The term *discourse domain* mentioned in point 2 above refers to ‘the internal interpretation of context’ (Douglas 2000:46). According to Douglas (2000:46), discourse domains are engaged when strategic competence, in assessing the communicative situation, recognizes cues in the setting that ‘allow the language user to identify the situation and his or her role in it’. In order to communicate, a language user has to know what’s going on, where he or she is, who he or she is communicating with, what his or her role is, what the topic is. Thus, Douglas emphasizes that ‘providing clear, appropriate, and sufficient cues to ensure the engagement of the intended discourse is of paramount importance’ in task design (Douglas 2000:46).

This framework provides a clear and comprehensive means for analyzing TLU tasks in terms of the characteristics that must be incorporated into the design of assessment/learning tasks.

The present study will borrow Douglas’ modified model of Bachman’s in the investigation of authenticity of the case PBL tasks. Although Bachman/Douglas discusses authenticity in language assessment/test tasks, their models are equally applicable to the design of language learning tasks. As Bachman puts it, ‘there must be a correspondence between the test task characteristics and the TLU task characteristics, so that the performance on the test tasks can be interpreted as evidence of communicative language ability with reference to the target situation.’ (Bachman 1991). In other words, authenticity can enhance the validity of a test task.

Authenticity can, in the same way, enhance the validity of a learning task by ensuring what the L2 learners are practicing in the classroom rehearses what is required of them in the TLU situation. As Bachman recognizes, his approach to characterizing the authenticity of a language task ‘can help us to better understand the nature of the tasks we set, either for students in instructional programs or for subjects in language learning research and which can thus aid in the design and development of tasks that are more useful for these purpose,’ and this is ‘what language testing has to offer to researchers and practitioners in other areas of applied linguistics, particularly in language learning and language teaching’ (Bachman 1991:672). Thus, here it is suggested that Bachman’s/Douglas’ model for ascertaining authenticity is equally applicable to language learning tasks as it is to language test tasks.

When we design a language task (either for assessment or learning purpose or both), we hypothesize that the learner’s language ability will be engaged by the task. Thus, in order to relate the abilities we believe are involved in the performance of the language (learning/assessment) task to the abilities involved in actual language use, we need a model of language ability. The following section discusses Bachman’s (1990) model of Communicative Language Ability (modified by Bachman and Palmer 1996 and Douglas’ model of Specific Purpose Language Ability (adapted from Bachman’s model).

#### **2.7.5. Communicative Language Ability (Bachman and Palmer 1996) and Specific Purpose Language Ability (Douglas 2000)**

Bachman (1991) defines language ability essentially in Widdowson’s (1983) terms as the capacity for using the knowledge of language in conjunction with the features of

the language use context to create and interpret meaning. This view of language ability is consistent with applied linguistics research that has increasingly come to view language as consisting of two components: language knowledge (sometimes referred to as competence) and cognitive processes (or procedures) that implement that knowledge in language use (e.g. Bialystok 1990; Spolsky 1989 Widdowson 1983). Bachman's model is also consistent with earlier work in communicative competence (such as Hymes 1971; Munby 1978; Canale and Swaine 1980; Canale 1983) in that 'it recognizes that the ability to use language communicatively involves both knowledge of or competence in the language, and the capacity for implementing, or using this competence' (Bachman 1990:81). The formulations of communicative competence provide a much more comprehensive description of the knowledge required to use language than did the earlier models (such as linguistic competence as originally defined by Chomsky (1965)), in that they include 'in addition to the knowledge of grammatical rules, the knowledge of how language is used to achieve particular communicative goals, and the recognition of language use as a dynamic process' (Bachman 1990).

Bachman's model of communicative language ability (CLA) has mainly evolved from that of Canale & Swale 1980). Within Bachman's model, communicative language ability is composed of two components: language knowledge and strategic competence. Language knowledge includes two broad areas: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. Strategic competence consists of the metacognitive processes of assessment, goal setting, and planning.

## Language Knowledge

- a. Organisational Knowledge  
(how utterances or sentences and texts are organized)
  - i. Grammatical Knowledge  
(how individual utterances or sentence are organized)
    - knowledge of vocabulary
    - knowledge of morphology
    - knowledge of syntax
    - knowledge of phonology/graphology
  - ii. Textual Knowledge  
(how utterances or sentences are organized to form texts)
    - Knowledge of cohesion
    - Knowledge of rhetorical or conversational organisation
- b. Pragmatic Knowledge  
(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goals of the language users and to the features of the language use setting)
  - i. Illocutionary/functional Knowledge  
(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to the communicative goals of the language users)
    - knowledge of ideational functions
    - knowledge of manipulative functions
    - knowledge of heuristic functions
    - knowledge of imaginative functions
  - ii. Sociolinguistic Knowledge  
(how utterances or sentences and texts are related to features of the language use setting)
    - knowledge of dialects/varieties
    - knowledge of registers
    - knowledge of natural or idiomatic expressions
    - knowledge of cultural references and figures of speech

## Strategic Competence

### Assessment

(taking stock of what one needs, what one has to work with, and how well one has done)

1. assessing the characteristics of the task and engaging an appropriate discourse domain
2. assessing one's own knowledge components – language knowledge and topical knowledge (schemata) – to see if relevant areas are available for successfully completing the task
3. assessing the correctness or appropriateness of the response to the task – the extent to which the communicative goal has been achieved

### Goal-setting

(deciding what one is going to do)

1. identifying and selecting one or more communicative goal that one wants to achieve
2. deciding whether or not to attempt to achieve the communicative goal selected

### Planning

(deciding how to use what one has)

1. selecting elements from the areas of topical knowledge and language knowledge for accomplishing the communicative goal
2. formulating a plan for implementing these elements in response to the task

(adapted from Bachman and Palmer 1996:68)

As Bachman (1991: 684) noted, the metacognitive strategies and areas of language knowledge interact with each other simultaneously. There is no particular ordering or sequencing in the way they operate. Moreover, the strategies and areas of language knowledge are integrated and interactive - all the components of CLA, although distinct from each other, interact with each other and are fully integrated in any instance of language use.

While planning strategies involves deciding what aspects of background/topical knowledge and language knowledge will be needed to accomplish the intended communicative goal, it also has to be noted that, as Douglas (2000:81) points out, the 'planning' process under strategic competence may also take account of the possibility that certain aspects of topical knowledge or language knowledge necessary for completing the task are not available, and so a plan must deal with the deficiency, by means of communicative strategies such as avoidance, paraphrase, translation, appeal for assistance, or the use of gestures (Tarone 1977).

Douglas (2000), in presenting a construct of 'Specific Purpose Language Ability', combines Bachman and Palmer's formulation of CLA with the component of *specific background knowledge*. His construct of 'Specific Purpose Language Ability' emphasizes the interaction of specific background knowledge with language knowledge to produce a communicative performance in specific purpose contexts. Douglas (2000: 39) posits that a specific purposes language task should be 'demonstrably related to the target language situation, and, therefore, relevant background knowledge will necessarily be called upon in the interpretation of the communicative situation and in the formulation of a response'.

## 2.8. The Classroom as an Authentic Context (Breen 1985)

In discussing authenticity in the language classroom, Breen (1985:61) points out that the teacher is concerned with four types of authenticity:

- a. Authenticity of the texts which may be used as input data for the learners.
- b. Authenticity of the learner's own interpretations of such texts.
- c. Authenticity of the tasks conducive to language learning.
- d. Authenticity of the actual social situation of the language classroom.

From the claim that these four demands for authenticity are in continual interrelationship with one another during any language lesson, Breen (1985) deduces three pedagogical proposals. The first pedagogical proposal is that, within the classroom context, authentic texts for language learning are any source of data which will serve as a means to help the learner to develop an authentic interpretation, i.e. any text that can help the learner to 'discover those conventions of communication in the target language which will enable him or her to gradually come to interpret meaning within the text in ways likely to be shared with fluent users of the language' (Breen 1985:68). The second proposal is that the most authentic language learning tasks are those which require the learner to undertake communication and meta-communication, with the assumption that genuine communication during learning and meta-communication about learning and about the language are likely to help the learner to learn. (In discussing task authenticity, Breen makes a distinction between two types of task: authentic *communication* task and authentic *language learning* task. An authentic *communication* task 'expects an authentic communicative response or authentic language-using behaviour on the part of the

learner' (Breen 1985:65). An authentic *language learning* task may focus the learner's attention to the form or requires the learners to meta-communicate about the language being learnt. Breen posits that such 'apparently inauthentic language-using behaviour might be authentic learning behaviour'.) The third proposal concerns the 'potential authenticity of the classroom *as a classroom*' (Breen 1985:68) – the authentic role of the language classroom is 'the provision of those conditions in which the participants can publicly share the problems, achievements and overall process of learning a language together as a socially motivated and socially sustained activity' (Breen 1985:68). Thus, the classroom is an authentically *social* context where people meet and communicate for the explicit purpose of language learning – learning is the main psychological and social function of a classroom.

What Breen terms 'authentic communication tasks' correspond to the authentic tasks we have discussed all along, where the learners are engaged in communication which rehearses real-world target tasks. What Breen terms 'authentic language learning tasks' focus on the classroom as an authentically social context where the participants can share publicly the process of learning a language together as a socially motivated and sustained activity. Breen's argument about the classroom as an authentic context has added a further dimension to the notion of authenticity previously discussed. This dimension of authenticity, namely the second language classroom as an authentic context, will be addressed in the data analysis of the present study.



## **2.9. The Role of Genuineness in the Design of Authentic Tasks**

### **2.9.1. Incorporation of Genuineness in Task Design: Use of Authentic Texts for Second Language Learning**

While a distinction is made between genuineness and authenticity as discussed in the above sections, it is important to note the complementariness of the two in the context of task design. Context of situation serves to authenticate the language tasks for the learners (as discussed in 2.5.1). It is believed that this authenticity can be enhanced by the incorporation of genuine materials as input data for the language learning tasks. As Weskamp (1977, cited in Amor 2002:146) suggests:

[genuine materials] give learners a genuine feel for the language and situations, provide language material that is relevant to life, include incidental information about a culture that is generally filtered out of specially written materials, and provide real information that will be of use in real-life situations.

Mishan's (2005:18) suggests that the following should be considered when incorporating genuine texts in task design:

- Provenance and authorship of the text
- Original communicative and socio-cultural purpose of the text
- Original context (e.g. its source, socio-cultural context) of the text
- Learning activity engendered by the text
- Learner's perceptions of and attitudes to the text and the activity pertaining to it.

(Mishan 2005:18)

Thus, it is believed that genuine texts should be incorporated into the design of tasks in order that the learners are exposed to and are given a genuine feel for 'real language'. In fact, the advantages of using authentic texts (both printed and audio)

have been occasionally discussed in literature. Nuttall (1996:172) states that ‘authentic texts can be motivating because they are proof that language is needed for real-life purpose by real people.’ Galien and Bowcher (1994:111) mention that ‘these materials provide great potential for the second language learner in that they are an exposure to realia – an exposure to language outside the language classroom’. Peacock’s study (1997) suggests that authentic materials have positive effects on ‘increasing students’ level of on-task behaviour, concentration and involvement in the target activity more than artificial materials’. Tomlinson (2003) states that ‘meaningful engagement with authentic texts is a pre-requisite for the development of communicative and strategic competence’. Research has shown that authentic texts provides ‘the essential predications of language proficiency: linguistically authentic comprehensible input presented in a fashion which allows students to practise decoding message systems rather than individual words’ (Swaffar 1985:17), and make ‘a vital connection between the classroom and the real world’ (McGrarry 1995:3).

Proponents of authentic language models argue that it is crucial to introduce learners to the fundamental characteristics of authentic real-life examples of both spoken and written discourse. They have demonstrated that many contrived scripted textbook language models and dialogues are unnatural and inappropriate for communicative language teaching because they do not adequately prepare students for the types of pronunciation (Brazil et al 1980, Levis 1999), language structures, grammar, idioms, vocabulary and conversational rules and strategies that they will have to use in the real world (Cathcart 1999, Bardovi-Harlig et al 1991, Yule et al 1992). They further argue that the scripted unauthentic language found in many textbooks does not lend itself to communicative practice but instead can lead to an oversimplification of language and

unrealistic real-life situations. As Nunan (1994) suggests, non-authentic materials may act against the long term goals of learners by misrepresenting the language, since non-authentic materials may be models of language which do not reflect language used outside the classroom. Brosnan et al (1984: 2-3) offer the following justifications for the use of genuine materials for language learning:

- The language is natural. By simplifying language or altering it for teaching purposes (limiting structures, controlling vocabulary, etc.) we may risk making the reading task more difficult. We may, in fact, be removing clues to meaning.
- It offers students the chance to deal with small amounts of print which, at the same time, contain complete, meaningful messages.
- It provides students with the opportunity to make use of non-linguistic clues (layout, pictures, colours, symbols, the physical setting in which it occurs) and so more easily to arrive at meaning from the printed word.
- Adults need to be able to see the immediate relevance of what they do in the classroom to what they need to do outside it, and real-life reading materials treated realistically make the connection obvious.

(Brosnan et al 1984 in Nunan 2004: 51)

On the other hand, authentic texts enhance motivation especially in LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) situations where

learners need the specialised language for professional advancement, authentic texts might be more motivating because learners recognize them as pertaining to the professional community to which they aspire. (Mishan 2005:26)

Mishan highlights that one of the strongest justification for using authentic texts with learners comes from how language input is processed, and authentic texts are particularly suited to the deployment of the more holistic mode of language processing: schematic top-down processing:

Elementary level learners are particularly reliant on top-down processing. Having little syntactic or lexical knowledge of the target language, they deploy stored schematic knowledge, that is, they rely heavily on context and on their own knowledge of the subject matter, in their attempts at comprehension. The operation of such processes is particularly striking in low level students of LSP, whose expertise in their subject area enables them to cope with TL texts in their specialism which lay native speakers might have difficulty with. It may be inferred that the best type of texts for the encouragement of top-down processing are – because they are related to a real culture or topical context or subject area of which learners can be expected to have some knowledge – authentic texts. (Mishan 2005:40)

This argument is particularly relevant to the present study which is set within an ESP context, where learners' background knowledge in their specialism provides a 'window' into the target language texts on that subject. As Devitt (2002) points out, 'Knowledge of the subject presupposes a knowledge of the discourse of that subject' and thus 'equipped learners can often cope with texts well above their estimated proficiency level' (Crandall 1995:87).

Compared with the advantages, less has been written against the use of genuine texts. Gallien (1998) points out that the strongest objection to using genuine texts is that these materials are linguistically and culturally too difficult and often too long particularly for beginner learners and are likely to raise the anxiety level of the learners. As Guariento and Morley (2001:348) points out, genuine texts can be 'frustrating, confusing and de-motivating' because they are too difficult for lower level learners to comprehend. Moreover, the variety of such materials is thought to be useful for learning a language for specific purposes, but not helpful for general language learning because they are too particular and culturally specific (Gallien 1998). Nevertheless, it is suggested that these possible disadvantages such as the difficulty and the length of the texts are not so much a problem for language learners

if the tasks are properly graded for learners of different levels (Guariento and Morley 2001). Thus, ‘the question....is not whether authentic texts should be used, but when and how they should be introduced’ (Guariento and Morley 2001:348).

### **2.9.2. Genuineness along a Continuum**

Brown and Menasche (1993) (cited in Nunan 2004: 51), argue that the genuine (authentic)/ non-genuine (unauthentic) distinction of texts is an oversimplification, and that input data to tasks can be placed on a continuum from ‘genuinely authentic’ to ‘non-authentic’. They suggest that there are at least five distinguishable points along this continuum:

- **Genuine:** created only for the realm of real life, not for the classroom, but used in the classroom for language teaching.
- **Altered:** While there is no meaning change, the original has been altered in other ways (for example, the insertion of glosses, visual resetting, the addition of visuals, etc.)
- **Adapted:** Although created for real life, vocabulary and grammatical structures are changed to simplify the text.
- **Simulated:** Although specially written by the author for purposes of language teaching the author tries to make it look authentic by using characteristics of genuine texts.
- **Minimal/incidental:** Created for the classroom with no attempt to make the material appear genuine.

This text authenticity continuum serves as a useful tool for analyzing the input data for the PBL tasks in the present study.

### **2.9.3. Procedural Authenticity**

Nunan (2004: 54) argues that *procedural authenticity* is as important an issue to discuss as authenticity of input data. ‘Procedures’ specifies what learners will actually do with the input data that forms the point of departure for the learning task. Candlin and Edelhoff (1982) (cited in Nunan 2004:53) point out that, ‘the authenticity issue involves much more than simply selecting texts from outside the arena of language teaching, and that the processes brought to bear by learners on the data should also be authentic’. Nunan suggests that tasks should be analysed in terms of the extent to which they require learners to rehearse, in class, the sorts of communicative behaviours they might be expected to use in real world communicative interactions outside the classroom, and thus the purpose of reading (the input data of the task) should be the same in class as they are in real life. Those procedures that attempt to replicate and rehearse in the classroom the kinds of things that learners need to do outside of the classroom have *procedural authenticity*. Thus, for example, a task requiring the learner to read through a series of classified advertisements of cars and evaluate available options to select a suitable model based on price and features has procedural authenticity (since this is exactly the procedures one has to follow in reading car ads when one wants to buy a car in real life), while a task requiring the learners to read through these ads and answer some reading comprehension questions lacks procedural authenticity.

## **2.9.4. ICT (Information and Communications Technology) as a Source of Genuineness to be Incorporated into the Design of Authentic Tasks**

### *2.9.4.1. Use of ICT in Language Learning*

Mishan (2005) highlights the role of ICT in the discussion of authenticity in language learning in that it opens up ‘unlimited access to authentic texts from the target culture, thereby impelling the issue of authenticity of texts and interaction to the fore in language pedagogy’:

As ICT becomes increasingly part of our daily reality, the dichotomy between ‘real life’ and ‘the classroom’ which theorists struggled to resolve during the authenticity debate (Hughes 1981, Taylor 1994, Widdowson 2001), is becoming something of an anachronism. Given access to the technology, today’s learners can reach out and touch ‘real life’ at the tap of the keyboard. ‘The physical properties of the electronic medium and the students’ engagement with it’ (Kramsch et al 2000:78) are thus causing a paradigm shift in our conception of authenticity. (Mishan 2005:19)

In discussing the use of ICT in language learning, Mishan makes a distinction between exploiting the Web as a resource and as a medium. As a resource, the Web offers three main categories of genuine materials:

- a. materials not written for the Internet which have been transferred to it either directly or in abridged form, e.g. poetry, song lyrics, books, film scripts, journal articles.
- b. Materials not written originally for the Internet but adapted for it, e.g. newspaper and journals, many of which publish adapted online versions in conjunction with their hard copy versions.

- c. Materials written specially for the Internet, such as the materials found on personal, institutional, commercial and informative sites e.g. government websites, personal websites of celebrities, financial and tourist information.

As a medium, the Web offers sites written specially for language learning, offering language practice via interactive exercises and activities. (Mishan 2005:242)

Mishan also recognizes the significance of ICT for language teachers/materials writers:

As far as the teacher/[material writer] is concerned, this resource aspect (the Web) has revolutionized language learning materials preparation. Teachers/[materials writers] no longer need to hunt out authentic texts from libraries and bookstores but can download texts and write materials based on them on their own PCs ... Tasks can be set for learners to work with the chosen texts online, i.e. using texts and materials printed out by the teacher, or, alternatively, online. (Mishan 2005:243)

Another aspect of the Web that makes it a useful resource for language learning is its currency, as Mishan notes:

The currency of the Web quite simply outranks that of any other medium. The up-to-date-ness of the information it carries and of the language it uses, its capacity to cater minutely to personal needs and interests thanks to powerful search capabilities, and not least, the transferable electronic literacy skills required to use it, all give the Web an immediacy and relevance that galvanizes students using it in their language learning. (Mishan 2005: 245)

The discussion on ICT as a useful resource for language learning is of particular relevance to the present study of task design for PBL (project-based learning), in that a substantial part of the input data for the tasks come from the internet. The present study will investigate how this kind of genuineness contributes to both the situational and interactional authenticity of the PBL tasks.



#### *2.9.4.2. Finder Authenticity, Learner Autonomy and the Use of ICT*

The use of the Web for language learning has significant implication on learner autonomy and is a version of what van Lier (1996) calls '**finder authenticity**', which is present in activities where learners go out and find texts and bring them to the classroom. These may be texts found at home, advertisements in magazines, or texts from the Internet. Van Lier comments that this is an important aspect of autonomy, since learners determine which texts are to be used instead of just reading the texts in the textbook or texts assigned by the teacher.

Mishan (2005) notes the effect of ICT on learner autonomy:

The radical effect of ICT has stimulated an overt shifting of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the learner and thereby reaffirming the long association between technology and autonomy. (Mishan 2005:241)

In connection with this, Shetzer and Warschaner (2001) identify a new repertoire of skills associated with the use of ICT in language learning known as 'electronic literacy' – 'the ability to find, select, organize and make use of information, as well as to read and write in the new medium'.

Mishan highlights the degree of learner autonomy that working online bestows:

If [learners] are to work effectively on the [Web], they need as a basis an awareness of the principles of learning autonomously and of their role and responsibility in this ... Among the responsibilities most pertinent to the use of the Web is that of critically reflecting on choices and decisions. This requirement can be seen to coincide with what is needed for electronic literacy, especially learning to be selective, i.e. how to evaluate the quality and

relevance of information found on the Web and to exclude the 'dross'. As Volger (2001) points out, selectivity is not a skill learners need in the traditional classroom where input is generally selected by the teacher. (Mishan 2005:243)

The discussion in this section on 'finder authenticity' in relation to the use of ICT in language learning is pertinent to the present study, in that most of the input texts for the project tasks under investigation are to be determined by the learners themselves (and learners usually search for the input texts on the internet) instead of being assigned by the teacher. The review here forms the ground work on which to build the analysis of the incorporation of ICT into the design of authentic tasks for PBL in the present study.

## **2.10. Simulations as a Form of Authenticity**

### **2.10.1. Situational Authenticity in the form of Simulation in Task Design**

As discussed in 2.5.3, Douglas (2001:88) refers to the simulation of real-life texts or tasks as a form of situational authenticity. Thus, situational authenticity, to some extent, can be realized by means of what Jones (1987) terms 'communication simulations', where simulation can be defined as 'an operational representation of the central features of reality,' (Guetzkow, in Thatcher and Robinson 1986:15) where 'participants take on roles which are representations of roles in the real world' (Taylor and Walford 1978:7). In terms of language learning, communication simulations 'allow participants to develop skills, and to explore the effectiveness of linguistic/communicative strategies in real-world scenarios' (Bambrough 1994:19). Sharrock and Watsons (1987:36) also see simulations as 'one of several ways ... of

bringing the classroom into close contact and correspondence with the practical realities of the world outside', which echoes Bachman's notion of situational authenticity discussed in 2.7.3.

Jones (1987:23) suggests a skeleton on which to hang the design process of a simulation, which he sees as 'a creative process fleshing out, in almost inspirational fashion, the meat around the four bones':

- a. What is the [problem]? [subject matter]
- b. Who are the participants? [participants]
- c. What do they have to do? [tasks]
- d. What do they do it with? [input materials]

This 'skeleton' of simulations largely corresponds to the components of Halliday's (1978) context of situation, which make up the 'conceptual framework for representing the social context as the semiotic environment in which people exchange meanings' (Halliday 1978:11), as discussed in section 2.7.2.

### **2.10.2. Intrinsic Vs Extrinsic Documentation in Simulations**

Bambrough (1994), in discussing the design of simulations, puts forth two terms: **intrinsic** and **extrinsic** documents.

Simulations need documentation to inform the participants of key information including their roles, other roles (where appropriate), role functions, the scenario, and the central and other problems ... including information relevant to accomplish their task. (Bambrough 1994:30)

Intrinsic documents are presented within the reality of the world of the simulation to achieve ‘social and communicative reality’. An example of intrinsic document taken from Bambrough (1994) is as follows:

Uncle's Farm  
Date: End of Year 10

To Yellow Farm  
Brother Yellows

Just a note about the ginning this year. Don't forget to record how many times we have done ginning for those Reds. .... Every time we do one gin, keep a record of which Red it was for in this book, as we agreed....

Your brother

Bambrough (1994:30) comments that ‘[his] own preference is for intrinsic documents’ as ‘social or communicative reality is important to the simulation’.

On the other hand, extrinsic documents

interfere with the reality. They are usually given to participants during the briefing before the action takes place. They create outside reference points, since participants refer to the external (classroom) world of the pre-simulation briefing during the action to define their roles and purpose from information they were given. They are also extracted from their simulation world by the extrinsic language on the documents. Such documentation detracts from the role, function and environment of the simulation.

An example of extrinsic document taken from Bambrough is as follows:

You are a landowner. Your job is to gin nottocks. You must write down in a book every time you do a gin ...

The distinction between ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ documentation is a helpful one in analyzing task design as far as situational authenticity is concerned, as well as the how ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ documents may contribute to interactional authenticity . In fact, this distinction can be applied not only to documentation which provides the learners with instructions about the activities, it can also be applied to all input materials and even to roles of the learners. Thus this distinction between ‘intrinsicity’ and ‘extrinsicity’ offers part of a conceptual framework for the exploration of the authenticity in task design in the present study.

## **2.11. Conclusion**

The review of literature in this Chapter has provided insights into the complexity of what is meant by *authenticity*, which in turn informs the formulation of the specific research questions for the present study. Against the backdrop of the TBL paradigm, this Chapter has revisited the notion of *authenticity* by examining its various dimensions, from the traditional focus on authentic texts to the recent emphasis on task and learner authenticity. In the light of Bachman’s (1990) duality view of the notion – that for a task to be authentic, it has to achieve both situational authenticity as well as interactional authenticity – the main research question set out in Chapter 1 is fractured into two specific research questions as follows:

### **Main research question:**

- To what extent is authenticity achieved in the tasks designed for the ESP project-based learning (PBL) module under investigation? What is the nature of the authenticity that is manifested? What implications does this authenticity have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?

### **Specific Research Questions:**

1. To what extent are the PBL tasks *situationally authentic*? How is *situational authenticity* realized in the design features of the PBL tasks?
2. In what way in practice do the task characteristics of the PBL tasks engage the learners? To what extent is the learners' interaction with the PBL tasks authentic? What is the nature of the *interactional authenticity* manifested, and what implications does it have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?

Douglas' (2000) model of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) task characteristics as discussed in 2.5.4, in conjunction with Halliday's (1978) notion of Context of Situation within the Systemic Functional Linguistic model as discussed in 2.7.2, have constituted the conceptual framework for the investigation of authenticity in ESP task design in the present study.

## **Chapter Three: Research Design**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the epistemological issues concerning qualitative research and explains how the present study is located within the interpretive paradigm. It then continues with an explication of the research design, including the selection of the case and sampling of subjects, the research methods for the present study (namely, documentary and discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and unstructured observations), ways of achieving trustworthiness for the study, the ethical issues concerned, as well as the data analysis methods.

### **3.2. Why Qualitative Study: Epistemological Issues**

#### **3.2.1. Definition of Research**

Johnson (1994) defines research as ‘a focused and systematic enquiry that goes beyond generally available knowledge to acquire specialized and detailed information, providing a basis for analysis and elucidating comments on the topic of enquiry.’ Thus, the purpose of research is to generate knowledge.

Several key words from this definition shed light on the essential characteristics of any research: *focused, systematic, beyond generally available knowledge, basis for analysis and elucidating comments*. The researcher sets out to gain knowledge. This

naturally leads to the following questions: *But how do we gain knowledge? What philosophical basis underpins the way we go about 'gaining knowledge'?* This calls for a discussion on what underlies our research position.

To address the question *What philosophical basis underpins the way we go about 'gaining knowledge'?* is to look into our paradigmatic position.

### **3.2.2. Nature of Paradigms**

A paradigm can be defined as 'the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques shared by members of a given scientific community.' (Kuhn 1970:75) Usher (1996) defines paradigms as 'frameworks that function as maps or guides for scientific communities, determining important problems or issues for its members to address and defining acceptable theories or explanations, methods and techniques to solve defined problems'. A paradigm represents a set of beliefs about the world – a world view 'that defines for its holder the nature of the 'world', the individual's place within it and the range of possible relationships to the world.' (Guba and Lincoln 1998:200)

Thus, a paradigm forms the philosophical basis which underpins the inquirer's research approach and methodological framework to the investigation of the world.

Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggest that a paradigm can be identified with reference to three fundamental questions:

- The ontological question: What do we believe exists? – the fundamental beliefs that someone holds about the nature of the world



- The epistemological question: What is the nature of knowledge? What proof do we accept about what constitutes reliable and valid knowledge?
- The methodological question: How can we go about the task of gaining reliable and valid knowledge?

In fact, any paradigmatic position can be represented in terms of these three intimately related aspects. Basic ontological and epistemological assumptions held by the researcher will shape the kind of methodology which the researcher will adopt in order to ‘gain knowledge’.

The two main epistemological traditions underlying research methods are: positivism and interpretivism. These are distinct paradigms based on different views of the nature of the world and thus different views of research.

### **3.2.3. Positivism**

Within the positivist paradigm, quantitative methods are likely to be used, which is based on the use of the scientific method, and seeks to ‘discover’ general laws explaining the ‘objective reality’ out there. The research usually proceeds from an existing theory from which hypotheses are formulated and tested. The key belief is that the researched world exists externally and aspects of it can be measured through objective methods. ‘Knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observations of this external reality.’ (Easterby-Smith et al 1994:77). Within this paradigm, a social reality exists and it is possible through empirical research to establish sets of social ‘facts’. There will be an attempt to identify causality. Research aims at ‘objectivity,

standard procedures and replicability' (Johnson 1994:7). This position holds that all objects in the world exist apart from any consciousness and that they are essentially just as they are, existing independently of the human mind.

#### **3.2.4. Review of the Positivist Paradigm**

It is argued that a distinction should be noted between the subject matter of natural science and that of social science. The social world is a meaningful world where actors constantly construct and reconstruct the realities of their own lives. Thus, to what extent are empirical scientific methods underpinned by positivist assumptions applicable?

Critics have argued against the sole reliance upon objective, quantifiable measures, and quantitative data within positivism for social phenomena without paying attention to the interpretations and meanings individuals assign to events and situations in a qualitative way. e.g., the use of questionnaires in surveys may not be flexible enough to enable respondents' true feelings or attitudes to come through. Instead, questions may structure responses too much or they may lead the respondent into answering in a particular way instead of capturing the authentic experience of the actor. No matter how exact measurement may be, it can never give an experience of life, for life cannot be weighed or measured on a physical scale. The essence of life can only be known by its 'inner' experience, and understanding of individual's interpretation of the world around them must come from the inside, not the outside. (Cohen and Manion 1994)

On the other hand, in searching for quantifiable data, researchers have neglected the qualitative context out of which all 'data' emerge. There is a need for a detailed appreciation of both the immediate interactional circumstances of events in the social world and the cultural context out of which they grow.

### **3.2.5. Interpretivism**

In the light of the review of positivism in the previous section, it is recognized that the way of investigating the social world must be very different from the way of investigating the natural world. The interpretive paradigm is based on the idea that there is no objective truth, and that:

All human life is experienced and indeed constructed from a subjective point of view, and that social research should seek to elicit the 'meaning' of events and phenomena from the point of view of participants. (Johnson 1994:7)

Within the interpretive paradigm, the stress is on the subjective reality for individuals.

The principal concern is with an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself.  
(Cohen and Manion 1994:8)

This position holds that objects do not exist apart from consciousness, that the so-called 'external world' is not external at all but a mental construct.

It is the subjective experience of the individual that is important and that it is individual perception that bestows meaning, rather than there being any external objective meaning. "The world and 'reality' are socially constructed and given

meaning by people” (Easterly-Smith, et al 1994:78), ‘and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices.’ (Usher 1996:18)

Therefore, the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated. Social science is thus seen as a subjective rather than objective undertaking, as a means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts. Within this paradigm, qualitative methods are employed to explore the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. The central endeavour of research within the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Efforts are made (using qualitative methods) to get inside the person and to understand from within. Theory is emergent and arises from particular situations. Theory should not precede research but follows it. (As opposed to the positivist paradigm where quantitative research starts with an existing theory, and hypotheses are formulated from the theory and are tested.)

### **3.2.6. Review of the Interpretive Paradigm**

The previous sections have highlighted the differences between the two epistemological paradigms and provided a rationale for the use of qualitative methods for research of the social world. However, the interpretive paradigm is not without its criticisms. Some has questioned if the interpretive methodology is really scientific:

Some argued that advocates of [the interpretive] stance have gone too far in abandoning scientific procedures of verification and in giving up hope of discovering useful generalizations about behaviour. (Cohen and Manion 1994)

Indeed, some criticisms are directed at the interpretive tradition's being situation-specific, small scale, and unable to generalize (Dixon 1973).

Nevertheless, Hitchcock and Hughes (1993) argue that 'qualitative research in schools and classrooms is not concerned with the production of generalizations. Instead, these researchers are more concerned to produce adequate descriptions of educational contexts and analyses which highlight and explain the social processes that shape and influence teaching and learning in schools.' The comments Richards (2003) makes well supplement the rebuttal. He argues that the specificity (as opposed to generalisability) of qualitative research is in itself a strength rather than weakness:

... **the power of the particular case** to resonate across cultures should not be underestimated.

High quality, detailed cases can contribute to what Stenhouse, referring to schools, has described as the archaeology of the future—it is an exciting possibility that current interest in the careful study of cases might produce a national archive of such case records. If we had such an archive now, we could understand in much greater intimacy and depth the recent history of our schools. (Stenhouse 1980:5 in Richards 2003:21)

Nevertheless, as Hitchcock and Hughes (1993) remark, if being scientific means being systematic, rigorous, and analytical, then the interpretive tradition can meet the criteria of being scientific. It's just that interpretivists tend to approach research design, data collection, and analysis in a fundamentally different way from the positivists due to their fundamentally different philosophical underpinnings.

### 3.3. The Present Study Located within the Interpretive Paradigm

There are a number of key pointers which clearly identify the present study as a qualitative study, located within the interpretive paradigm. The study sets out to ‘explore’, ‘describe’ and ‘explain’ the kind of authenticity that is manifested in the tasks designed for an actual ESP course. It is an exploration of how authenticity is manifested as a dual notion in the PBL tasks in their design and as experienced by the learners. The fact that this study is essentially explorative – seeking understanding and meanings – indicates that it is within an interpretive paradigm. Table 3.1 shows how the present study is located within the interpretive paradigm in response to the three fundamental questions.

**Table 3.1: How the present study is located within the interpretive paradigm**

<b>The Ontological question: What do we believe exists?</b>	
➤	‘Authenticity’ is designed into the ESP tasks and ‘constructed’ through the interaction of the learner with the designed tasks.
➤	Thus, ‘reality’ (i.e. the world of ‘authenticity’) is created and constructed (and it is this ‘reality’ that the research sets out to explore).
<b>The Epistemological question: What is the nature of knowledge?</b>	
➤	Knowledge is to be gained through an exploration of how authenticity is constructed and experienced.
➤	The task of the researcher is to understand the ways in which the ESP tasks create the situational authenticity for the learners and how learners construct and experience the interactional authenticity through engaging with the designed

tasks.
<b>The Methodological question: How is knowledge gained?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Authenticity in task design is a product of construction and experience.</li> <li>➤ The researcher tries to understand this reality, i.e. the constructed authenticity by becoming personally involved.</li> <li>➤ Qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis, discourse analysis, and unstructured observation will be used to understand and capture the quality of this ‘authenticity’ from the point of view of the language learners.</li> <li>➤ The diverse opinions and multiple perspectives in focus group interviews, the interactions between the researcher and the respondents and the interactions among the participants themselves are to add depth and dimension to the knowledge gained.</li> <li>➤ Themes emerge from the qualitative data collected through semi-structured group interviews, documentary analysis and unstructured observations.</li> </ul>

### **3.4. Research Design**

#### **3.4.1. The Use of Case Study Approach for the Present Study**

Cohen et al (2000) define case study as an observation of characteristics of an individual unit, which can be a person, a class, or a community. Stake (1995) views case study as the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case such as a

student, or a classroom in order to understand its activities in context. Yin (1993) describes case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. Pole and Morrison (2003:3) state that case study employs qualitative research methods which aim to provide detailed descriptions leading to the identification of concepts and theories, and that the purposes of case studies are to produce detailed descriptions of a phenomenon, to develop possible explanation, and to evaluate the phenomenon. The present study can be regarded as the investigation into an individual unit, i.e. the study of a particular ESP module offered in the context of a vocational institution in Hong Kong with regard to investigating the nature of the authenticity manifested in the PBL task series of this module, with the aim of considering the phenomenon in its context, yielding a holistic perspective.

#### **3.4.2. Research Methods and Data Collection**

The epistemological issues discussed in section 3.2 underpin and thus guide the research methodology for the present study. To address the research questions formulated for the study, documentary analysis, observations, discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted.

Following the purpose of the research as discussed in Chapter 1, the main research question is formulated as follows. The main research question, together with the specific research questions, and the research methods to be outlined in this Chapter reflect the complexity of the notion of authenticity as discussed in the literature review



in chapter 2. They aim to generate data that will provide information that represents the complexity of what is meant by ‘authenticity’ according to the discussion in the literature review and will have implications for how the notion of authenticity can be used for practical task design for ESP and ELT in general.

### **Main Research Question:**

- To what extent is authenticity achieved in the tasks designed for the ESP project-based learning (PBL) module under investigation? What is the nature of the authenticity that is manifested? What implications does this authenticity have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?

In the light of the discussion in the literature review in Chapter 2 that authenticity is a dual notion (that for a task to be authentic, it has to achieve both *situational* as well as *interactional* authenticity), the main research question is fractured into two specific research questions:

### **Specific Research Questions:**

1. To what extent are the PBL tasks *situationally authentic*? How is *situational authenticity* realized in the design features of the PBL tasks?
2. In what way in practice do the task characteristics of the PBL tasks engage the learners? To what extent is the learners’ interaction with the PBL tasks

authentic? What is the nature of the *interactional authenticity* manifested, and what implication does it have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?

### **Research Methods and Their Rationale:**

To address the first specific research question concerning *situational authenticity*, two research methods were employed: **a.** documentary analysis of the Project Brief (i.e. an analysis of the task design of the PBL task series); **b.** semi-structured interviews with practitioners in the specific purposes TLU domain/ subject specialist informants (Douglas 2000: 97)

Within Bachman's (1990) and Douglas's (2000) model, situational authenticity refers to the degree of correspondence between task characteristics of the PBL task and the TLU task. Thus,

- a. First, **documentary analysis of the Project Brief** (the series of tasks designed for the PBL module under investigation) using Douglas's 'framework of LSP task characteristics' (2000) (as adapted from Bachman and Palmer (1996)) discussed in 2.5.4, in conjunction with Halliday's (1978) conceptual framework of **context of situation** (as discussed in 2.5.2), was conducted to arrive at a characterization of the situational authenticity of the PBL tasks – i.e. the correspondence between the task characteristics of the PBL tasks and those of the TLU tasks, and to what extent and how the situational features of the TLU (target language use) tasks come to be incorporated into the design of the PBL tasks.
- b. Second, **a semi-structured interview was conducted individually with two practitioners in the fashion industry** (one fashion designer and one fashion

product developer) with a view to investigating the characteristics of the TLU (target language use) situation and thus to verify the extent to which the situational features of the PBL tasks correspond to those of the TLU tasks. This is a method proposed by Douglas (2000: 97) as *subject specialist informants procedure*, which involves the use of subject specialists in the analysis of specific purpose target language use situations. In the interviews for the present study, the fashion practitioners were asked to review the PBL tasks under investigation. This method is also what Wu and Stansfield (2001:198) propose as ‘*verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field*’. Wu and Stansfield propose that verification comments and critique by task performers in the field and TLU specialists are of vital importance in ensuring authenticity. Thus, in the present study, ‘*verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field*’ was used to investigate the characteristics of the TLU (target language use) situation and to ascertain the extent of correspondence between the PBL tasks and TLU tasks, and thus the situational authenticity of the PBL task series. Since the informants here are specialists in the fashion industry but not language experts, they were not directly asked to comment on the linguistic features of the PBL tasks in relation to the TLU tasks. Instead, they were prompted to comment on the task characteristics and the contextual features of the situation set up in the project brief. The informants’ advice and views on the communication needs of the task performers in the workplace were solicited to provide insights into the role and functions of language in the specific purposes field (i.e. TLU context) in relation to the PBL tasks. The guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews were drawn up after the analysis of the design features of the PBL task series in the Project Brief. (These guiding questions can be found in the interview schedule given in

Appendix II). Halliday's (1978) conceptual framework of *context of situation* (as discussed in 2.7.2) will be utilized here to characterise the TLU context.

The analysis of the data collected from these two research methods helps to answer the first specific research question concerning how situationally authentic the PBL tasks are and how the situational authenticity is realized in the task design.

The second specific research question looks into the *interactional authenticity* (defined as the learners' interaction with the task characteristics (Bachman 1990; Douglas 2000)) manifested in the implementation of the PBL tasks. As Spence-Brown (2001: 479) points out, it seems more meaningful to examine authenticity 'from the point of view of implementation rather than just of task design.' Lewkowicz (2000:48), in discussing the issue of authenticity in task design, echoes Spence-Brown's view by stating that 'of concern is not only the nature of the task, but the outcome arising from it.' Spence-Brown (2001) suggests that 'the elicitation of subjects' own accounts of their engagement with the task, in conjunction with an examination of the discourse produced', will yield valuable data about the task process (Spence-Brown 2001:480). Thus, to address the second specific research question 'In what way in practice do the task characteristics of the PBL tasks engage the learners? To what extent is the learners' engagement with the PBL tasks authentic? What is the nature of the interactional authenticity manifested?', three research methods were employed to look into the interactional authenticity manifested in the process as well as the products elicited by the PBL tasks:

- a. discourse analysis of the project outcome products– Since the PBL tasks under investigation requires the learners to come up with a written project

report and an oral presentation, discourse analyses of the learners' written project report and (in conjunction with observation of) their oral presentation of the project (which was video-taped) were done so as to arrive at an understanding of the way in which the task characteristics of the PBL tasks engaged the L2 learners and their specific purpose language ability (drawing on Douglas' model of 'Specific Purpose Language Ability' (2000), and discourse analysis based on Halliday's (1978) triad contextual parameters of field, tenor and mode). Since the learners were required to work in groups for the PBL tasks under investigation, the project outcome products of two groups of learners were analysed. (The sampling of the two groups of learners will be discussed in the next section.) The oral presentations by the two groups of learners were video-taped and transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

- b. unstructured observation of the team discussion session that the learners were involved in to arrive at their project outcome products and discourse analysis of their oral interactions in the team discussion. (As the two groups of participants were from different classes and their team discussion sessions took place at two different time slots, the researcher was able to personally observe the two groups separately.) The team discussion session of the two groups of learners were video-taped and their oral interactions were transcribed verbatim for data analysis.
- c. retrospective semi-structured focus group interviews with the two groups of learners about their experience of the process of engaging with the PBL tasks to triangulate with the data collected from the project outcome products (the written project report and the oral presentation) and the team discussion

session and to gain further insight into the task processes. The focus group interviews were conducted in Cantonese, the mother tongue of the participants, in order for the participants to be able to express their thoughts thoroughly without any language barrier (Keats 2000). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and the transcriptions were then translated from Cantonese into English. The guiding questions for the focus group interviews were drawn up after the analysis of the participants' project outcome products (i.e. the written project report and the oral presentation) and the team discussion session. The guiding questions for the focus group interviews can be found in the interview schedule given in Appendix III.

The analysis of the data collected from these three research methods helps to answer the second specific research question concerning how in practice the learners actually interacted with the task features of the PBL process and product tasks and thus giving rise to the characterization of the interactional authenticity arising from the implementation of the PBL tasks. This will also have implications on the situational authenticity realized in the task design discussed in specific research question 1.

The research design can thus be summarized in the Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Summary of Research Design**

	<p><b>Main Research Question:</b> To what extent is authenticity achieved in the tasks designed for the ESP project-based learning (PBL) module under investigation? What is the nature of the authenticity that is manifested? What implications does this authenticity have for ESP (and ELT in general) task design?</p>
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	<u>Specific Research Question 1:</u> <b>Situational Authenticity</b>	<u>Specific Research Question 2:</u> <b>Interactional Authenticity</b>
Research Method 1:	Documentary analysis of Project Brief of PBL task series (objective: to characterize the task design features in terms of situational authenticity)	Discourse analysis of the PBL task outcome products – the written project report and oral presentation produced by two purposively sampled groups of participants of learners (objective: to characterize the learners’ interaction with the task features in approaching the written project report and oral presentation task)
Research Method 2:	Semi-structured interviews with subject specialist informants/practitioners in the specific purpose TLU field (objective: to ascertain the extent of correspondence between the task features of the PBL task series and those of the TLU tasks)	Unstructured observation and discourse analysis of the team discussion session (objective: to characterise the learners’ interaction with the task features in approaching this project <i>process</i> task)
Research Method 3:		retrospective semi-structured focus group interviews with the two groups of learners about their experience of the process of engaging with the PBL tasks (objective: to triangulate with the data collected from the project outcome products (the written project report and the

		oral presentation) and the team discussion session and to gain further insight into the task processes
Conceptual framework for data analysis:	Douglas' framework of <i>LSP task characteristics</i> , in conjunction with Halliday's notion of <i>Context of Situation</i> in SF Linguistics	Douglas' model of <i>Specific Purpose Language Ability</i> , in conjunction with Halliday's notion of <i>Context of Situation</i> in SF Linguistics

### Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups

As mentioned in the research design, semi-structured interviews and focus groups are among the research methods employed for the present study. The main characteristics of semi-structured interviews, as outlined by Drever (1995), are as follows:

- It is a formal encounter on an agreed subject, and 'on the record'
- Main questions set by the interviewer create the overall structure
- Prompts and probes fill in the structure: prompts by encouraging broad coverage, probes by exploring answers in depth
- There can be a mixture of closed and open questions
- The interviewee has a fair degree of freedom: what to talk about, how much to say, how to express it
- But the interviewer can assert control when necessary

Within the interpretive paradigm, the present study does not aim to cover a whole population and to generalize, but to provide an in-depth picture of authenticity from the perspectives of those involved (the learners) within a specific context (the ESP PBL module). Semi-structured interviews are well-suited to this purpose:

The semi-structured interview allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses. This can be done



also by including spaces on the interview schedule for the interviewer to add comments or make notes. In this way some kind of balance between the interviewer and the interviewee can develop which can provide room for negotiation, discussion and expansion of the interviewee's responses. (Hitchcock and Hughes 1993:83)

Moreover, it is important that the interview schedule remain as open-ended as possible, so that we might hear *how* the learners speak, and what they choose to say about it.

Moreover, as Spielmann (2000) points out, in an interview of this kind, *how* the respondents express themselves may be as important as what they have to say; equally important is their choice of what they will *not* say. In order to obtain rich data, it is vital that the interviewer let the respondent make such choices, and ask few convergent (i.e., close ended) questions which narrow down the range of possible answers. This is why, in a semi-structured interview, interviewers have a deliberately loose agenda:

- They ask a number of divergent (i.e., open-ended) questions, followed by more pointed questions to follow up on whatever issues the respondents have brought up.
- Although there is an interview protocol, there is no set of questions to be asked of all respondents in a uniform manner, or following a uniform pattern.
- The interviewer must follow the leads provided by the respondents as much as possible. Interviewing is a human interaction with all of its attendant uncertainties. [...] Questions may emerge in the course of interviewing and may be added to or replace the preestablished ones; this process of question formation is the more likely and the more ideal one in qualitative inquiry.
- The interview should have the tone and the feel of an informal conversation: the interviewer should act as an equal partner, not as an interrogator or a teacher.

(Spielmann 2000:61)

In the present study, focus group interviews were conducted with two groups of students right after they had finished the PBL tasks under investigation. One reason why focus group interviews were employed to address the second research question is that learners were involved in group work in this PBL module. By using focus group interviews (with participants being fellow group members in their class activities), the participants' normal patterns of interaction within the group were built into the focus group interviews. Since the fellow group members were already used to interacting with one another throughout the PBL tasks and had established good rapport, this ensures effective group dynamics for the focus group interviews for the research.

Moreover, Vaughn et al (1996) argues that the interactive group format offers distinctive advantages for the collection of rich, in-depth data in that:

First, focus group interviews encourage interaction not only between the moderator and the participants but also between the participants themselves. Second, the group format offers support for individual participants and encourages greater openness in their responses. Third, focus group interviews allow – and even encourage – individuals to form opinions about the designated topic through interactions with others. (Vaughn et al 1996: 34)

Indeed, this group format is dynamic:

The feature which most clearly distinguishes group research from other kinds of qualitative research is the group discussion. While the discussion centers on issues which are of interest to the researcher, it involves the exchange of opinions, personal reactions, and experience among members of the group. (Brodigan 1992 in Vaughn et al 1996:35)

‘Such interviews are useful...where a group of people have been working together for some time or for common purposes.’ (Watts and Ebbutt 1987) With participants

‘challenging and extending each others’ ideas,’ (Lewis 1992) thus yielding a wide range of responses.

Hess (1968) noted that the focus group interview offers several advantages over the individual interview as follows:

- a. synergism (when a wider bank of data emerges through the group interaction),
- b. snowballing (when the statement of one respondent initiate a chain reaction of additional comments),
- c. stimulation (when the group discussion generates excitement about a topic),
- d. security (when the group provides a comfort and encourages candid responses), and
- e. spontaneity (because participants are not required to answer every question, their responses are more spontaneous and genuine).

(Hess 1968 in Vaughn et al 1996:38)

The focus group interviews in the present study were done after the analysis of the Project Brief and discourse analysis of the project outcome products (i.e. the written project report and the oral presentation) and the team discussion sessions. Some central guiding questions were decided after the analysis of the Project Brief and discourse analysis of the project outcome products and team discussion sessions in relation to the issue of authenticity.

### Unstructured Observation

In the present study, unstructured observations were done of the team discussion sessions of the two groups of participants separately in the classroom. Wolfinger (2002), in discussing strategies for taking fieldnotes, points out that the researcher should write down what is most interesting, noteworthy or telling, but descriptions of

apparently ‘mundane’ events might later turn out to be of value (e.g they can provide contrasts, or allow deviant cases to be identified). Richards (2003:137) suggests that, in writing fieldnotes, it is possible to add analytical insights, possible connections with theory, methodological points, etc., and that *relational issues* help connect the researcher with the whole process of research and with the researched, including personal reflections and resonances.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 382) suggest that one great strength of the observational method lies in the ease through which researchers can ‘gain *entrée* to settings’. As it is unobtrusive and does not require direct interaction with participants, observation can be conducted unobtrusively. They point out another strength associated with unstructured observation lies in its emergence. Instead of working with predetermined categories, observers construct theories that generate categories and posit the linkages among them. Compared with more structured methods, unstructured observation ‘has the flexibility to yield insight into new realities or new ways of looking at old realities’. Denzin and Lincoln suggest that observation produces especially great rigor when combined with other methods. They point out that although direct observation may be marred by researcher biases, ‘when added onto other research yielding depth and/or breadth, enhances consistency and validity’.

The present study will triangulate data obtained from the unstructured classroom observation with retrospective group interviews with the participants.

### 3.4.3. Background Information Regarding Context of Study and Profiles of Learner Participants

The case ESP PBL module chosen for the present study is one run by the language centre for students from the Department of Fashion and Textiles undertaking a Higher Diploma for Fashion Design and Product Development at a local vocational institution. Students undertaking this Higher Diploma programme have completed secondary seven education. Since the PBL task series under investigation requires learners to work in groups of four to carry out a team project, the present study has sampled two of the groups to be the participants of the research. The first group comprises the members (pseudonyms are used here to anonymise the participants) Carrie, Christine, Chai Chi and Yan, while the second group comprises the members Carmen, Louis, Rachel, and San. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 the learner participant profiles:

**Table 3.3 Learner participant profiles of Group 1**

Participants (pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	First language	Educational level	Higher Diploma sought	Grade attained in English subject last semester (A – F*)	Attendance rate in the ESP module under investigation
Carrie	20	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	B+	100%
Christine	19	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	B+	100%
Chai Chi	20	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	B	80%
Yan	18	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product	C	80%

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**Table 3.4 Learner participant profiles of Group 2**

Participants (pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	First language	Educational level	Higher Diploma sought	Grade attained in English subject last semester (A – F*)	Attendance rate in the ESP module under investigation
Carmen	21	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	B	90%
Louis	19	Male	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	B	90%
Rachel	20	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	B	100%
San	21	Female	Cantonese	Finished secondary 7	HD in Fashion Design and Product Development	C+	80%

\* Grade A represents the top 10% of the student cohort with the highest English proficiency, while grade F represents the bottom 5% with the lowest English proficiency.

#### **3.4.4. Purposive Sampling for the Present Study**

Since the PBL tasks under investigation requires learners to work in groups of four to carry out a team project, the present study has sampled two of the teams to be the participants of the research. In order to select cases that are likely to be information-rich with respect to the purpose of research, sampling for the present qualitative study is purposive. These two teams of learners were recommended by the teacher of the PBL module, who had been teaching these students for one year already and she knew

well about the learning attitudes and language standards of these learners. The two teams of subjects were recommended for the present study for the following reasons:

- a. These two teams of learners had a track record of good class attendance. It would be pointless to use frequent absentees (who did not participate in all PBL tasks under investigation) as participants for the study.
- b. Although there are individual variations of English language standard among the team members, the general English language proficiency of these two teams of learners is considered average or slightly above average among the student cohort. The present study purposively sampled typical cases (learners of average and slightly average language ability) instead of extreme cases (learners of the lowest or the highest language abilities in class) so that the data yielded will be typical of ELT/ESP learners.

#### **3.4.5. Achieving Trustworthiness**

Qualitative researchers mostly agree that the same concepts of validity and reliability that apply to quantitative research are not appropriate for qualitative methods with their opposing ontological and epistemological beliefs (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Instead, criteria for quality and rigour in qualitative research methods centre around the notion of trustworthiness. To enhance trustworthiness for the present study, the following techniques were employed.

##### **3.4.5.1. Member checking**

In the context of qualitative research, achieving trustworthiness is to establish credibility. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985: 314), the most crucial technique for establishing credibility is through member checking. Member checking is the process of getting the interviewees to 'review statements made in the researcher's report for accuracy and completeness' (Gall, Borg & Gall 1996: 575). In this research, confirmation of the transcripts and summaries of the interviews was sought from the interviewees (the subject specialist informants as well as the participants of the focus group interviews). The interviewees were asked to read and confirm the findings in the researcher's report. Member checking provides a chance to correct any misrepresentation and misinterpretation, and is thus an act of validation and refutation.

#### **3.4.5.2. Triangulation**

Triangulation is another way to validate the present study. Triangulation is defined as 'the process of using multiple data-collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories to check the validity of case study findings' (Gall, Borg & Gall 1996: 574). In this study, the three research methods, namely discourse analysis of learners' written report, oral presentation and team discussion, observation of learners' interaction and performance in the team discussion task, and semi-structured focus group interviews with the learners, are complementary to each other in addressing the research questions. Data from the discourse analysis of the written project report and oral presentation tasks, data from the focus group interviews and data from the observation of learners' interaction and performance in the team discussion task will be constantly compared to validate interpretations made in the analysis.

#### **3.4.5.3. Other Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness and Transferability**



In order to avoid any power difference between the participants and the researcher, the participants chosen for the present study were not the students of the researcher, and the researcher has no influence and authority over the assessment and grades of the participants. In order to build rapport with the participants, the researcher conducted small talk with the participants for about thirty minutes before starting the focus group interviews. The same was also done with the subject specialist informants in order to build rapport before the start of the interviews.

In order to keep an audit trail, the oral presentations of the two groups of participants, their team discussion sessions as well as the focus group interviews were videotaped so that they could be revisited when needed. Since it is the policy of the vocational institution in which the present study is conducted that all oral presentation and group discussion assessment (and also some class work) activities are video-taped as records (for marking and course quality assurance purposes), the students are already very used to being video-taped while performing speaking tasks in class. Thus, the effect of being video-taped for the present research is minimal.

One potential problem with qualitative research is, as pointed out by Burns (2000), that the researcher tends to allow personal bias to influence the interpretation of the data. In alleviating this potential problem, all interview data were transcribed verbatim rather than having the researcher reconstructing the general sense of what the participants said.

Critics of qualitative and case study research have questioned the value of the study of single events and the *generalizability* of its findings. However, others believe that

generalizability is possible from qualitative and case study research and that ‘the extent to which findings from case study can be generalized to other examples in the class depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type’ (Denscombe 1998: 36-7), i.e. through choosing a case that is typical of the phenomenon. As discussed in 3.4.2, the case PBL module selected for the present study is typical in the ESP curriculum for the final year higher diploma students from all disciplines (not only for students of Fashion Design) in the context of vocational education. Thus, the typicality of the chosen case in the present study allows for generalizability.

Another approach to generalizability of case study findings is to place the responsibility for generalizing on the ‘reader’ or the ‘consumer’ rather than the researcher. In this way, it is the reader or user of the case study to decide the applicability of the findings in their own situation. This is termed ‘*transferability*’ by Lincoln & Guba (1985). To ensure transferability, the researcher is obliged to provide thick description of the participants, the setting and context, so that the reader can compare their own situation with the case. The present study has attempted to provide detailed accounts to allow the reader to draw comparisons to their own context and situation related to authenticity in task design for their own ESP/ELT curricula.

#### **3.4.6. Ethical Issues**

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical framework of educational research stipulated by the University of Leicester. Only public documents were examined. Approval was obtained from the case ESP PBL module leader of the

vocational institute and the PBL task designers before their work was analyzed for research purpose. The student participants were given a full explanation of the purpose of the research, and their full consent was obtained before the interviews and observations were conducted and their work was analyzed. The interviews with the subject specialist informants were video-taped. The learners' performance in the oral presentations and team discussion tasks were also video-taped to ensure authenticity and trustworthiness. The participants were assured of the privacy and confidentiality of their participation and the information they provided. They were told of their right to stop the observations and interviews at any time and refuse to answer any questions. Pseudonyms are used to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees. Furthermore, they were assured that the data collected would not be used outside the study without their consent and that they would be given an opportunity to read the transcription of their interviews and to make corrections so that there would be no misrepresentation of their view.

### **3.5. Data Analysis Methods**

Data analysis for the present study followed the following order:

The Project Brief of the PBL module was analysed first, followed by the data obtained from the two interviews with the subject specialist informants. Then discourse analysis of the project outcome products (the written project report and oral presentation) was done. Next, data obtained from the observation of the team discussion session was analyzed in conjunction with the discourse analysis of the learners' oral interactions in the discussions. Finally, data from the retrospective focus group interviews with the learners was analyzed. The results of the documentary analysis of the Project Brief and discourse analyses of the project outcome products and team discussions informed the drawing up of the interview schedules to be used for the focus group interviews with the participants. The conceptual frameworks

discussed in Chapter 2, such as Douglas' (2000) task characteristics model and Halliday's (1978) notion of Context of Situation within the Systemic Functional Linguistic model, were applied to the analysis of data throughout the whole study. Richards' (2003) description captures the essentially exploratory nature of the analysis of data for the present study:

[Data analysis] is a process of breaking down the data set and exploring different ways of arranging it in order to promote a better understanding of what it represents. The principles of rearrangement will be derived from a variety of sources, including theoretical and conceptual links, analytic notes and ongoing analysis, while the ways in which data are displayed may prompt further insights. (Richards 2003:271)

The following diagram (Figure 3.1), borrowed from Richards (2003:271), captures the different elements in the process of analysis (which the present study follows) and their interactive relationship. 'The diagram reflects the centrality of categorization as a link between interpretive positioning and data collection, suggesting a degree of interconnectivity that undermines any notion of analysis as a linear process that can be instantiated in a series of clearly specifiable steps.'

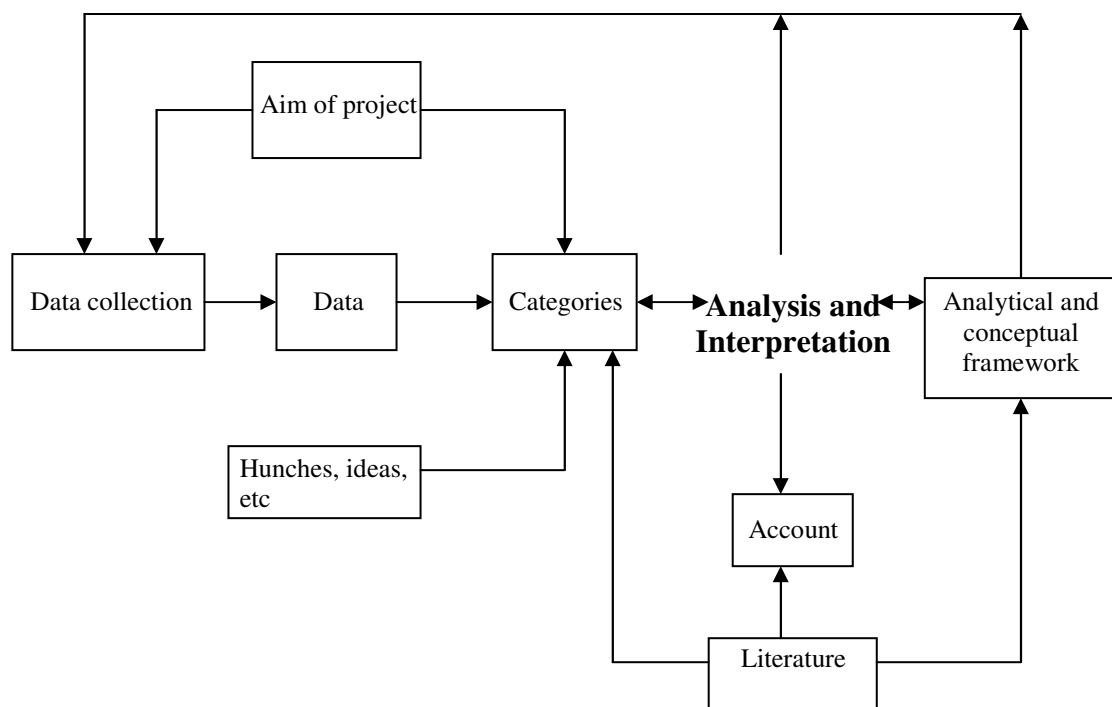


Figure 3.1 Process of data analysis (Richards 2003:271)

In fact, the analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research and is not a separate self-contained phase. Richards (2003) highlights this point in discussing data analysis of qualitative interview:

Analysis is in fact no straightforward matter, a simple one-off exercise in transforming a mound of unanalyzed interview scripts into a neatly categorized set of related statements; it is an unfolding process of interactional exploration that begins with the very first interview and informs the research process through to its final representation ... analysis is so integral to the [whole research] process. (Richards 2003:79)

As Punch (1998:200) points out, ‘the method of analysis is integrated from the start with other parts of the research, rather than being an afterthought.

Coding and categorizing has an important role to play in the data analysis process in reducing the data, since raw data does not help the reader to understand the social world unless such data have been systematically analysed to illuminate an existent situation. Coding involves subdividing the data as well as assigning categories. (Basit 2003):

Qualitative data are textual, non-numerical and unstructured. Coding [and categorizing] has a crucial role in the analysis of such data to organize and make sense of them ... What coding [and categorizing] does is to allow the researcher to communicate and connect with the data to facilitate the comprehension of the emerging phenomena and to generate theory grounded in the data. (Basit 2003:152)

In view of the crucial role of developing categories in data analysis, Richards (2003) summarises the features of the criteria of an effective category as in Figure 3.2.

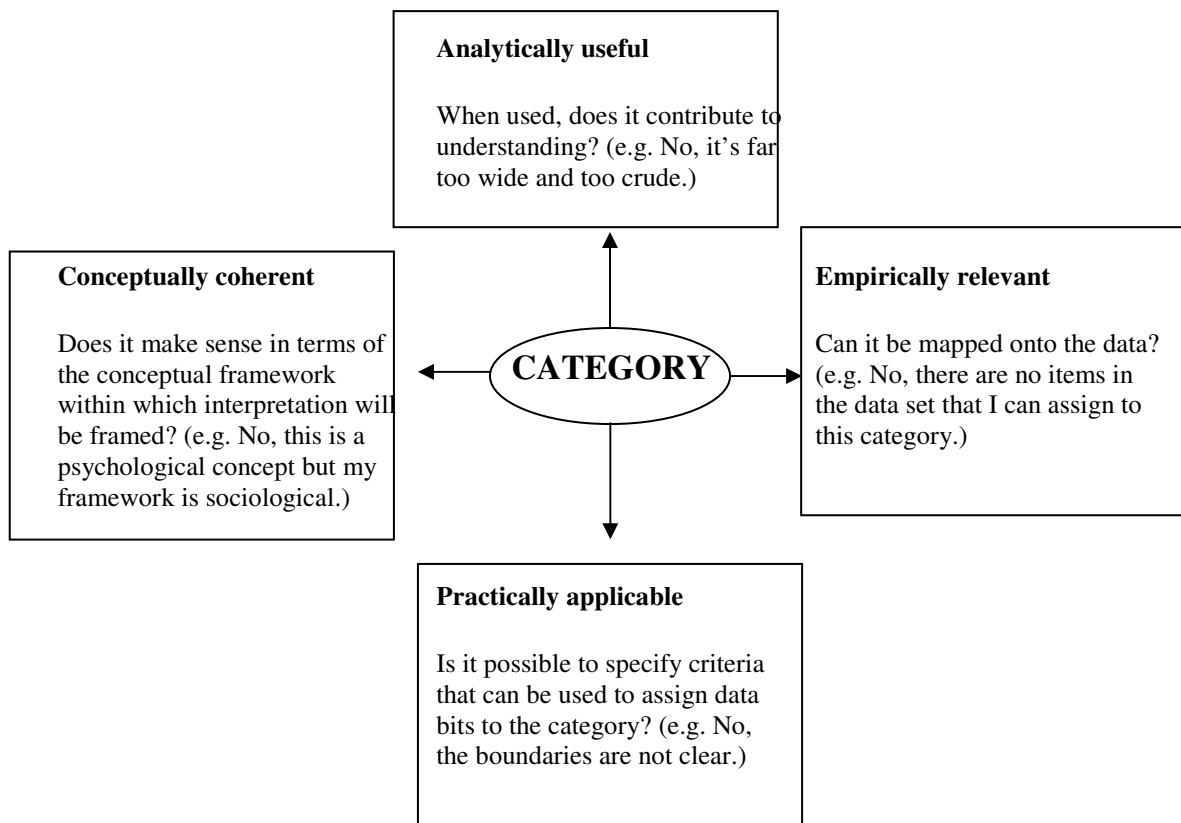


Figure 3.2 Criteria of an effective category (Richards 2003:276)

Wellington's (2000) model of 'Continuous Refinement' of categories (Figure 3.3) also informs the formulation of categories in data analysis for the present study.

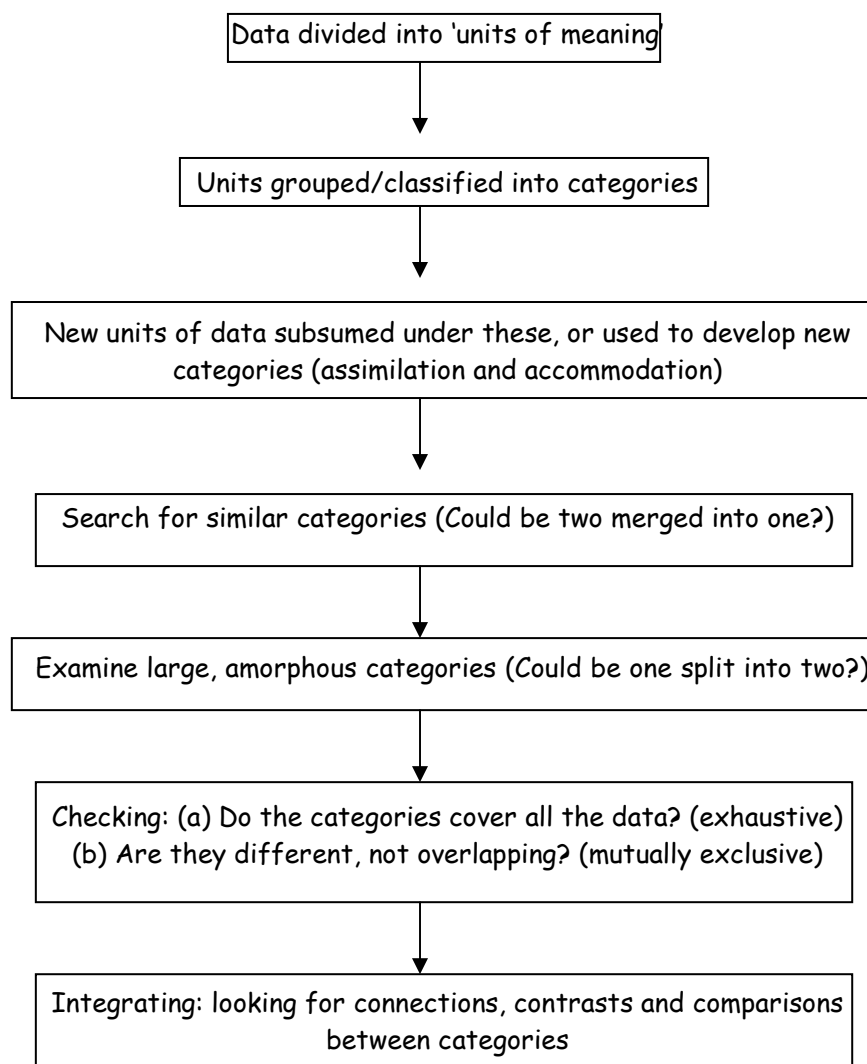


Figure 3.3 Continuous refinement of categories

The categories used for the analysis of data for the present study will be a mixture of ‘a priori’ and ‘a posteriori’ categories (Wellington 2000). Existing (‘a priori’) categories, developed from the outset based on conceptual frameworks derived from the linguistic and second language learning theories embodied in the concept of authenticity as discussed in Chapter 2 (such as Douglas’ (2000) framework of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) task characteristics, Halliday’s (1978) notion of Context of Situation within the Systemic Functional Linguistics model, Willis’s model of task-based learning, Bambrrough’s (1994) framework of ‘intrinsic Vs extrinsic

documentation in simulations', etc) will be brought to the data and used to make sense of them. On the other hand, there may be data which require new thoughts and new categorization. Pre-existing categories may not be adequate to exhaust all the data. New categories (a posteriori) may need to be created to accommodate those data and help to refine and clarify existing categories. Thus the research will generate theory grounded in the data, building on existing theories and literature of SLA and second language learning. (Worked samples of coding are given in Appendix IV.)

On the other hand, memoing begins at the start of the analysis, alongside with coding. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:72), memoing is

The theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding ... it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages ... it exhausts the analyst's momentary ideation based on data with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration.

(Miles and Huberman 1994:72)

The memos may suggest still deeper concepts than the coding has so far produced, and thus they may point towards new patterns and higher level of pattern coding and categorizing. They help the analyst move from the empirical to the conceptual level (Punch 1998:207) (A worked sample of memoing is given in Appendix IV.)



## Chapter Four: Data Analysis: Situational Authenticity in Task Design

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes the data for the first specific research question with regard to situational authenticity in task design: To what extent are the PBL tasks *situationally authentic*? How is *situational authenticity* realized in the design features of the PBL tasks?

To start with, section 4.2 presents an analysis of the design features of the case PBL task series within Douglas' (2000) task characteristics framework, resulting in a detailed characterisation of the PBL task series in terms of the task characteristics of the *rubric*, *input* (*prompt and input data*), *expected response*, *interaction between input and response*, and *assessment*. The analysis in section 4.3 presents how a workplace scenario in the task design serves as a 'skeleton context' on which to hang the series of language tasks that the learners have to perform for the project under investigation. Halliday's (1978) triad construct of *context of situation* is then drawn on as a conceptual framework for the analysis of this workplace scenario in the design of the PBL task series. This analysis within the Hallidayan framework is then, in section 4.4, synthesized with the analysis within Douglas' model, resulting in the emergence of the notion of *CoS* from the data for the characterization of the *situational authenticity* manifested in the task design of this case PBL module.

Drawing on Douglas'/Bachman's definition of *situational authenticity* as the correspondence between the task characteristics of the PBL tasks and those of the

TLU tasks (i.e. within the present analysis framework, the extent to which the features of the constructed CoS of the PBL task series correspond to those of the context of situation of the specific purpose TLU domain – the learners’ future workplace), and following what Wu and Stansfield (2001:198) propose as ‘verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field’ (as discussed in 3.4.3), section 4.9 presents the analysis of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with two practitioners in the fashion industry with a view to shedding light on the correspondence between the contextual features of the constructed CoS of the PBL task series and those of the specific purpose TLU domain, and thus the *situational authenticity* of the PBL task series.

This chapter ends with a discussion on the two levels of *situational authenticity* conceptualised from the data analysis for the first specific research question.

## **4.2. Task Characteristics of PBL Tasks**

Douglas’s ‘framework of LSP task characteristics’ (2000), as adapted from Bachman and Palmer (1996) (discussed in 2.5.4), is employed here to arrive at a characterization of the task characteristics of the case PBL tasks. An examination of the Project Brief shows that the ***rubric*** (in the form of a set of ‘Notes to Students’) was given separately from the ***input*** (in the form of ‘Situation Brief’) to the students. (The Project Brief is given in Appendix I.) The following characterises the PBL task series in terms of the task characteristics of the ***rubric***, ***input*** (*prompt and input data*), ***expected response***, ***interaction between input and response***, and ***assessment***.

### **a. Characteristics of the Rubric**

#### **Specification of objectives:**

##### **Task 1 (Written Project Report)**

- To describe the background, rationale and purpose of the research
- To explain clearly the research questions and methodology
- To present findings including fashion trends, market scope, target customer profile, design inspiration, colour and fabric selection, etc.
- To make recommendations based on findings

##### **Task 2 (Persuasive Oral Presentation)**

- To organize information from a written text into spoken discourse for a particular audience and purpose.
- To explain a research question to an audience
- To outline appropriate solutions/findings to the research question
- To use persuasive language and communication techniques
- To handle questions from an audience

#### **Procedures for Responding**

Procedures for responding are stated separately for the project outcome Task 1 and

Task 2:

##### **Task 1 (Written Project Report)**

Learners have to form a team of 4 and write a research report of 2000 words. To prepare for the report, the team has to carry out some research and, based on the findings of the research, propose the development of new fashion products for the coming season. In the process of doing this research project, the team members have to read (and also listen to) trade-related texts and be involved in plenty of group

discussions and collaborate to come up with a proposal. Learners have to utilize what they have read (combined with their specific background knowledge) and discussed to perform the report writing task.

### Task 2 (Persuasive Oral Presentation)

The team has to give an oral presentation of their research and proposed fashion product (line) for 15 minutes to persuade the audience (i.e. the senior management of your company) to accept the proposal. The presentation will be followed by a 3-minute question-and-answer session in which the team invites and answer questions from the audience. Learners have to prepare the presentation as a team. They should divide the presentation among team members so that each member will have around 4 minutes for presentation. They should make use of visual aids such as Powerpoint slides. They may also make use of note cards.

Each learner will receive an individual mark based on his/her performance in the overall group presentation.

### Sub-task (Team Discussion Session)

Learners have to take part in a team discussion session in which they share research findings and discuss the details of the new product line they are to propose.

### **Structure**

Number of tasks:	2 (Task 1: Written project report; Task 2: Oral Presentation) + 1 Subtask (team discussion session)
Relative importance:	Each of the two tasks (i.e. written project report, oral presentation) carries 50% of the total project marks. Subtask not assessed

Task distinction:	The two tasks (i.e. the written report and the oral presentation) and the sub-task (team discussion) are interdependent.
Time allotment:	10 weeks for the whole project (including the writing up of the project report), 18 minutes for the actual oral presentation, 1 hour for the team discussion

### **b. Characteristics of the *Input***

**Prompt** (presented in the form of an e-mail from the boss)

Setting	Fashion company
Participants	Members of Product Development Team (reader(s) of written project report and audience of oral presentation: company management)
Purpose	<p>The <i>prompt</i> sets up the context for this research project and makes clear to the learners the purposes of the tasks that the learners are required to perform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To report on research, design and propose new fashion product line for upcoming season (Project outcome Task 1: written project report)</li> <li>● To sell the proposed product design concepts to company management (Project outcome Task 2: oral presentation)</li> <li>● To discuss with fellow team members to come up with details of the new product line to be proposed (Subtask: team discussion) in the written project report and oral presentation</li> </ul>
Form/ Content	<p>In the form of an e-mail (intrinsic document) (specifying the 7 steps leading to the 2 project outcome tasks):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss with team members and identify a problem/a need/ an opportunity related to the Hong Kong/ China / international fashion market.</li> <li>● Carry out an initial Internet search on your chosen topic to see if you can find substantial information about it.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Investigate the market needs as well as the fashion trend (including colour, fabric, silhouette trends etc.)</li> <li>● Analyse your major competitors as far as the proposed product is concerned and develop your target customer profiles.</li> <li>● For the investigative research into fashion trends, market needs, customer profiles, you have to decide what methods (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, observations, documentation analyses, etc.) you would employ to obtain findings to address the research issues</li> <li>● Carry out the research. Discuss how you would organize and present the findings to justify your proposal</li> <li>● Based on research findings, your proposal should detail the design of the proposed product/ product line (including the special features, colour selection, choice of materials, lines, patterns and silhouettes, and technical information) and the target market.</li> </ul>
Tone	formal tone, businesslike, in a work context

### Input data

Format	Varied. Written, oral, pictures
Vehicle of Delivery	Internet (e.g. fashion websites), fashion magazines, fashion textbooks, trade-related documents, videos, etc. (Learners are supposed to follow the <i>prompt</i> and find relevant genuine texts on their own as <i>input data</i> .)

### c. Characteristics of Expected Response

Format	<p>Project outcome Task 1: <b>Written project report</b> - To report on research, design and propose new fashion product line for upcoming season (to be supplemented with pictures and charts in appendices)</p> <p>Project outcome Task 2: <b>Oral presentation</b> - To sell the proposed product design concepts to superiors (use of Powerpoint slides and other visual aids)</p>
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	<p>Sub-task: <b>Team discussion</b> – To share research findings and exchange ideas with fellow members to come up with details of new product line to propose</p>
Language Characteristics	<p><b>Task 1 Written project report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● use formal, businesslike tone</li> <li>● use a range of structures, syntax, vocabulary (including trade-specific terminology) and a variety of discourse structures of the report writing genre</li> <li>● Illocutionary force: expository, persuasive</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 2 Oral presentation of proposal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● use less formal, conversational but businesslike tone</li> <li>● use proper structure of a presentation (with an introduction, a main body, a conclusion, use of discourse markers, etc.)</li> <li>● apply non-verbal communication skills in oral presentation (body language, tone and pitch of voice, use of visual aids, etc.)</li> <li>● show awareness of the audience</li> <li>● respond to others contributions (in 2-way communication)</li> <li>● Illocutionary force: expository, persuasive</li> </ul> <p><b>Sub-task: Team Discussion Session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● use conversational tone</li> <li>● exchange and explain detailed information accurately and appropriately</li> <li>● discuss work-related concepts such as fashion design ideas, etc.</li> <li>● use the language and techniques of discussions</li> </ul>

	<p>accurately and appropriately</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Illocutionary force: exchanging information and ideas, making suggestions, agreeing, disagreeing</li> </ul>
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#### **d. Characteristics of the Interaction between Input and Response**

Reactivity	<p><b>Task 1 – Written report:</b> non-reciprocal</p> <p><b>Task 2 – Oral presentation:</b> moderately reciprocal (there is supposed to be interaction between the presenters and the audience especially in the Q&amp;A session)</p> <p><b>Sub-task – team discussion:</b> highly reciprocal</p>
Scope	Very broad, a wide range of input data must be processed to get sufficient information in order to come up with a proposed new product line
Directness	Fairly indirect, must use specific background knowledge and creativity

#### **e. Characteristics of Assessment**

Linguistic competencies to be assessed	<p><b>Task 1 – Written Research Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To describe the background, rationale and purpose of the research</li> <li>• To explain clearly the research question and methodology</li> <li>• To present findings including fashion trends, market scope, target customer profile, design inspiration, colour and fabric selection, etc.</li> <li>• To make recommendations based on findings</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 2 – Oral Presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To organize information from a written text into spoken discourse for a particular audience and</li> </ul>
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	<p>purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explain a research question to an audience</li> <li>• To outline appropriate solutions/findings to the research question</li> <li>• To use persuasive language and communication techniques</li> <li>• To handle questions from an audience</li> </ul> <p><b>Sub-tasks – Team Discussion</b> (not assessed)</p>
Assessment Criteria	To be assessed in terms of content, language, organization, and presentation

This section has given a detailed description of the PBL task series in terms of the task characteristics of the *rubric*, *input (prompt and input data)*, *expected response*, *interaction between input and response*, and *assessment*.

#### 4.3. Situational Authenticity in the Form of Constructed Context of Situation

An examination of the project brief shows that, in this case PBL module, the learners are required to perform a series of language tasks (referred to as the ***PBL task series*** in subsequent discussions):

- reading* and *listening* to trade-related texts from various sources;
- group discussions* on the research topic, planning of research, sharing of research findings and collaborating to propose a new product line;
- writing* up a project report;
- giving an *oral presentation* on their research and to sell their proposed product line

An analysis of the design of the PBL task series shows that *an authentic workplace scenario* (Chic Fashion House calling on its Product Development Team to conduct research and propose new products for the forthcoming season) is given here to serve as a *skeleton context* on which to hang the series of language tasks the learners have to perform (reading and listening to trade-related texts, group discussions, writing a project report, oral presentation, etc.). In this way, by means of this ‘skeleton context’, one task leads realistically to the next. (Thus, it is also this ‘skeleton context’ that renders what Nunan (2004:35) calls *task dependency*<sup>1</sup>). Learners are informed of key features of the communicative event including the subject matter, their role, role functions, the various tasks, etc. through the use of ‘*intrinsic documents*’ (Bambrough 1994, discussed in 2.7.2), i.e. documents presented within the simulated world, to achieve social and communicative reality (e.g. the e-mail message from the Product Development Manager to the Product Development Team, see Appendix I). Through being presented with this authentic workplace scenario, students are given a realistic purpose of the whole series of language activities in the PBL tasks:

- a. What are we doing? Why do we have to work in groups? Because we are members of the Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House and we are working together towards a goal (to collaborate to develop a new fashion collection for our Company).
- b. What is the point of (collecting and) reading and listening to those trade-related texts? In order to get to know more about the fashion market as far as our chosen research area is concerned. We are reading/listening with a purpose, i.e. to find

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<sup>1</sup> One of the principles that Nunan (2004:35) suggests for task-based language teaching is that of task dependency, where , within a lesson, one task should grow out of, and build upon, the ones that have gone before. He explains that ‘the sequence tells a “pedagogical” story, as learners are led step by step to the point where they are able to carry out the final pedagogical task in the sequence’.

relevant information that will help us to develop a profitable new fashion collection for the coming season.

- c. Why do we have to do all the group discussions? Because we have to share information and ideas and collaborate to come up with the details of a successful new collection for our company.
- d. For what purpose are we writing the project report and doing the oral presentation to the whole class? The readers of the report and the audience of the oral presentation are our superiors and the management of Chic Fashion House. We are persuading them to accept our team's proposed new collection.

Thus, the various dimensions constituting this 'skeleton context' are:

**Subject matter:** development of a new product line for a fashion company

**Activities taking place:** fashion market research (which involves reading/listening to information about fashion market and fashion trends, etc.), discussing new products, presenting proposals, writing a project report

**Participants:** as members of Product Development Team

(reader(s) of written report and audience of oral presentation: company management)

**Channel:** both written and spoken English

**Purpose of situation:** to participate in a fashion product development project, to propose a new product line for a fashion company.

The construction of this 'skeleton context' for the PBL tasks echoes Halliday (1978) that where authentic communication takes place, there is always a *context of situation*,

whose three parameters are: ***field, tenor, and mode*** (as discussed in 2.5.2). Thus, the various dimensions of the *context of situation* constructed for the PBL task series are listed as follows in Table 4.1:

<b>Field</b> (subject matter, activities taking place)	Researching and developing new fashion products for Chic Fashion House – team discussions, project report writing, oral presentation
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	as members of Product Development Team (reader(s) of written report and audience of oral presentation: company management; interlocutors in team discussion: fellow team members)
<b>Mode</b> (channel, role of language)	Written (project report); Spoken (team discussions, oral presentation) To <i>explain</i> design concepts and product details and <i>persuade</i> readers/audience to accept the proposed ideas team discussion: to share information and exchange ideas

**Table 4.1: Context of situation constructed for the PBL task series**

It is this *constructed context of situation* that serves to present to the learners a clear communicative context that corresponds to that of the real world and a realistic purpose of each PBL task. Thus, it is this constructed context of situation that serves to engage the *discourse domain* in the learners. (As discussed in 2.7.4, the term *discourse domain* refers to ‘the internal interpretation of context’ (Douglas 2000:46). According to Douglas (2000:46), discourse domains are engaged when strategic competence, in assessing the communicative situation, recognizes cues in the setting that ‘allow the language user to identify the situation and his or her role in it’. In order to communicate, a language user has to know what’s going on, where he or she is,

who he or she is communicating with, what his or her role is, what the topic is. Thus, Douglas emphasizes that '*providing clear, appropriate, and sufficient cues to ensure the engagement of the intended discourse is of paramount importance*' in task design (Douglas 2000:46)). The constructed context of situation in the design of the PBL task series aims to serve this purpose.

#### **4.4. Task Design as the Construction of Context of Situation: Synthesizing the Notion CoS with Task Characteristics**

An analysis of the PBL tasks in terms of Douglas' (as modified from Bachman and Palmer's) framework of task characteristics in 4.2 shows that all task characteristics of this PBL task series under investigation are tied to, and thus can be analysed using, the concept of *context of situation*. Within Douglas' task characteristics framework (discussed in 2.5.4), the *Input* comprises *prompt* and *input data*. In this PBL task series, the *prompt* is given in the form of a *simulated text* (according to Nunan's (2004:51) text genuineness continuum discussed in 2.9.2, simulated texts are texts which, although specially written by the author for purposes of language teaching, are made to look authentic by using characteristics of genuine texts) – an e-mail message from the Product Development Manager to the Team members (see Appendix IV).

Thus, this is an intrinsic document (Bambrough 1994:30) (as discussed in 2.7.2 – Intrinsic documents are presented within the reality of the world of the simulation to achieve 'social and communicative reality'). This *prompt* (one of the task characteristics within Douglas' framework) sets up the *context of situation* of the simulated world in the form of a *scenario*. The three parameters of the context of

situation (*field, tenor, and mode*) are realized as various dimensions of the scenario - *subject matter, activities taking place, participants, channel, and purpose of situation*.

This ***context of situation*** (abbreviated as ***CoS*** in the following discussions within the present study) set up by the ***prompt*** (using the term in Douglas' task characteristics framework) of the PBL task series contextualises the ***input data*** (by requiring the learners to locate genuine input texts from their original contexts, e.g. from fashion websites, fashion magazines, boutique catalogues, etc.) and gives ***the interaction between input and response*** (another task characteristics within Douglas' framework) ***procedural authenticity*** (discussed in 2.9.3 – procedural authenticity is achieved when the procedures that the learner has to follow in interacting with the input data resemble those expected in the real world).

It is also this ***constructed CoS*** that determines the ***scope*** and ***directness*** of the interaction between input data and response. For the ***scope***, the ***CoS*** governs that the learners go to a wide variety of authentic sources such as Internet (e.g. fashion websites), fashion magazines, fashion textbooks, trade-related documents, videos, etc. (learners can make use of their professional judgment to determine what sources they would rely on for ***input data***) to research their chosen topic. This is also a kind of ***finder authenticity*** (Van Lier 1996, as discussed in 2.6.4.2) rendered by the ***CoS*** (to be further explicated in the 4.6.) For the ***directness*** of the ***interaction between input and response***, the ***CoS*** requires that the learners assimilate the ***input data*** and also make use of their ***specific background knowledge*** (fashion knowledge and creativity) to come up with details of a proposed new fashion collection for the market. Thus, the ***CoS*** governs that the ***expected response*** be ***indirect***.

In the same way, this constructed CoS also determines the task characteristics *the expected response*. For the *expected response*, the CoS requires that the learner, through reading and listening to the *input data* and discussions with team members, come up with project outcome 1: **Written project report** - To report on research, design and propose new fashion product line for upcoming season (to be supplemented with pictures and charts in appendices) and project outcome 2: **Oral presentation** - To sell the proposed product design concepts (use of Powerpoint slides and other visual aids).

The notion of *CoS* can also be used to characterize the task characteristic *rubric*. According to Douglas (2000), *rubric* refers to the objective of the task, the procedure for responding, the task's structure and format, the time available for completing it, and the evaluation criteria. Douglas notes that characteristics of the rubric are usually implicit in a TLU situation, residing in the participant's background knowledge, but the *rubric* needs to be made explicit in a test/pedagogic task. In this case project, the *rubric* (in the form of a set of 'Notes to Students') was given separately from the *prompt* in the *input* (in the form of 'Situation Brief') to the students (Appendix I). An examination of the rubric (see Appendix I – Notes to Students) shows that it is an explication of the *context of situation* for this project *within the second language classroom* (as opposed to the simulated world of Chic Fashion House). The Notes to Students here explain to the learners what they, as students of this ESP module, are expected to do for this English language group project assignment, the language requirements, the date on which they have to submit this assignment to their English teacher and the assessment weightings of each project task.

Thus, the *rubric* serves to explain to the learners what they have to do *as second language learners of this ESP PBL module*. As opposed to the *prompt* (in the form of the Situation Brief) that sets up the *CoS internal to the simulated world*, the *rubrics* serves to explain the context of situation *external to the simulated world*, i.e. the project in the context of the second language classroom. In subsequent discussions, I would call the former the *internal CoS* (the CoS internal to the simulated world) and the latter the *external CoS* (the CoS external to the simulated world, i.e. the immediate context for the learners – the second language classroom). This *external CoS* also encompasses Douglas’ task characteristic *assessment* – with the criteria and weightings of assessment specified. Indeed, this distinction between the internal CoS and the external CoS echoes Bambrough’s (1994) distinction between ‘intrinsicity’ and ‘extrinsicity’ as discussed in 2.7.2. The notion of external CoS (the CoS external to the simulated world, i.e. the immediate context for the learners – the second language classroom) also echoes Breen’s (1985) view of the language classroom as an authentic context as discussed in 2.8. A comparison of the *internal CoS* and *external CoS* in terms of the three parameters (*field*, *tenor* and *mode*) is presented as follows:

**Table 4.2 Comparison between Internal and External CoS in Terms of Field, Tenor and Mode**

CoS parameters	Internal CoS	External CoS
<b>Field</b> (subject matter, activities taking place)	Collaborate with team members to carry out a product development project for Chic Fashion House – researching and developing new fashion products	An English language group project assignment (with assessment weighting stated for each task); pedagogical language practice
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	As members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House, working with 3 fellow team members	As language learners, working with 3 fellow classmates to form a group (reader of project outcome 1 written report: language teacher; audience of



	(reader(s) of project outcome 1 written report and audience of project outcome 2 oral presentation: boss and company management; interlocutors in team discussions – fellow product development team members)	project outcome 2 oral presentation: language teacher and fellow classmates, with language teacher as assessor; interlocutors in group discussions – fellow classmates)
<b>Mode</b> (channel, role of language)	<u>Channel:</u> Written (project report); Spoken (group discussions, oral presentation) <u>Role of language:</u> To explain and persuade Language and communicative performance as an integral part of professional performance	<u>Channel:</u> Written (project report); Spoken (group discussions, oral presentation) <u>Role of language:</u> To explain and persuade Focus on language, with the actual design of the new product being peripheral

This dichotomy of *internal and external CoS* will be further explored and utilized as a conceptual framework for the data analysis concerning *interactional authenticity* in the next chapter.

Indeed, as Douglas (2000:55) puts it, ‘features of the context and contextualisation cues are realized in language tests/[learning tasks] as task characteristics’. From the analysis explicated above, it can be seen that the notion of **CoS** can be synthesized with the *task characteristics* of Douglas’ model as shown in Table 4.2, which features the correspondence between the *external CoS* and the task characteristics *rubric* and *assessment*; and also the correspondence between the *internal CoS* and the task characteristics *prompts*, *input data*, *expected response* and *the interaction between input data and response*.

**Table 4.3: Analysis of Task Design: Synthesis of the CoS Model with Douglas’ Task Characteristics Framework**

CoS Model	Task Characteristics in Douglas’ Framework
<p><b>External CoS</b></p> <p><u>Field</u>: An ESP group project assignment (with assessment weightings and other administrative procedures stated); pedagogical language practice</p> <p><u>Tenor</u>: As language learners, working with 3 fellow classmates to form a group (reader(s)/audience of project outcome: language teacher and fellow classmate, with language teacher as assessor; interlocutors in group discussions – fellow classmates)</p> <p><u>Mode</u>: Channel – Written (project report); Spoken (group discussions, oral presentation); Role of language – To explain and persuade, focus on language, with the actual design of the new product being peripheral</p>	<p>Details of <b>external CoS</b> are explicated in the <b><u>Rubric</u></b>: Procedural information about the ESP project assignment including the learning objectives, procedure for responding, structure, format, deadline for submission, etc.</p> <p><b>External CoS</b> also encompasses <b><u>Assessment</u></b>: evaluation criteria and rating procedure</p>
<p><b>Internal CoS</b></p> <p><u>Field</u>: Collaborate with team members to carry out a Product Development Project for Chic Fashion House – researching and developing new fashion products</p> <p><u>Tenor</u>: As members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House, working with 3 fellow team members(reader(s)/audience of project outcome: boss and company management; interlocutors in team discussions – fellow product development team members)</p> <p><u>Mode</u>: Channel – Written (project report); Spoken (group discussions, oral presentation); Role of language – To explain and persuade, language and communicative performance as an integral part of professional performance</p>	<p>The <b><u>Prompt</u></b>, in the form of a simulated text (an intrinsic document e-mail), set up the <b>internal CoS</b> realized as a scenario giving information about subject matter, participants, channel, and purpose of situation.</p> <p>This scenario (the <b>internal CoS</b>) governs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the <b><u>Input data</u></b> to be used</li> <li>2. what the <b><u>expected response</u></b> is</li> <li>3. the <b><u>interaction between input data and response</u></b> (including the <i>scope</i> and <i>directness</i>)</li> </ol> <p>(Thus, the task designer, in constructing the internal COS, has to make sure that the task characteristics in 1 –3 are made clear to the learners through the scenario.)</p>

#### **4.5. Situational Authenticity in Terms of Group Interaction and Individual Work**

In the future workplace of the learners in the fashion industry, as suggested by the subject specialist informant to be discussed in the next section, they will have to work individually as well as to collaborate in teams. The *constructed CoS* of the PBL task series involves the learners in both group work and individual work, and this corresponds to the TLU situation and thus constitutes another aspect of the situational authenticity. Learners have to prepare individually, read and listen to information about the researched topic, extract relevant information on their own before they come to class to share what they have prepared with their team members. On the other hand, they have to listen to one another, share their information and ideas in the process of preparing for the proposed new product. This combination of individual work and group work constitute a dimension of authenticity which is supposed to facilitate L2 learning in various ways: Individual work results in sustained self-dependent efforts by learners, and helps to foster independence and autonomy (Prabhu 1987). Working independently on tasks also ‘enables learners to engage in the “private” manipulation and experimentation with language’ (Lantolf 2000), which many theorists (e.g. Skehan 1998) consider essential for interlanguage development. On the other hand, group work can maximize classroom interaction and can increase the communicative abilities of the group members. Ellis (2003) maintains that collaborative work enables learners to perform beyond the capabilities of any individual learner and cites Dewey (1916:302) that ‘certain capabilities of an individual are not brought out except under the stimulus of associating with others’.

#### **4.6. CoS Incorporating Finder Authenticity**

The constructed CoS of the PBL task series also incorporates what van Lier (1996) calls '*finder authenticity*' (as discussed in 2.6.4), which refers to activities where learners go out and find texts (both written and spoken) for themselves to use in performing tasks. These may be texts found at home, advertising out in the streets, or texts from the Internet, etc..

The constructed CoS of the case PBL task series governs that the Product Development Team members go out and find information (both written and spoken texts) about their chosen research topic and gather whatever information they find useful for proposing a new product from whatever sources possible (e.g. fashion magazines, Internet, commentaries of fashion shows on TV, etc.). This corresponds to what fashion product developers have to do as 'finders' (or discoverers) when researching new fashion products in the TLU situation and thus constitutes another dimension of situational authenticity. van Lier (1996) suggests that this *finder authenticity* is an important aspect of autonomy, since learners determine which texts are to be used instead of just reading/listening to materials assigned by the teacher.

#### **4.7. Situational Authenticity Enhanced by Genuineness**

As discussed in the preceding sections, the constructed CoS serves to authenticate the PBL tasks. This situational authenticity is enhanced by the use of genuine texts as *input data* to give the learner a taste of real language in use. The use of genuine texts, both written and spoken (e.g. the use of magazine articles, fashion information on the

Internet, commentaries of fashion shows on TV, etc.) and real world target tasks (e.g. discussing product design and development concepts with teammates, presenting proposed design products, writing research reports, etc.) has served to enhance the authenticity of the PBL tasks. As Weskamp (1977, cited in Amor 2002:146) suggests:

[genuine materials] give learners a genuine feel for the language and situations, provide language material that is relevant to life, include incidental information about a culture that is generally filtered out of specially written materials, and provide real information that will be of use in real-life situations.

Thus, the use of genuine texts, together with real world target tasks, contextualised by the *constructed CoS*, has enhanced the situational authenticity of the PBL task series.

#### **4.8. CoS Incorporating the Integration of Language Skills and Task Continuity**

To achieve authenticity in the second language classroom, it is important to recognize the natural integration of language skills in real life communication. Authentic communication tasks seldom call for isolated language skills. A workplace communication task as simple as a secretary answering an incoming call and taking a telephone message for her boss involves an integration of listening, speaking and writing skills. As Grundy (1989) points out:

Skills division (listening, speaking, reading, writing, ...etc.) are generally unmotivated by theories of SLA. They also limit what is possible in the classroom.

The constructed CoS serves to link all PBL tasks together, and one task leads logically to the next. The output of one task provides the input for the next. Within this CoS, learners have to read and listen for details in various genuine trade-related texts and present the information they have prepared in the team discussion session with fellow

team members. This involves the integration of reading, listening and speaking skills. In the team discussion session, they have to participate in discussions and arrive at a proposal of new products, which involves listening and speaking skills (and also note-taking skills as they have to take notes during the discussion). Thus, the information that the students obtain from the reading and listening tasks provides the input for the group discussions, and the result of the discussion task forms the input for the final writing and oral presentation tasks. In this way, all PBL tasks are authentically interrelated and the four language skills naturally integrated. Thus, this natural integration of language skills in the design of the PBL task series constitute another aspect of authenticity.

#### **4.9. Correspondence between Contextual Features of Constructed CoS and Those of Specific Purposes TLU (Target Language Use) Domain: Findings from Interviews with Subject Specialist Informants**

If we take Douglas'/Bachman's definition of situational authenticity as the correspondence between the task characteristics of the PBL tasks and those of the TLU tasks, the data analysis in 4.2 – 4.8 has illustrated one dimension of situational authenticity manifested in the design of the PBL task series under investigation – i.e. the construction of CoS to foster authentic communication that correspond to real life/TLU communication (as underpinned by Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics that *where authentic communication takes place, there is always a context of situation*). Another dimension of situational authenticity of the PBL tasks that has to be explored in accordance with Douglas' model has to do with the correspondence between the task characteristics of the PBL tasks (i.e. features of the constructed CoS

in this case) and those of the specific purpose TLU situation (Douglas 2000:47). That is to say, in what way do the features of the constructed CoS of the PBL task series resemble those of the CoS of the specific purpose TLU tasks, i.e. the learners' future workplace? To investigate this dimension of situational authenticity, what Douglas (2000) terms 'subject specialist informant procedure' or what Wu and Stansfield (2001:198) propose as 'verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field' has been employed (as discussed in 3.4.2)

#### **4.9.1. Verification by Practitioners in the Specific Purposes TLU Domain**

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with two practitioners in the fashion industry with a view to investigating the correspondence between the contextual features of the constructed CoS of the PBL task series and those of the specific purposes TLU domain. This is a method proposed by Douglas (2000: 97) as *subject specialist informants procedure*, which involves the use of subject specialists in the analysis of specific purpose target language use situations. Pseudonyms have been used in order to anonymise the informants in the present study. The first informant, Kelly, has worked in the fashion industry for five years. She has worked as Fashion Merchandiser for a medium-scale garment firm (for one and a half years) and then as Fashion Designer for an international fashion company. The second informant, Joyce, has worked for seven years first as a fashion designer (for two years) and then as a product developer for a small-scale local fashion company (for five years). In the interviews for the present study, the informants were asked to review the PBL task series under investigation in terms of their task characteristics and features of the constructed CoS. This method is what Wu and Stansfield (2001:198) propose as

‘verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field’. Wu and Stansfield propose that verification comments and critique by task performers in the field and TLU specialists is of vital importance in ensuring authenticity. Thus, in the present study, ‘verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field’ is used to ascertain the extent of correspondence between the PBL tasks and TLU tasks. Since the informants here are specialists in the fashion industry but not language experts, they were not directly asked to comment on the linguistic features of the PBL tasks in relation to the TLU tasks. Instead, they were prompted to comment on the task characteristics and the contextual features of the CoS set up by the project brief. The informants’ advice and views on the communication needs of the task performers in the workplace were solicited to provide insights into the role and functions of language in the specific purposes field (i.e. TLU context) in relation to the PBL tasks. The guiding questions for the interviews, which were decided after having analysed the Project Brief of the PBL task series, can be found in the interview schedule in Appendix II.

The following reports on the informants’ comments on the correspondence between the *constructed CoS* and the TLU domain in terms of the three contextual parameters *field*, *tenor*, and *mode*.

### **Field (Subject Matter, Activities Taking Place)**

Both informants commented that the subject matter and activities in the constructed CoS (i.e. carrying out a product development project for the company – researching and developing new fashion products) mirror those in their workplace,



We do need to carry out research and come up with new fashion products every season. Unless we offer customers with a wide range of new choices in each season that keep up with the trend, we can't keep them. (Kelly)

To maintain the competitive edge in this industry, it's vital that the company research well into the market and fashion trend and develop new products and styles for every new season. Thus, we very often have to be involved in this kind of product development project. (Joyce)

although this kind of project usually involves the collaboration of different departments of the company:

This kind of project usually involves the collaboration of people from different departments particularly in larger scale companies. Often, the marketing people are responsible for the market research and the promotional strategies; fashion designers will be doing the fashion trend research, and also based on the information from the marketing people, come up with designs for the new season; product developers may coordinate the project and specialize in the actual development of the new products. (Kelly)

But for smaller scale companies, the same team of fashion product developers may be responsible for the whole process of the product development project. (Joyce)

Thus, both informants agreed that fashion designers and product developers, particularly those working in small-scale fashion firms, need to perform the kind of tasks set up in the PBL Project Brief. They are involved in the whole product development project. For those working in bigger companies, their division of work is more specialized and this kind of project will involve the collaboration of different departments, where fashion designers will concentrate on the fashion trend research and design part, without having to be involved with strategies for promoting the new

fashion products. But in small-scale companies, fashion designers and product developers have to be involved in the whole process, from research and development of fashion products to the promotional strategies. Thus, the *context of situation* set up in the Project Brief is realistic in that the TLU context is a small-scale fashion company. In that TLU context, fashion designers / product developers have to submit written research reports/proposals of new fashion products every season. More often, they are required to orally present their proposed design to their boss or clients.

When asked to review the e-mail as an intrinsic document in the *prompt* of the PBL task series, the informants agreed that instructions given by the boss to subordinates to perform tasks are often in the form of e-mail followed by verbal briefing. Thus, the use of the intrinsic document here as the *prompt* corresponds to that in the TLU domain. However, the informants remarked that the email in the TLU context may not be as detailed as the one given in the project brief, which states the steps of the whole process of the research one by one.

On the other hand, Kelly's comments on the job duties of fashion designers have also shed light on the authenticity of *input data* used in the PBL tasks under investigation and the procedural authenticity involved:

As fashion designers, we have to regularly watch fashion shows and review garment magazines and manuals in order to gather information about fashion trends and consumer preferences. (Kelly)

Thus, There is a kind of correspondence between the *input data* used in the PBL task series and those that fashion designers have to interact with in the specific purposes

TLU domain, and the procedures that the learners have to follow in interacting with the input data resemble those expected in the real world (i.e. procedure authenticity).

### **Tenor (Participants)**

The informants revealed that the learners of the PBL module, who are most likely to take up posts of Assistant Fashion Product Developer, Assistant Fashion Designer or Assistant Merchandiser upon finishing their higher diploma course, may not be often required to take part in this kind of product development project. However, when they become more experienced or when they are promoted to Fashion Product Developer, Fashion Designer or Merchandiser, they will be likely to be participants of this kind of project.

In fact, the discussion above concerning the *Field* of discourse also tells much about the participants and their relative status and role in a real life product development project in the TLU situation. The team members, especially in large-scale companies, come from different departments and have different titles of post (such as Fashion Designer, Merchandiser, Product Development Officer, Marketing Officer, etc), while in small companies, all members of the team may assume the post of product development officers and be involved in all stages of the project. Thus, fellow team members are usually of equal status in terms of their rank or title of post. The team is usually led by a more senior or experienced member such as Senior Product Development Officer or Senior Fashion Coordinator.

Our team meetings are usually not very formal, even with our immediate boss as the team leader. Usually, they're like brainstorming sessions. (Joyce)

On the other hand, the readers of project reports and the audience of the oral presentation of proposals are usually the management of the company or the clients who have the power to decide whether or not to accept the proposal.

Of course, we're a lot more alert and businesslike when presenting our proposal. They are our big bosses and clients. Our proposals need the green light from them. This will also affect our career prospects. (Joyce)

Kelly's comments on the job duties of fashion designers also shed light on the participants (and thus the *Tenor*) of communicative events in the workplace:

Look. As fashion designers, we often have to confer with management executives to discuss design ideas. We also have to collaborate with other designers to coordinate special products and designs. (Kelly)

Thus, the information given by the informants concerning the project participants does shed light on the tone and degree of formality of the language used for different tasks of this kind of projects in the TLU context, which to a large extent, correspond to those required in the case PBL tasks.

### **Mode (Channel, Role of Language)**

Both informants agreed that in taking part in this kind of product development project, participants have to be involved in a lot of discussions and information and idea sharing. At the end of the project, the team has to prepare a *written* project report to be

submitted to the boss and either the whole team or the team leader has to *orally* present their project outcome and proposed new products/design concepts to the company management and potential clients.

One of the informants clearly pointed out the role of language in the TLU context in relation to the PBL tasks under investigation:

To be a successful fashion designer or product developer or fashion merchandiser, not only is it important for us to be able to do good designs and develop fashion products that suit the needs of the clients and the market, we also have to be able to communicate the uniqueness of our designs and products to them. Thus, being able to verbalise the selling points of our product designs is crucial.  
(Kelly)

Another informant emphasized the importance of using language to express emotion and visual effects associated with different aspects of the product design:

For instance, you don't just say 'We have chosen black as the main colour tone for our collection'. You don't just say what colour, or what fabric you use for your design. You also have to be able to express the feeling, mood and visual effect associated with the use of different colours and fabric textures, like '*Black gives a sense of mystery* and makes you look more *elegant*; *Sky blue* expresses a *peaceful* and *tranquil* feeling; *lycra* is *highly elastic* and *allows good movement*. (Joyce)

Thus, the informants are emphasizing the ***expository*** (to explain clearly the features and uniqueness of products) and ***persuasive*** (to get across the benefits and selling points of products) illocutionary functions of language in the TLU context and that communicative performance is an integral part of their professional performance. Thus, the role played by language in the TLU tasks, as suggested by the fashion practitioners, corresponds to that of the PBL tasks under investigation.

#### **4.10. Conclusion: Two Levels of Situational Authenticity Conceptualised from the PBL Task Series**

From the analysis of the task design of the PBL task series discussed in this Chapter, it can be concluded that situational authenticity in task design is essentially the *construction of a CoS* within which the learner(s) communicates using the target language. A detailed examination of the design features reveals that two levels of situational authenticity can be conceptualised from the PBL task series:

##### **Level 1: Provision of a constructed CoS (as *context of situation* is a necessary condition for any real life communication event)**

The kind of authenticity manifested in the design of the PBL task series is essentially the provision of a *constructed CoS* through an intrinsic document (an e-mail giving information about *Field*, *Tenor* and *Mode*) in the *prompt*, which in turn governs other task characteristics such as the *input data*, the *expected response* and the *interaction between input and response*. This *constructed CoS* serves to establish for the language learner the *discourse domain* (which refers to ‘the learner’s internal interpretation of context’ (Douglas 2000:46). According to Douglas (2000:46), discourse domains are engaged when the language user recognizes cues in the setting that allow him/her to identify the situation and his or her role in it’. In order to communicate, a language user has to know what’s going on, where he or she is, who he or she is communicating with, what his or her role is, and what the topic is.) Thus, by means of the provision of a *constructed CoS*, the PBL tasks correspond to authentic (real world) communication tasks in the sense that (as the basis of Halliday’s systemic functional linguistic model) *where authentic communication takes place, there is always a context of situation*,

which determines the linguistic choices that are made in relation to the subject matter, the activities taking place, the statuses or roles of the participants in the situation, the channel of communication and the overall purpose of the situation itself (Galien and Bowcher 1994:113). Thus this level 1 of situational authenticity is the *provision of a constructed CoS to correspond to any real world communication event where a context of situation is a necessary condition.*

## **Level 2: Alignment of the constructed CoS with that of the specific purposes TLU domain**

The second level of situational authenticity manifested in the PBL task series under investigation has to do with, on top of the provision of a constructed CoS, the *alignment of the constructed CoS with that of the specific purposes TLU domain.*

Drawing on Bachman's/ Douglas' model of task characteristics for ascertaining situational authenticity, this second level of authenticity has to do with the correspondence of the task characteristics of the PBL tasks and those of the specific purposes TLU domain. As discussed in section 4.9 Verification by Practitioners in the Specific Purposes TLU Domain, it was found that the constructed CoS of the PBL tasks to a large extent correspond to that of the TLU domain in the fashion industry in terms of *field, tenor and mode*. On the other hand, the PBL constructed CoS also corresponds to that of the TLU domain in terms of *finder authenticity, procedural authenticity, group interaction and individual work, and integration of language skills* as discussed in 4.5 –4.8.

Therefore, on top of providing a constructed CoS to resemble the necessary condition of any real life communication as suggested by level 1, the features of the constructed

CoS have to be aligned with those of the specific purposes TLU domain in order to achieve this level 2 of situational authenticity in task design. This is exactly where needs analysis for ESP (Munby 1978) and verification by practitioners and subject specialist informants (Wu and Stansfield 2001) can facilitate this alignment in the task design process. This level of authenticity is especially relevant to ESP, where needs analysis aims to arrive at a sociolinguistic profile of the learner's future language use, and from there to develop a profile of their present learning needs. It seeks to find out about the language-using communities that the learner wishes to join and what their roles and purposes within that community are likely to be. Such information can be the basis for the design of tasks in terms of their linguistic and pragmatic authenticity vis a vis the target speech community, i.e. the construction of a CoS aligned with those of the specific purposes TLU domain, and thus achieving level 2 of situational authenticity in task design as discussed in the analysis in this section.

Thus, the two-level model of situational authenticity conceptualized from the analysis of the task design of the case PBL task series can be represented as follows in Figure 4.1.

<b><u>Situational Authenticity</u></b>	
<b>Level 2</b>	Constructed CoS aligned with that of the specific purposes TLU domain
<b>Level 1</b>	Provision of Constructed CoS (as a necessary condition for any real life communication)

**Figure 4.1: two-level model of situational authenticity**



Within this 2-level model, **level 2** of situational authenticity is implicational of level 1, i.e. this 2-level model is an implicational hierarchy where level 2 of situational authenticity also subsumes features of level 1. As will be seen in the next Chapter, a third level of authenticity will be abstracted from the data collected for the second specific question, and thus will be added to this implicational hierarchy of the authenticity model.

## Chapter Five: Data Analysis: Interactional Authenticity

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the second specific research question by characterizing the *interactional authenticity* manifested in the case PBL task series. It starts by recapitulating the dual dimensionality of authenticity as discussed in the literature review and re-stating the definition of interactional authenticity in the context of the present study – the extent to which the task characteristics (and thus features of the constructed CoS) of the PBL tasks engage the second language learner. It then gives a detailed characterization of the learners' interaction with the constructed CoS in terms of its three parameters *Field*, *Tenor* and *Mode*. The discussion begins with an analysis of data from one of the project outcome products – the written project report. It examines the way the learners interacted with the parameter *Field* of the constructed CoS by engaging their specific purpose background knowledge to address the subject matter of the PBL tasks in various ways, such as making reference to the context of the real world Hong Kong fashion market, engaging their fashion design creativity in the proposed product, making use of trade-specific genuine texts, trade specific vocabulary and language items, etc. It also examines the learners' interaction with the *Tenor*, another parameter of CoS, by analyzing the learners' use of personal pronouns and the formality of tone used in the project report – areas of grammar most closely related to the *interpersonal* meta-function of language. It then discusses the way in which the *Mode* of the CoS engaged the learners' illocutionary competence *to explain* and *to persuade*.

Section 5.4.2 then reports on the interactional authenticity with regard to the learners' interaction with the constructed CoS in their oral presentation, another project outcome product. It focuses on the extent to which the *Tenor* engaged the learners in this oral presentation task, i.e. how much the learners approached the oral presentation as if they really assumed the role of Product Development Team members and were presenting to an audience who are their superiors and the company management (the *Tenor* set up in the constructed CoS).

Section 5.4.3 analyzes data from the team discussion session and characterizes the learners' interaction with the constructed CoS as a manifestation of group dynamics in terms of Jacobs and Ward's (1999) principle of *positive interdependence*. An analysis of the student-student interactions utilizing the Hallidayan framework reveals that the learners, in approaching this team discussion task, operated within both the *internal CoS* and the *external CoS* in terms of the *Tenor*. This is to be triangulated and further explored in the data analysis section on the retrospective focus group interviews.

Section 5.4.4 analyses the learners' interaction with the constructed CoS of the PBL task series with regard to the data obtained from the retrospective focus group interviews and it characterizes the authenticity as well as the 'inauthenticity' of the interaction emerging from the data.

Upon triangulating data obtained by the various research tools employed in the present study, this chapter then attempts to account for both the authentic and 'unauthentic' aspects of the learners' engagement with the PBL tasks by again utilizing the CoS conceptual framework – the dichotomy of the internal CoS and the external CoS. This

chapter concludes that the interactional authenticity manifested in the PBL task series has shed light on a Level 3 situational authenticity (to be added to the 2-level situational authenticity model discussed in Chapter 4) and discusses its implications for ESP/ELT task design.

## **5.2. Dual Dimensionality of Authenticity**

Drawing on the dual notion of authenticity proposed by Bachman (1990) and Douglas (2000), for a task to be authentic, it has to achieve both *situational and interactional authenticity*. While the focus of *situational authenticity* is on the relationship between the task characteristics of the language learning tasks and those of the TLU tasks, *interactional authenticity* resides in the interaction between the language learner and the task characteristics of the learning task. Thus, in investigating the authenticity as manifested in the case PBL module, this study seeks to explore the dual dimensions of authenticity. To explore the situational authenticity of the PBL task series, the first specific research question focuses on the analysis of the task design of the PBL module and examines how and to what extent situational authenticity is realized in the task design. In the data analysis in Chapter 4, utilizing the conceptual framework of Halliday's (1978) notion of *Context of Situation* in conjunction with Douglas' (2000) *Task Characteristics* framework, it is concluded that task design can be conceptualized as the construction of CoS, and two levels of situational authenticity can be abstracted from the analysis of the design of the PBL task series.

The second research question aims to look at the other dimension of authenticity, i.e. interactional authenticity – the interaction between the language learner and the task

characteristics. In other words, the second research question aims to look beyond the situational authenticity designed into the tasks to examine the task implementation, i.e. to what extent and in what way the task characteristics engaged the learners and their Specific Purpose Language Ability (according to Douglas' definition of *interactional authenticity*). It is commonly known that learners do not always implement tasks in the way in which task designers intend. This has been highlighted by authors such as Breen (1987), who notes that the 'task as workplan' will be redrawn by learners as the 'task in process'. Thus, as Spence-Brown (2001: 479) points out, it is important to examine authenticity 'from the point of view of implementation rather than just of task design.' He suggests that 'the elicitation of the subjects' own accounts of their engagement with the task, in conjunction with an examination of the discourse produced', will yield valuable data about the task process (Spence-Brown 2001:480). Thus, to address the second specific research question, three research methods were employed to look into the interactional authenticity manifested in the process as well as the products elicited by the PBL tasks:

- a.** discourse analysis of project outcome products (i.e. written project report and oral presentation)
- b.** unstructured observation of the team discussion session that the learners were involved in and discourse analysis of their oral interactions in the team discussion
- c.** retrospective semi-structured focus group interviews with the two groups of learners about their experience of the process of engaging with the PBL tasks to triangulate with the data collected from the project outcome products (the written project report and the oral presentation) and the team discussion session and to gain further insight into the task processes.

### 5.3. Interactional Authenticity Defined in the Context of the Present Study

Drawing on Bachman's/Douglas' model and the '*task design as construction of CoS*' framework that has emerged from the discussion in Chapter 4, interactional authenticity in the context of the present study refers to *the extent to which the task characteristics of the PBL tasks (and thus the feature of the constructed CoS) engage the learner*. Thus, to address the second specific research question concerning *interactional authenticity* is to examine what the project outcome (the written project report and the oral presentation) as well as the process (the learners' team discussion and the retrospective focus group interviews on the learners' experience of engaging in the PBL tasks) tell us about how features of the *constructed CoS* engaged the learners and their Specific Purpose Language Ability (Douglas 2000).

If task design, as discussed in Chapter 4, is the construction of a CoS for learners to interact with, to look at the interactional authenticity thus means to look into the extent to which the learners really approach the task(s) within the constructed CoS.

Before analyzing how the data collected for the second specific research question shed light on the interactional authenticity manifested in the PBL tasks under investigation, Table 5.1 recaps the constructed CoS of the PBL tasks in terms of the three parameters Field, Tenor and Mode as discussed in the previous chapter:

<b>Field</b> (subject matter, activities taking place)	Researching and developing new fashion products for Chic Fashion House
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	as members of Product Development Team (reader(s) of written report and audience of oral presentation: superiors and company management; interlocutors in team discussion: fellow team members)
<b>Mode</b> (channel, role of language)	Written (project report); Spoken (group discussions, oral presentation)  To <i>explain</i> the design concepts and product details and <i>persuade</i> readers/audience to accept the proposed ideas  Team discussion: to share information and exchange ideas

**Table 5.1: Constructed CoS of the PBL Task Series**

#### **5.4. Learners' Interaction with Features of Constructed CoS**

If task design is essentially the construction of a CoS (which incorporates all task characteristics as discussed in 4.4) and interactional authenticity is the learner's engagement with the task characteristics (Douglas 2000), it follows that interactional authenticity is about how and the extent to which the learners are engaged with the features of the constructed CoS in terms of its three parameters. An analysis of the data from the PBL task outcomes together with those from the retrospective focus group interviews shows the learners' awareness of and interaction with the contextual features of the constructed CoS in various ways, as to be seen in the following sections.

Since the PBL task series under investigation requires learners to work in groups of four to carry out a team project, the present study has sampled two of the groups to be the participants of the research. The first group comprises the members (pseudonyms are used here to anonymise the participants) Carrie, Christine, Chai Chi and Yan, while the second group comprises the members Carmen, Louis, Rachel, and San. In the following discussion I would refer to the first group as Carrie's group and the second group as Carmen's group. Carrie's group has chosen to work on the topic 'The Development of a Rainwear Collection' while Carmen's group has chosen the topic 'The Development of a Maternity Wear Collection' for their research project.

#### **5.4.1. Learners' Interaction with Features of the Constructed CoS: Data from the Written Project Report**

The written project reports from both Carmen's group and Carrie's group were analysed utilising the *CoS* conceptual framework (which synthesizes Halliday's Context of Situation notion and Douglas' Task Characteristics framework as discussed in 4.4). As context of situation determines the linguistic choices in relation to the subject matter, the activities taking place (Field), the statuses and roles of the participants (Tenor), and the role that language is playing in that situation – the channel or medium and function of language (Mode), it was found that the learners' awareness of and interaction with the *constructed CoS* in terms of Field, Tenor and Mode are evident in various ways in their written project reports. The following gives a characterization of this interaction.



#### **5.4.1.1. Learner's Awareness of and Interaction with the Contextual Parameter *Field***

An examination of the written project reports from the two groups of learners shows that the learners were aware of and interacted with the *Field* (realized as the subject matter/activities going on, i.e. a fashion product development project) by engaging their specific purpose background knowledge in various ways:

##### Making Reference to the Context of Real Life Hong Kong Fashion Market:

##### Establishing the 'Territory'

The awareness of and interaction with the *field* of the constructed CoS of the PBL task series is evident from the learners' justification of their choice of topic of the research project. To illustrate this, the framework of *genre analysis* (Swales 1990) can be drawn upon to complement the CoS conceptual framework here. Genre analysis emphasizes the dynamic nature of genres in which writers manipulate genre structures depending on the situation and the purpose of writing (Bhatia 1993). In other words, the text is a function of the interaction between the writer and the context of situation. Within genre analysis, a text is analysed in terms of the rhetorical moves. Essentially, a move in a text is a functional unit, used for some identifiable rhetorical purpose. The first move found in the project reports of both Carrie's and Carmen's groups is one which, to borrow Swales' term (1981, 1990), establishes the '*territory*' in which the research placed itself. According to Swales, there are two types of territories: 1. a 'real world' territory, i.e. how the project is situated in the world outside the research field, and 2. a research territory, i.e. the field that the research places itself in, within the

discipline that the project identifies with. In both the project reports under investigation (the one by Carmen's group and the other by Carrie's group), both the 'real world' and 'research' territories are addressed. Both project reports begin by establishing how the new product line to be proposed is situated in the Hong Kong fashion market:

Nowadays, most of people pursue a high quality lifestyle. Although pregnant period just ten months, there still many pregnant women desire suitable pregnant clothing when they are pregnancy. They not only need comfortable pregnant clothing but also is fashionable clothing. In Hong Kong, there are many women need to work during pregnant, especially they are working ladies and need to wear formal dressing due to their work nature. To consider these factors, developing pregnant clothing which combine fashionable and formal has its potential in the Hong Kong fashion market. (Carmen's group)

We have the idea of developing rainwear collection because Hong Kong always faces rainfall in spring and summer. Also, we believe that bad weather can affect one's dressing. Since we need to consider what to wear to prevent clothes from wetting and splashing, we cannot dress our best but dress shabbily to welcome rainfall. It seems that rainfall not only brings a lot of inconvenience to us and also affect our moods. Therefore, we would like to develop rainwear collection with cheerful colours, fashionable styles and functional purposes to let the public to get rid of dull moods. (Carrie's group)

The fact that the learners address the 'territory' (i.e. the Hong Kong fashion market) in the justification of their research topic shows their awareness of the *field* established by the constructed CoS.

<b>Field</b>  <b>(subject matter, activities taking place)</b>	Researching and developing new fashion products for Chic Fashion House for the Hong Kong fashion market
--	---

Reference to the ‘real world’ territory (and thus interaction with the *field*) can be found in various other parts of the project report, such as the mentioning of the ‘low birth rate in Hong Kong’, the ‘high purchasing power and high quality, chic lifestyle of Hong Kong working women’ (Carmen’s group), and the fact that ‘it has been raining continuously for over a month in Hong Kong’ (Carrie’s group). Such references to the real world Hong Kong context in relation to their proposed fashion products for the project have also revealed the learners’ interaction with the subject matter and the setting established in the constructed CoS.

Another move found in the two project reports under analysis is ‘*establishing a niche*’ (to again borrow Swales’ term), i.e. a gap in the ‘territory’ that needs to be filled, which serves as a motivation to the research and thus justifies the subsequent proposed new product line:

In Hong Kong garment retail market, most of companies and brands mainly put their resources into Men’s, Women’s /Ladies even Kids product line. Thus pregnant clothing always is ignored. (Carmen’s group)

A search on Hong Kong fashion shop websites show not many choices of rainwear are offered on the market. The styles and colours of rainwear are very limited. (Carrie’s group)

Both moves, *establishing a territory* and *establishing a niche*, have reflected the learners’ interaction with the *field* (subject matter: a project in the context of the Hong Kong fashion industry) set up in the *constructed CoS* in that the learners’ specific purpose background knowledge (which is one of the components of specific purpose language ability within Douglas’ model) concerning the fashion market is engaged when responding to the subject matter and the activities going on in this project (i.e.

researching and developing new fashion products for Chic Fashion House for the Hong Kong fashion market).

The engagement of the learners' specific purpose background knowledge is evident in the research questions stated in the report by Carrie's group:

1. What is the background of raincoat?
2. What is the fashion trend for spring/summer 2008 (e.g. colour palette, fabrics, prints and patterns)?
3. What are the characteristics of our target market (e.g. age, income, personality, hobbies, shopping habits and fashion attitude)?
4. How do the public like the idea of rainwear collection?
5. How much are the public willing to spend on rainwear products?

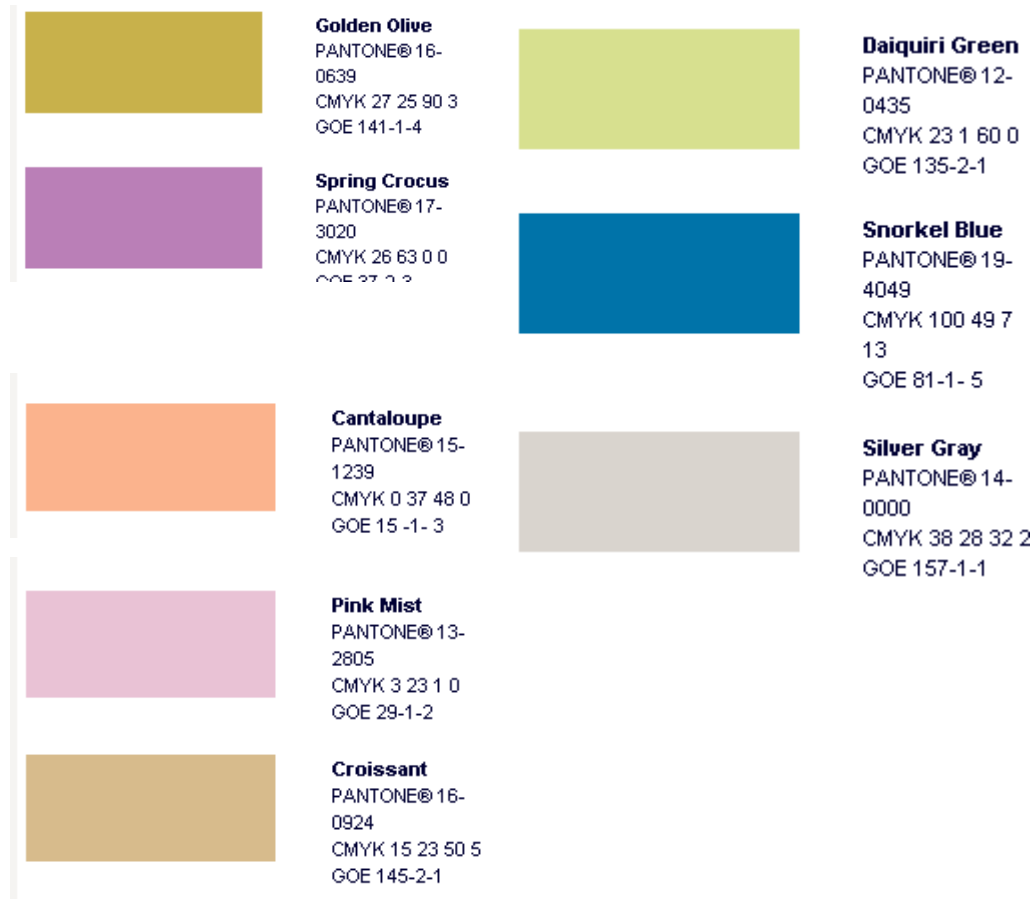
(Carrie's group)

The setting of these research questions was to a certain extent guided by the learners' specific purpose background knowledge about the fashion industry. (As the learners later on revealed in the retrospective interviews, they set these research questions in the light of what they had learnt in their trade subjects Fashion Trend Analysis and Fashion Business.)

### The Use of Trade-specific Genuine Input Texts

Other instances of the learners' engagement with the *field* are their references to genuine sources used in the fashion field, such as the Pantone Colours website and the WGSN website. These are websites that people in the fashion industry use when doing professional research in their trade. The following are quoted from the project reports by Carmen's and Carrie's groups:

As 43% of [the potential customers] like soft color and 36% of them like natural color. As Spring/Summer 09 these color which is searched from pantone website will be hit. These colors are not very bright but it can give people the peace feeling. That can be suitable for our collection line.



(Carmen's group)

As noted in WGSN's fashion trend analysis, floral prints, animal prints and geometric prints will become popular:

*"Print is a key fabric direction for spring/summer 2008. Flora is a driving force, with abstract, flat florals and illustrative wild flowers joined by the occasional animal pattern. Extravagant-scale geometric prints imbued with a "summer of love" feel, evocative of the 1970s."*

(WGSN 2007) (Carrie's group)

Thus, this learner awareness of the *Field* established in the constructed CoS leads to *procedural authenticity* (Nunan 2004) of the use of these trade-related *genuine* input data, i.e. the procedures that the learners followed in interacting with the input data (in this case, input texts and graphics from the Pantone Colours website and the WGSN website, etc.), to a certain extent, resemble those of fashion professionals in carrying out trade projects, in that the learners were guided by their specific purpose background knowledge to search for relevant genuine trade materials as reading input, assimilated the input data, and made use of the assimilated information in developing a new fashion product line for their company (the subject matter of the case PBL task series).

#### 'Indirectness' in the Interaction between the Input Data and Expected Response

The activation of the learners' specific purpose background knowledge by the *Field* parameter of the CoS is particularly evident in the section of 'Proposed Product Design and Promotional Strategies' in the project report. This is the result of, to be put in terms of *task characteristics* in Douglas model, the '*indirectness*' in the *interaction between the input data and expected response*. (Here, '*directness*' refers to the degree to which the response depends directly on the *input* as opposed to the language user's own specific purpose background knowledge. The task may require a 'direct' response, where the response is highly dependent on the *input*, or an 'indirect' response, where the task taker relies more on specific purpose background knowledge.). In this case project, the constructed CoS governs that the learners assimilate the input data and research findings and incorporate their specific purpose background knowledge of fashion (and also their own creativity) to come up with a

proposed new product line for their fashion company, thus requiring an *indirect* response. For example, for Carmen's group, after finding out from the fashion websites and target customer survey that 'modern pregnant ladies want a line of maternity clothes that offers the perfect mix of comfort, fit and style and is designed to compliment the wearer and her changing body shape', and that 'they attach a lot of importance to high quality fabrics and the protective functions of hi-tech materials,' the group made use of their fashion design knowledge and creativity to address these findings. They proposed a collection that 'features high waistlines with ties at the side to adjust the fit' and 'makes use of an innovative high-technology metal net, which has been proven to be repellent to electromagnet waves emitted by computers and photocopiers in the office, as the raw material for the garments to provide a kind of protective function for pregnant women.' Similar incorporation of specific purpose background knowledge is also found in the project report of Carrie's group. For example, the group proposes 'posting advertisements in fashion magazines such as Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan and Jessica which are targeted at young female', using 'celebrity endorsement', and that 'a group of three mannequins be placed in the centre of the rainwear area and surrounded by two rails of key products, which include signature items such as the geometric raincoat and rain boots' as promotional strategies for the new product line. (As the group revealed in the retrospective focus group interview, these are some of the promotional strategies they had learnt from their trade subject Fashion Business.)

#### Trade-specific Lexical Items and Language Expressions

The interaction between the learners' specific purpose background knowledge and language ability is also manifested by the presence of trade-specific lexical items and

language expressions in the project report. For example, numerous vocabulary items related to elements of fashion design such as colours, lines, fabrics, silhouettes are present in the project report of both Carrie's and Carmen's group. Some instances are quoted as follows in Table 5.2:

<b>Fashion Design Elements</b>	<b>Trade-specific Lexical Items</b>
Colours	Pastel colours, earth tone, green, shocking pink, white, golden olive, silver grey, croissant, snorkel blue, etc.
Lines and patterns	floral prints, animal prints, vertical and horizontal stripes, geometric patterns, checks, paisley, etc.
Fabrics	lightweight, quality natural fabrics such as organic cotton and silk, lycra, spandex, polyester, linen, nylon, rayon, etc.
Silhouettes	Balloon silhouette, loose-fitting, high waistline, etc.

**Table 5.2: Instances of trade-specific lexical items and language expressions in the project report**

Apart from trade-specific lexical items, language expressions describing the feelings and moods associated with colours can also be found in the project reports:

Pastel colours and earth tones use for maternity clothes give a comfortable feeling and a sense of tranquility.

Sharp colours stand for happiness.

(Carmen's group)

Cheerful colours will be a trend.

Dynamic and energetic colours such as yellow, red and shocking pink play an important role in the coming season.

(Carrie's group)



As shown in section 4.9.1. ‘Verification by Practitioners and Subject Specialists in the Specific Purposes TLU Domain’ in Chapter 4, *expressing emotion and visual effects* associated with *different aspects of the product design* is a language feature specific to the field of fashion product design. Thus, the presence of language expressions describing the feelings and moods associated with colours in the project report is also a manifestation of the interaction between the learners’ language knowledge and specific purpose background knowledge (in this case, the learners’ professional sense of colours) activated by the *Field* parameter of the constructed CoS.

From the discussion in this section, it can be concluded that the learners were aware of and they interacted with the parameter *Field* of the constructed CoS by engaging their specific purpose background knowledge to address the subject matter of the PBL task series in various ways. This shows that the learners, in approaching this research project report writing task, operated within the constructed CoS in terms of its Field parameter.

#### **5.4.1.2. Learners’ Awareness of and Interaction with the Contextual Parameter**

##### ***Tenor***

***Tenor***, another parameter of the Context of Situation within the Hallidayan model, has to do with to the social relation existing between the participants in a speech situation. It includes formality, power and affect. It refers to who is taking part and the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles. *Tenor* influences interpersonal choices in the linguistics system, and therefore affects the structures and strategies chosen to activate

the linguistic exchange. The *Tenor* of the CoS constructed for the PBL task series, as discussed in Chapter 4, is as follows:

<b>Tenor (Participants)</b>	as members of Product Development Team  (reader(s) of written report and audience of oral presentation: boss and company management)
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According to Halliday (1978), one of the areas of grammar most closely associated with the Interpersonal meta-function of language, and thus *Tenor*, is the use of personal pronouns. Throughout the project reports of both Carmen's and Carrie's groups, there are instances of the use of the first person plural pronoun '*we*' and the possessive pronoun '*our*' as in:

We will use high quality fabrics such as 100% organic cotton and jersey for our new collection.

We aim to create high quality, fashionable maternity clothes for our target customers.

We can expand to the mainland China fashion market.

(Carmen' group)

Through the survey, we found that ..... Therefore, we would recommend.... for our new product line.

The survey shows that our potential customers would like us to invite celebrities to be the image girl. Surely, the celebrities need to match our brand image.

(Carrie's group)

It is obvious that the 'we' in these instances refers to 'the Product Development Team' or 'Chic Fashion House', and 'our' refers to 'the Team's' or 'Chic Fashion House's'. Thus, the learners' use of the personal pronouns 'we' and 'our' reflects that they recognized their role as established in the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS. In approaching this project report writing task, the learners are operating within the

constructed CoS in terms of its *Tenor* (which refers to the role of the participants as members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House).

What is also worth noting about the use of the personal pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ can be found in the introductory paragraph of the project report by Carrie’s group:

We have the idea of developing rainwear collection because Hong Kong always faces rainfall in spring and summer. Also, we believe that bad weather can affect one’s dressing. Since we need to consider what to wear to prevent clothes from wetting and splashing, we cannot dress our best but dress shabbily to welcome rainfall. It seems that rainfall not only brings a lot of inconvenience to us and also affect our moods. Therefore, we would like to develop rainwear collection with cheerful colours, fashionable styles and functional purposes to let the public to get rid of dull moods.

(Carrie’s group)

Here, the underlined ‘we’ and ‘us’ do not necessarily refer to ‘the Product Development Team’ or ‘Chic Fashion House’. Rather, these first person plural pronouns refer to the generic ‘we’, or the writers’ personal self, the ‘*real we*’, i.e. the learners themselves, and in this introductory paragraph, the learners are referring to their own personal experience about wearing clothes in the rainy weather of Hong Kong rather than talking on behalf of ‘the Product Development Team’ or ‘Chic Fashion House’.

Thus, from the analysis of the learners’ use of personal pronouns in the project reports, it can be seen that the learners, in approaching this project report writing task, operated not only within the *internal CoS* but also the *external CoS* in terms of the *Tenor*. The notion of *internal CoS* and *external CoS* has been pursued in 4.4 in Chapter 4, where *internal CoS* refers to CoS internal to the simulated world (i.e. the

Product Development Project for Chic Fashion House) and *external CoS* refers to CoS external to the simulated world, i.e. the second language classroom (the personal, real world of the learners). It was found that this distinction between the *internal* and *external CoS* became more apparent when it comes to the data analysis of the team discussion task and retrospective focus group interviews in later sections.

Another linguistic feature associated with *Tenor* is the formality of tone of the discourse, as the tone reflects the interpersonal relation of the participants. As the reader(s) of the project report in the constructed CoS are the writers' superiors and company management in a business context, the writers' engagement with the *Tenor* will result in the choice of a formal, business-like tone of the written text. There are plenty of instances of the use of passive voice (with occasional grammatical mistakes though), which may apparently show the writers' attempt at achieving a more formal, distant, and impersonal tone as activated by the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS:

Based on the findings, a new product design **will be proposed**.

Several methods **were used** to obtain findings of this research. First, an internet search **was carried out** for information about the main pregnant clothing design details and elements which **have been existed** nowadays. Second, an observation **was carried out** to find out the main competitors (brand) in pregnant clothing field. Third, a survey questionnaire **was done** with 80 pregnant women...

(Carmen's group)

To examine the potential of using rainwear for the upcoming spring/summer women's collection of our fashion brand Monsoon, a research **was carried out**.

The development of the rainwear collection **is proposed** as follows:

Thus, **it is recommended** that ....

According to the survey, **it was found** that ...

the background of raincoat **was found** on <http://www.answers.com/topic/raincoat>.

(Carrie's group)

There are also instances of the learners' attempted use (with grammatical mistakes due to the learners' immature mastery of the form) of the present subjunctive mood which serves to enhance the formality of the tone of the project report:

It is recommended that organic fabrics are be used for the new collection.

It is proposed that the new collection not only provides formal clothes but also casual wear.

(Carmen's group)

However, it is found that the tone of the project report is not consistently formal.

Apart from the use of the first person pronouns 'we', 'us' and 'our' as mentioned before, which is inconsistent with the official, impersonal tone achieved by the passive constructions in the text, there are other instances of expressions of more of a conversational, rather than formal style such as:

**Surely**, our collection will include casual wear and sportswear as well.

**Maybe** some online shops are our competitors.

**By the way**, the maternity wear market will expand **more and more**.

**But of course**, some design features should be changed.

(Carmen's group)

These inconsistencies in terms of the formality of tone have cast doubts as to the extent to which the learners were aware of, and thus, their engagement with the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS. This issue is to be followed up on in the retrospective focus group interviews with a view to seeking clarifications as far as the learners' engagement with the *Tenor* of the CoS is concerned.

#### 5.4.1.3. Learners' Awareness of and Interaction with the Contextual Parameter

##### *Mode*

*Mode* refers to what part the language is playing and what is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation. It describes the way the language is being used in the speech interaction, including the medium (spoken, written) as well as the rhetorical mode (expository, instructive, persuasive, etc.) (Halliday 1978). The Mode of the constructed CoS under investigation is:

<b>Mode</b> <b>(channel, role of language)</b>	Written (research project report); Spoken (oral presentation)  To <i>explain</i> the design concepts and product details and <i>persuade</i> readers/audience to accept the proposed ideas
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Thus, the role played by language in this constructed CoS is *to explain* and *to persuade* – to explain clearly the research they have carried out and how the proposed new product line is based on the research findings so as to persuade the reader(s) to accept the proposal. The learners' awareness of and interaction with the *Mode* of the constructed CoS are illustrated by the learners' attempt to achieve the illocutionary force of *explication* and *persuasiveness* to fulfill the communicative goal of the discourse. The learners' attempt to explicate and to persuade is manifested in different parts of their project report.

Immediately in the introduction section of the report, both groups tried to justify the choice of their project topic. Carmen's group tried to do so by quoting from famous fashion magazines, which gives more authority and thus persuasiveness to their argument:

Pregnancy is often regarded as 'one of the happiest times in a woman's life' but it can also be 'the most sartorially frustrating' period since 'it's tough to feel beautiful when you're swollen up, and there are diminishing choices in your wardrobe' (InStyle 2003, p.166).

(Carmen' group)

This illustrates the learners' awareness of the communication goal of the text *to persuade* and their attempt to convince the reader of their sensible choice of the topic.

Carrie's group did this by sharing their personal (as discussed in 5.4.1.2, the underlined 'we', 'us' and 'our' refer to the learners' personal self) feelings and experience to persuade the reader of the need for fashionable rainwear.

The learners' attempt to *persuade* is especially evident in the section 'Recommendations: Proposed New Product Line', where the learners tried to justify their proposed new product line based on the research findings. They refer to their research findings using phrases such as 'in view of the survey results', 'according to the findings above', 'with reference to the survey report', 'based on the findings of the survey', 'in the light of the market research findings', etc. to give more credibility to what they are proposing. There are also instances where the learners used cause-and-effect phrases (as highlighted below) in giving reasons to support their proposed products, and thus to *persuade*:

As modern women have a high purchasing power, they are willing to buy trendy and high quality pregnant clothes when they are pregnant.

A majority pregnant women do not buy pregnant clothing *due to* they need to wear formal dressing when they are working.

*Since* the survey shows....., *therefore* the price of our maternity collection can be middle-high.  
According to the survey result, our target customers prefer stylish and chic maternity clothes.  
*So*, our design will be ....

(Carmen's group)

With reference to the Pantone Fashion Color Report for S/S 2008, cheerful colors like blue, yellow, red will play an important role in coming season. *Therefore*, these colors will be included in our collection.

The survey shows that the majority of respondents were in favor of .... *Hence*, it is proposed that our color palette of our collection would include blue, yellow, red, pink, ....  
...*Therefore*, it is suggested that floral prints, animal prints, checks, dotted prints and vertical stripes will be adopted in our collection.

According to the fashion trend analysis, ....*Thus*, it is recommended that blend of cotton, rayon, polyester and plastic would be used for our collection.

(Carrie's group)

To achieve the *persuasive* illocutionary function for the discourse, clear explication of ideas and arguments also plays an important role. In the project reports of both Carmen's and Carrie's group, there are instances demonstrating the learners' strategies to explain ideas clearly such as making use of various discourse markers to sequence ideas and mark the change of topics:

Several methods were used to obtain findings of this research. *First*, .... *Second*, ... *Third*, ....  
*Finally*,....

(Carmen's group)

*Regarding* the Pantone Fashion Color Report, ...

*With regard to* their monthly income, one-third of the respondents earned \$5001-\$10000 a month....

*Concerning* the personality of interviewees, under one-third of them said that...

*As far as* their shopping habits are concern, .....

(Carrie's group)



Besides, the text is organized under different headings using a numbering system, and this contributes to a clearer *explication* of the learners' ideas in the report.

Also illustrating the learners' illocutionary competence *to explicate* is their use of language expressions to describe and explain the use of colours with their associated feelings and moods, which is a very important language skill for fashion designers as discussed in 5.4.1.1.

In addition, there are non-verbal elements used by the learners in the report of both Carmen's and Carrie's group in an attempt to enhance the clear explanation of their ideas in the project report, such as the use of charts and graphs to represent survey findings, the use of sketches and pictures to illustrate the proposed product design.

When triangulated with data from the retrospective focus group interviews with the learners in 5.4.4, the above instances from the project report show the engagement of the learners' CLA (communicative language ability) in response to the *Mode* of the constructed CoS. It is interesting to note that, although the learners made frequent grammatical mistakes in their written project report, the examples discussed above nevertheless illustrate the learners' illocutionary competence *to explain* and *to persuade*, the role expected to be played by language as set up in the *Mode* of the constructed CoS. Thus, the language data here shows that the learners had low grammatical competence but they demonstrated awareness of and attempt to achieve the illocutionary functions (*to explain* and *to persuade*). This shows that the constructed CoS indeed established the discourse domain for the learners and engaged their communicative language ability (CLA) (Bachman and Palmer 1996) in terms of their grammatical, textual and functional knowledge. The learners were well aware of

the *Mode* of the constructed CoS (to be further discussed in the triangulation with the data from the retrospective focus group interviews in 5.4.4.) and attempted to achieve the illocutionary functions required in the constructed CoS. Thus, *task design as the construction of CoS* (discussed in 4.4 in Chapter 4) has significance for both pedagogical and assessment purposes. For assessment purposes, as the constructed CoS establishes the discourse domain for the learners and thus informs them of the illocutionary functions they are expected to achieve in such a context of situation, this engages the learners' CLA and thus can distinguish learners of higher grammatical competence from those of lower grammatical competence attempting to achieve the expected illocutionary functions. Pedagogically, this shows what grammatical areas and other language items the learner is weak in for achieving certain illocutionary functions, and thus sheds light on those particular language items to be focused on at a post-task stage. Thus, the CoS model can indeed complement Willis' TBL (task-based learning) framework (1996) discussed in 2.3.7, where a language focused component is needed at the post-task stage – 'the language focused work comes after the task cycle, when learners have had direct experience of the language in use and have become aware of what they as individuals, need to learn.'

#### **5.4.2. Learners' Interaction with Features of Constructed CoS: Data from the Project Oral Presentation**

Observations of the oral presentations given by Carrie's and Carmen's group show that both groups mainly based the content of their oral presentation on that of their written project report – Their oral presentation was basically a summary of their written report, with each member presenting one or two sections of the report.

Therefore the way the content of the oral presentation reflects the learners' interaction with the *Field* of the constructed CoS essentially resembles that of their interaction with the *Field* of the constructed CoS manifested in the data from the written project report as discussed in 5.4.1. – The learners were aware of and they interacted with the parameter *Field* of the constructed CoS by engaging their specific purpose background knowledge to address the subject matter of the PBL tasks in various ways.

What is more worth noting here is the extent to which the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS engaged the learners in this oral presentation task, i.e. how much the learners approached the oral presentation as if they were really presenting to an audience who were their superiors and the company management (the *Tenor* set up in the constructed CoS). Indeed, from the observation data of both Carrie's and Carmen's groups, most learners did not show much awareness of the audience – most of them just read from their notes without demonstrating much attempt to involve and interact with the audience. Although all members did attempt to maintain some eye contact with the audience, most of them did not have much facial expression and body language as required in an effective business presentation. Most of them maintained quite a flat intonation throughout the presentation. The only exception found is with a member from Carrie's group, Christine, who, apart from using body language such as hand gestures and enthusiastic facial expressions, also attempted to involve and interact with the audience by using imperatives and interrogatives such as:

Imagine er.. it's raining heavily outside right now. Would you want to go outdoors at the risk of er... getting your nice clothes wet?

Do you ever want to wear beautiful clothes on rainy days?

(Christine)

According to Halliday (1978), two of the grammar areas most closely associated with the Interpersonal meta-function of language, and thus *Tenor*, are **mood** and **personal pronouns**. By mood, we refer to whether the piece of language under focus is a statement, an imperative, an interrogative or a subjunctive. This relates to the interpersonal in that an interrogative reverses the roles in a statement. In a statement, the speaker seeks to give information; in a question, the speaker seeks to receive information from the audience, thus getting the audience to reply and hence involved. An imperative seeks to get the audience to act according to the command and thus again involved. Christine's use of the imperative mood and the interrogative mood are instances of her attempt to involve and interact with the audience. At the end of her presentation, she said, 'Will **you** think of accepting **our** proposed rainwear collection?' The question here not only shows the learner's attempt to involve the audience, but the use of the personal pronouns also sheds light on her awareness of the audience set up by the Tenor in the constructed CoS: ('**You**' here refers to the top management of Chic Fashion House who has the power to 'accept the proposed rainwear collection', while '**our**' refers to the 'Product Development Team's'.) Another member Carrie also demonstrated similar awareness when she said at the end of the group presentation, '**We** hope that **you** would give **us** er...the permission to go ahead with **our** proposal.'

However, apart from the occasional use of the first person plural pronoun 'we' to refer to 'the Product Development Team', no other instances like those of Christine and Carrie can be found in the oral presentations of other members to illustrate the learners' awareness of the audience. Most of the other members were like reading out a summary of their written project report to the audience, and often at quite a fast pace.

Another interesting observation worth discussing here is the interaction between the presenters and the audience in the question and answer session at the end of the oral presentation. This is almost the only interaction found between the learners with the audience throughout the whole presentation. One question was asked by a member of the audience in the Q&A session for Carmen's group and one was also asked for Carrie's group. For Carmen's group, a member from the audience raised the question: 'Have your team thought about which celebrity you will invite to be the spokesman of the proposed maternity wear collection?' For Carrie's group, the question raised is, 'Why are umbrellas not included in your rainwear collection?'

For Carmen's group, the members Rachel and Louis answered the question:

Well, we'll invite Kelly Chan as our spokesman. Er... As you all know, Kelly is such a famous pop singer in Hong Kong and has a very healthy image, and she is pregnant recently.  
(Rachel)

And Kelly's image suits the trendy image of our maternity wear collection very much. A lot of our potential customers are Kelly's fans. So, er... I think Kelly is a very suitable image girl for our collection. Do you agree? (Louis)

For Carrie's group, the members Chai Chi and Christine answered the question:

Actually, we will design umbrellas for our collections later on if the collection sells well. But at the moment, we'll just focus on items that can be put on the body, that is, trenchcoats, boots and hats. (Chai Chi)

We will expand to different styles of umbrellas in the next season. Thank you. (Christine)

While the above shows some interactions between the presenters and the audience and can be interpreted as the learners' awareness of the *Tenor* as set up in the constructed

CoS as the answers show that the learners are talking on behalf of the ‘Product Development Team’, it is nevertheless observed that the interactions are not at all authentic, in that the learners were able to answer the ‘on-the-spot’ questions very instantly without having to take time to consider as in real life situations. They were able to give their answers very fluently without hesitations, which makes the questions and answers in the Q&A session look pre-arranged and scripted. The authenticity of their interactions in the Q&A session will be further investigated and verified in the retrospective focus group interviews to be discussed in 5.4.4.

With regard to the extent to which the *Mode* of the CoS engaged the learners in this oral presentation task, it was observed that the language the learners used in most parts of this spoken discourse did not differ much from their written report as discussed in the previous sections – In fact, from the transcriptions of the oral presentations of both Carmen’s and Carrie’s groups, it was found that what some of the members said was read directly from the written project report.

While the *Mode* of the constructed CoS governs that the participants use a spoken discourse (the channel), the above examples illustrate that the learners did not show any attempt to organize and change the written text into the spoken register as governed by the *Mode* of the CoS. Instead, they just read directly from a written text.

With regard to the rhetorical functions required by the *Mode*, the role played by language in this constructed CoS is to *explain* and *persuade*, i.e. what the presenters are expected to achieve by means of language is to explain clearly the ideas about their proposed new product line to the audience so as to persuade them to accept the proposal. From the data of the oral presentations by Carrie’s and Carmen’s groups, the

learners nevertheless demonstrated some strategies to organize and manage the discourse, which contributed to the clarity of the presentation of their ideas. For example, Carrie, as the first presenter who introduced the presentation to the audience, gave the purpose of the presentation and outlined the structure of the group presentation (using discourse markers such as *'To begin with....Then....Next.... Afterwards.... Finally*) so as to make the discourse much easier for the audience to follow:

Today, we'll present to you our ideas of developing a rainwear collection for Chic Fashion House. To begin with, I'll share with you how we got the idea of developing this new collection. Then, my colleague Yan will present to you the research we have done..... Next, Christine will explain to you the design of the items in this rainwear collection and its pricing. Afterwards, Chai Chi will talk about our proposed promotional strategies. Finally, she will also give the conclusion to our project presentation. At the end, there will be a question and answer session. I'll appreciate it if you could reserve your questions until then.

(Carrie)

She also made use of a flowchart shown on a Powerpoint slide showing the structure of the group presentation as a visual aid to enhance the clarity of her presentation outline. This illustrates her effort to organize and manage the discourse of the group presentation, and hence is a manifestation of the learners' interaction with the *Mode* as activated by the constructed CoS. Carmen's group also demonstrated such effort to organize and manage the discourse of the group presentation, although their introduction is not as well-structured as Carrie's:

Our presentation will mainly be divided into the research part and the part on the proposed maternity wear collection. In the research part, we will talk about the research topic, methodology, findings and conclusion of the research. Then, in the second part, we will explain to all of you our proposed new maternity collection in terms of the design, pricing, positioning and promotion strategies.

(Louis)

Louis' introduction nevertheless exemplifies his attempt to give the audience an overview of the presentation structure so as to enhance the clarity of the discourse. He also showed the following Powerpoint slide to aid his presentation of the discourse outline:

Presentation on Product Development Project:

Maternity Wear Collection

A. Research part

1. Research Topic
2. Methodology
3. Findings
4. Conclusion of Research

B. The Collection of the Pregnant Clothes

1. The design
2. Pricing
3. Positioning
4. Promotion Strategies

Similar effort to achieve the illocutionary function *to explain clearly* so as to enhance the *persuasiveness* is also illustrated by the learners' use of various graphs and pictures to aid the explanation of the design features of the proposed fashion products. For example, while Rachel was presenting the special features of the maternity dress with the high waistline and the darts, a picture of the dress was shown on the screen, and her fellow member, San, was pointing to the relevant parts in the picture to show the audience what Rachel's descriptions were about. The same was observed with Carrie's group when members were presenting their rainwear collection items. This kind of cooperation among fellow members using visual aids in various parts of the oral presentations to enhance the clarity of the spoken discourse also illustrates the learners' efforts to achieve the illocutionary functions required by the *Mode* of the constructed CoS.



### **5.4.3. Analyzing Data from the Team Discussion Session: Manifestation of Group Dynamics**

The nature of the team discussion task is different from both the tasks of the written project report and the oral presentation in that, while both the tasks of the written project report and the oral presentation carry an element of assessment (each carries 50% of the module mark), the team discussion session is not assessed. It is among the '*process*' of the project that the learners had to go through before arriving at the '*products*' of the project, i.e. the written project report and the oral presentation. The *prompt* (which sets up the internal CoS) of the PBL tasks requires that the Product Development Team members hold an informal meeting to share information and exchange ideas so as to come up with the details of the proposed product line. They were required to use English throughout the team discussion session. The data for analysis in this section was collected from the team discussion session. The Team had already discussed their research work and had divided up among the members who were responsible for collecting what kind of information. For example, for Carmen's group, Rachel was responsible for collecting some catalogues on maternity wear from some local boutiques as well as online shops so as to get some information about their supposed competitors. Louis was to do some fashion trend research by analyzing information from fashion magazines and other professional fashion websites. Carmen did a survey with potential customers on their buying habits and preferences. San focused on gathering information about design details of maternity clothing. The team discussion session under investigation here is a session for the team members to share with their fellow members what they had researched and together work out the details

of a proposed product line. Thus, the constructed CoS of the team discussion task is as follows:

**Table 5.3 Constructed CoS of Team Discussion Task**

<b>Field</b>  <b>(subject mater, activities taking place)</b>	Researching and developing new fashion products for Chic Fashion House for the Hong Kong fashion market  Team informal meeting to come up with details of a proposed product line
<b>Tenor</b>  <b>(Participants)</b>	as member of Product Development Team  interlocutors: fellow team members
<b>Mode</b>  <b>(channel, role of language)</b>	Spoken  To share information and exchange ideas

According to systemic functional linguistics upon which the present CoS model is drawn, language is seen as a *system* of choices that accounts for the meanings people make in using a language (Halliday 1985), and people make these ‘choices’ based on the *functions* for which they seek to use language. Thus, *purpose* is the factor that tends to determine our choice of ‘which bits of language to deploy’ (Jacobs and Ward 1999). In the team discussion session under investigation, the constructed CoS governs that the **purpose** for which the team members seek to use language is to *cooperate* (to share information and exchange ideas) so as to come up with a new product line to be proposed to the company top management. Thus, this section will give an analysis of the data collected from the observation and discourse analysis of the team discussion session with regard to the extent to which the learners interacted to achieve the purpose of communication as set up by the constructed CoS (the **purpose** being to *cooperate* (to share information and exchange ideas) so as to come

up with details of a new product line to be proposed), and hence shedding light on the nature of the interaction of the learners with features of the constructed CoS as far as this 'process' task is concerned.

In analyzing the nature of interaction among learners *to achieve cooperation* as governed by the constructed CoS, Jacobs and Ward's (1999) principle of *positive interdependence* can be drawn upon. Jacobs and Ward, in their analysis of student-student interaction from cooperative learning and systemic functional perspectives, have highlighted *positive interdependence* as a major principle for cooperation that reflects *group dynamics*. According to Jacobs and Ward, there are these aspects of positive interdependence:

- a. *goal interdependence*: Members have a clearly-defined objective for their group, and none can succeed unless all succeed.
- b. *resource interdependence*: each member has only a portion of the information, materials, or resources necessary for the task to be completed, and members' resources are combined to achieve its goal.
- c. *role interdependence*: each member of the group takes a role necessary for the completion of the group's task.
- d. *Outside enemy interdependence*: It involves groups in working together to overcome common adversaries. These could be, for example, human adversaries in the case of one sports team trying to defeat another.
- e. *Task interdependence*: It involves each member of the group having a separate task, with the accomplishment of the group's goal hedging on each group member completing their task.

f. *Environmental interdependence*: Members are physically close together so that they can easily hear each other and share resources.

An analysis of the data from the team discussion session reveals that the learners demonstrated *positive interdependence* in the following ways:

### Goal Interdependence

Members in the team discussions demonstrated awareness that they shared a common goal to work towards: to work together to create a successful new product line for the company based on research findings. For example, when Christine suggested a design feature for the new product, her fellow member Yan said, 'That feature will be a major selling point and will make our product more successful,' showing that they reckoned 'making the product successful' was the team's common goal. In fact, this kind of goal interdependence among fellow members is particularly evident in the learners' interaction in many instances when they were discussing details of the proposed product line based on the fellow members' research findings. An example of this is when Carmen responded to Rachel's report on fashion trend analysis: 'So, your trend research shows that using organic materials is the right direction for our collection,' which implies that there is a 'right direction' leading to the team's common goal.

The goal interdependence is also manifested when members disagreed with one another, for example when Rachel commented on Louis suggestion:

No, I don't think that's a good idea. The survey shows that er...customers like .. like pastel colours more. Using very sharp colours, our product will not be popular in the market.

(Rachel)

This shows that Rachel didn't think Louis' idea would help to achieve the team's common goal of creating a popular product line for the market.

### Resource Interdependence and Task Interdependence

The team discussion session began with each member taking turns to present the information and findings of the part of research they were responsible for. The completion of the task of proposing a new product line was supposed to depend on the resources from each fellow member to be combined, i.e. In order to achieve the common goal of the team, all team members were dependent on one another's resources and the research task each member had carried out. The learners' manifestation of this kind of resource interdependence and task interdependence is particularly evident in the active response of the fellow team members as listeners when each member took turns to present their research findings to the group. Contrary to what has been observed in the oral presentation task discussed in 5.4.2 where the audience was largely unresponsive, the learners were very responsive when fellow team members were presenting their research findings in this team discussion session. They showed understanding by constantly nodding their heads, they also interrupted the presenters from time to time to seek clarifications and give comments, as exemplified by the following observed with Carrie's group:

Carrie pointed to the computer screen and explained:

'Take a look at the pictures here. These are some common styles of raincoats and rain boots available on the market nowadays. Very colourful, aren't they? But the styles are very few....

These are .....

Christine chipped in:

‘Excuse me. Are these from Marks and Spencer? Do you mean they....’

Chai Chi interrupted:

‘No, not from Marks and Spencer. I’ve seen these before.... from Esprit...’

(Carrie’s group)

Indeed, the presenters (Christine and Carrie in particular) also used plenty of body language when explaining their research findings and interacting with their fellow members. Lots of laughter was also observed.

Carmen’s group did not show such active interactions during the members’ presentations of research findings, though. Still some interactions were observed. For example, when San was presenting to the group some typical design features of maternity wear available on the market, the following was observed:

‘The designs usually features an empire line with a ribbon on the waist, and ....’ (San)

Rachel chipped in, gesturing to her own waist, ‘Is the ribbon put here? Or..?’ (Rachel)

These interactions show that the learners reckoned the *resources interdependence* and *task interdependence* among their fellow members, in that they paid attention to what each other presented, responded by asking for clarifications and giving comments, jotted notes on the information given by one another as all team members were dependent on one another’s resources and the research task each member had carried out in order to achieve the common goal of the team.

It is also interesting to note the ‘language resource interdependence’ found among fellow members. It was observed that learners occasionally helped each other to

express meanings fellow members had difficulties with, as exemplified by the following:

‘Using cotton and silk as the raw material will increase the .. th....comfort-abi-lity? of the ....’

(Carmen)

‘the comfort...’ (Louis)

‘Yes, Yes, will increase the *comfort* of the dress because cotton and silk is so.. so.. er.....’

(Carmen)

‘breathable?’ (San)

‘Right, *breathable*.’ (Carmen)

This kind of helping each other to express meaning when they lacked the language resources also illustrates a kind of interdependence among group members and is thus a form of cooperation that is manifested.

### Role Interdependence

Role interdependence is not particularly evident in the data. This may be due to the fact that the learners, in the constructed CoS, assumed the same role (i.e. members of the Product Development Team) instead of having different complementary roles. Despite this, it was observed that one member of the group took up the *role* of the leader (Carmen being the leader of the first group and Carrie the leader of the second group), and was observed to be leading the discussion throughout the session. The use of the pronoun ‘we’ to refer to ‘the Product Development Team’ is also frequently found in the team discussion session. For instance:

So, are we all agreed that we’ll have two separation collections for our maternity line?

(Carmen)

Based on our target customer profile, we’d better set the price at the mid level. (Yan)

That wouldn’t be cost-effective for our company. (Rachel)

We can have our next team meeting next Monday. (Carrie)

This shows that learners did participate in the discussion assuming the *role* of Product Development Team members as set up in the constructed CoS, and the constant use of ‘we’ throughout the discussion session reveals that the learners did perceive the group as a cohesive whole, and thus their *interdependence*. In addition, what is discussed in the previous section about *resources interdependence* and *task interdependence* can also be interpreted as the learners’ perception of the *role interdependence* among the fellow members.

### Outside Enemy Interdependence

According to Jacobs and Wards (1999), *outside enemy interdependence* involves groups working together to overcome common adversaries, for example, one sports team trying to defeat another. This kind of interdependence was shown in the way the members were discussing their competitors in the market:

Mothercare is our competitor.... We should offer more variety to the customers than

Mothercare.... (Rachel)

We can also focus more on fabrics. I know Mothercare uses fabrics mainly from Hong Kong and China. We can source our fabrics in Europe .... (Louis)

The members were working together on strategies to ‘beat’ their ‘enemy’. They were doing a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of their competitors in order to ‘defeat’ them.

‘It seems that er ... our major competitor is Mavis. Perhaps we can do a SWOT analysis of Mavis....’ (Chai Chi)

Christine chipped in: ‘Ah, I’ve got some information about Mavis. Their weakness is that they are just a local shop, not international brand, not famous...’ (Christine)

‘Any strengths...?’ (Yan)



‘We can find out more on the internet.’ (Carrie)

And Christine reached for the computer and went online...

Instances like this illustrates the learners’ perception of *outside enemy interdependence*.

### Environmental Interdependence

*Environmental interdependence* means that members are physically close together so that they can easily hear each other and share resources. In this team discussion session, it was observed that the learners arranged their desks into one which resembles a conference table and their seating in such a way that they were facing one another and could interact conveniently. Each group of learners brought along a laptop computer (although this was not required by the teacher) for presenting research findings to fellow members and for sharing other resources. This again resembles the environment of a real life company meeting.

The above analysis shows that the learners demonstrated *positive interdependence* in the team discussion session, showing authentic *cooperation* (as the constructed CoS governs that the purpose for which the team members seek to use language is to *cooperate* (to share and exchange ideas) in various ways as discussed. Their demonstration of different types of interdependence also shows that the learners, in approaching this team discussion task, operated within the constructed CoS, in that they perceived a common goal of their team, they were seeing things from the perspectives of members of the Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House, they were dependent on their fellow members for resources in order to achieve the team’s goal, they had their competitors in the market as their common ‘outside

enemies', and they arranged the physical setting of their discussion like a real life company meeting environment.

In analyzing student-student interaction utilizing Halliday's systemic-functional grammar model (Halliday 1978), Jacobs and Wards (1999) suggest that, of Halliday's (1978) three metafunctions, the most relevant one to student cooperation is the *Interpersonal* metafunction, which realizes the *Tenor* of the context of situation. In the analysis of the team discussion session here, the argument of Jacobs and Wards will be drawn upon and the focus will be on the way in which the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS engages the learners.

As Jacobs and Wards (1999) point out, the areas of grammar most closely associated with the interpersonal metafunction, and thus *Tenor*, are *mood* and *personal pronouns*.

### Mood

Mood refers to whether the piece of language under focus is a statement, an imperative, or an interrogative. Jacobs and Ward (1999: 8) argue that mood relates to the interpersonal metafunction as, for example, 'the interrogative reverses the roles in a statement – In a statement, the speaker seeks to give information, while in a question, the speaker seeks to receive information or ask for others' opinions'. They argue that 'imperatives tend to suggest domination, while interrogatives suggest *cooperation*'.

From the transcript of the team discussion, an abundance of interrogatives are found, and the language functions of these interrogatives are mainly to seek information,

clarifications, agreement, and opinions from others. Some instances of the interrogatives found in the team discussion and the language functions they serve are quoted as follows in Table 5.4:

<b>Examples of interrogatives found in the data:</b>	<b>Illocutionary functions:</b>
Which one do you like best? (Chai Chi)	Seeking opinions
What do you think? (Carrie)	Seeking opinions
Do you mean to create two different collections, one for the younger customer group, one for the more mature group? (Rachel)	Seeking clarification
So, shall we base the design on Alexander McQueen? (Louis)	Making suggestions
Do you agree with this idea? (Yan)	Asking for agreement
How are we going to attract the customers? (Louis)	Seeking opinions
San, did you find out about the latest fabric trend? (Carmen)	Asking for information
Shall we vote on this? (Carrie)	Making suggestions

**Table 5.4: Instances of interrogatives in the team discussion session and the language functions they serve**

The abundance of sentences in the interrogative mood found in the spoken discourse, which mainly serves the functions of asking for information, seeking clarifications, asking for agreement, asking for opinions from others and making suggestions, indeed suggests cooperation among fellow group members.

Despite the plentiful interrogatives in the discourse of this team discussion session, the indicative mood, or the statement, is nevertheless predominant in the discourse. Jacobs and Ward (1999:9) argue that the preponderance of statements in a discourse ‘suggest

that there is little in the oral interaction that would encourage the [participants] to cooperate with each other'. However, an examination of the illocutionary functions served by the statements in the team discussion reveals that this is not the case. Rather, apart from stating some facts and personal opinions, the speakers were using these statements to show agreement with others, to clarify oneself for others, to respond to others' point, to make suggestions, etc.

I think you've made a good point here. (Carmen)

I mean that we can add a ribbon to make the style more feminine. (Rachel)

Yes, that is what I mean. (Christine)

I don't think so. Two lines will be enough. (San)

Yes, you're right. But I don't think there's a big difference between the two designs. (Chai Chi)

I suggest we add some lace near the waistline. (Louis)

Even when the speakers were stating personal opinions, these statements are very often followed by interrogatives either to seek opinions or agreements from their fellow members:

I think this style is more comfortable and trendy. What do you think? (Rachel)

The point is, organic products, that's their lifestyle. Don't you agree? (Louis)

So, the price is about \$150 to \$200. Is that right? (San)

There are also some tag questions, which form 'a halfway position between bald statements of opinion and requests for such information as another's opinion' (Halliday 1985) and thus also suggests cooperation:

This one is very lovely, isn't it? (Christine)

Synthetic fabrics will cause skin allergy for the pregnant women, will they? (Carmen)

On the other hand, the imperative mood is rarely found in the discourse of the team discussion, except for what Halliday (1985: 347) calls the imperative ‘we’, i.e. the ‘*let’s*’ construction. Examples found in the team discussion are:

Let’s take a look at the photo here. (Louis)

Let’s have two separate collections for this line then. (Carmen)

OK. Let’s talk about our target customers. (Carrie)

Perhaps let’s have a closer look at the colour trend ... (Chai Chi)

Here, the speakers were not using the imperatives to give commands or orders that suggest domination. Instead, they were making suggestions that include the others (that is why Halliday calls this the imperative ‘we’), and thus gives a feel of cooperation.

### Personal Pronouns

There is an abundance of the first person plural pronouns ‘*we*’, ‘*us*’ and ‘*our*’ used in the discourse of the team discussion session of both groups of learners. As Jacobs and Ward (1999: 9) point out, the predominance of the use of the first person plural pronouns ‘*we*’, ‘*us*’ and ‘*our*’ indicates that the members regarded themselves as a ‘cohesive group’ rather than individuals, thus suggesting a sense of *cooperation* among fellow members.

What is also of interest here is the referent of these personal pronouns used in the context of this discourse. Of course, it is obvious that the ‘we’ in the constructed CoS refers to ‘the Product Development Team’ or ‘Chic Fashion House’. Thus, the learners’ use of the personal pronouns ‘we’ reflects that they recognized their role as

established in the Tenor of the CoS. Similarly, when they used ‘I’, they referred to ‘I’ as a member of the Product Development Team. Thus, it can be interpreted that, in approaching this team discussion task, the learners were operating within the constructed CoS in terms of its *Tenor* (which refers to the role of the participants as members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House).

However, it is interesting to note that, as pointed out in the analysis of the written project report in 5.4.1, some of the ‘we’s actually refers to the ‘real we’ or the generic ‘we’, as shown in the introductory paragraph of the project report by Carrie’s group. The ‘we’s and ‘us’s do not necessarily refer to ‘the Product Development Team’. Rather, these first person plural pronouns refer to the writers’ personal self, the ‘*real we*’, i.e. the learners themselves, and in this introductory paragraph, the learners are referring to their own personal experience about wearing clothes in the rainy weather of Hong Kong rather than talking on behalf of ‘the Product Development Team’.

From the analysis of the learners’ use of personal pronouns in the project reports, I came to the conclusion that the learners, in approaching this project report writing task, operated not only within the *internal CoS* but also the *external CoS* in terms of the Tenor. The notion of *internal CoS* and *external CoS* has been pursued in 4.4 in Chapter 4, where *internal CoS* refers to CoS internal to the simulated world and *external CoS* refers to CoS external to the simulated world, i.e. the second language classroom (the personal, real world of the learners).

It is interesting to note that, similar to the instances in the discussion of the data from the written project report quoted above, most of the ‘*we*’s found in the discourse of the

team discussion session can refer to ‘the Product Development Team’ and also the learners’ personal self, i.e. the ‘*real we*’. It can be interpreted that the learners were talking from their own personal perspective (as fashion students), while also consciously taking up the role of Product Development Team members, and there seems to be no conflict between these two referents in the context of the team discussion session here. This is particularly obvious with the use of the first person singular pronoun ‘*I*’:

I think you’ve made a good point here. (Christine)

I’ve collected some catalogues of maternity wear from some local boutiques. Let me share my findings with you. (Rachel)

I suggest using high waistlines for our maternity dress because that will make the wearer feel more comfortable. (Louis)

I have the experience of designing underwear for pregnant women before .... (Carmen)

In these instances, there seems to be no conflict between the ‘*I*’ referring to ‘*I* as a Product Development Team member’ (the role in *internal CoS*) and ‘*I* as myself, a fashion student having a discussion in this second language classroom’ (the role in the *external CoS*). Thus, it seems that the learners, in approaching this team discussion task, operated within both the *internal CoS* and the *external CoS* in terms of the Tenor. This will be triangulated and further explored in the next section on the data analysis of the retrospective focus group interviews.

#### **5.4.4. Learners’ Interaction with Features of Constructed CoS: Data from the Retrospective Focus Group Interviews – Authenticity and ‘Inauthenticity’ Manifested**

A retrospective focus group interview session was held with both Carmen’s group and Carrie’s group separately right on the next day after they had finished the whole

‘Product Development Project’, i.e. after they had submitted the written project report and given the oral presentation of the project, while the memories of their experience of doing the project were still fresh. The learners were prompted to talk in as much detail as possible about the process of completing the PBL tasks and their experience and attitude in approaching the PBL tasks. The recorded video tapes on the oral presentation of the project and also the team discussion session were played back to the group and the written project report was also referred to during the focus group interview in order to solicit the learners’ comments on their performance and thus to triangulate with data from the written project report, the oral presentation, and the team discussion session. The guiding questions for the focus group interviews were drawn up after the analysis of the participants’ project outcome products (i.e. the written project report and the oral presentation) and the team discussion session. The guiding questions for the focus group interviews can be found in the interview schedule given in Appendix III.

The data from the retrospective focus group interviews, when analysed and triangulated with data from the written project report, oral presentation and team discussion session, reveal that there are both authenticity and inauthenticity as far as learners’ interaction with the PBL tasks is concerned.

#### **5.4.4.1. Learners’ Interaction with the Contextual Parameter *Field***

##### Choice of Project Topic



When asked how they arrived at their selected topic for the project, the accounts from both Carmen's and Carrie's group reveal that the process, to a large extent, resembles that of a real life team project in which collective decision was made:

We started with all members brainstorming possible topics based on our personal observations of the Hong Kong fashion market. We'd thought of topics like developing a yoga collection, a kidswear line, rainwear collection, etc. and then we went online to find out a little bit more information about these topics. (Carrie)

Then all members voted on a topic they like best. In fact, all of us chose the topic rainswear collection. (Christine)

Their selection of the topic reflected the engagement of their specific purpose background knowledge as well as personal experience:

Yes, because we usually feel that rainy weather is very depressing, and it would be good to have very colourful, trendy rainwear to make us beautiful and cheer us up in the gloomy weather. (Chai Chi)

We found from fashion magazines that rainwear will be a trend soon, and in fact, it is already very hip in Japan. (Carrie)

Carmen's group also described similar collective decision by all members in arriving at their topic 'maternity wear'. They revealed that when they chose the topic, they were considering from the perspective of fashion business. The choice of this topic was based on their personal observation as well as specific purpose background knowledge:

We have read a lot of fashion magazines and fashion news. We thought about what is needed but are not available or inadequate for the customers in the fashion market. (Rachel).

We also tried to find a potential product line that has fewer competitors in the market. (Louis)

We have observed that maternity clothes available in the market are generally not fashionable at all. In fact, we also visited the online forums for pregnant women, and many of them

complained about having very few clothing choices available. They were not satisfied with the maternity wear particularly in terms of the styles. Some pregnant ladies are desperately looking for clothes that make them beautiful. (Carmen)

The above accounts show that the learners made their decision on the project topic from the perspective of a Product Development Project, looking to propose a fashion collection with good potential for the fashion market. This evidences the learners' operation within the constructed CoS (researching and developing new fashion products for Chic Fashion House for the Hong Kong fashion market) in approaching this project.

However, Carmen's comments below do shed some light on the 'inauthenticity' as far as the learners' interaction with the *field* of the constructed CoS is concerned.

Of course, we also considered whether we would be able to write 2500 words on this topic for the project report, whether we can find enough information to write so many words to fulfill the requirement of this assignment. If not, we had to find an easier topic. (Carmen)

The above showed that while the learners did engage their specific purpose background knowledge and made reference to the 'real world' territory, i.e. the Hong Kong fashion market (as discussed in 5.4.1.) which resembles the process of a real life trade project, it is nevertheless obvious that they are very conscious about this ESP project as an assessment in which they had to fulfill the word limit requirement. Thus, on the one hand, the topic they chose must have good market potential, while on the other hand, it must be one that the learners had confidence to 'write enough words' on to fulfil the requirement of the language assessment.

### 'Indirectness' in the Interaction between the Input Data and Expected Response

In Douglas' task characteristics model (2000), 'directness' in the interaction between the input data and expected response refers to the degree to which the response depends on the input as opposed to the language user's own specific purpose background knowledge. The task may require a 'direct' response, where the response is highly dependent on the input, or an 'indirect' response, where the task taker relies more on specific purpose background knowledge. In this case PBL task series, the constructed CoS governs that the learners assimilate the input data and research findings and incorporate their specific purpose background knowledge of fashion (and also their own creativity) to come up with details of a proposed new product line for their fashion company, thus requiring an *indirect* response. From the interview, the learners revealed that they incorporated what they had learnt from their trade subjects in interpreting the research findings and in proposing the details of the new product line.

We found out from the fashion websites and target customer survey that modern pregnant ladies want a line of maternity clothes that offers the perfect mix of comfort, fit and style and is designed to complement the wearer and her changing body shape. They attach a lot of importance to high quality fabrics and the protective functions of hi-tech materials. Therefore, for our maternity collection, we suggested high waistlines with ties at the side to adjust the fit.

We also made use of an innovative high-technology metal net, which is repellent to electromagnet wave emitted by computers and photocopiers in the office, as the raw material for the garment to provide a kind of protective function for pregnant women. (San)

We have learnt about the importance of the waistline for maternity clothing in our fashion design classes. (Louis)

We read about the high-tech metal net fabric from an article in our textiles lesson, and we find this may be very good for our maternity collection. (Carmen)

Carrie's group also described similar incorporation of specific purpose background knowledge resulting from the 'indirectness' of the PBL tasks. For example:

We proposed posting advertisements in fashion magazines such as Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan and Jessica, which are targeted at young females', using celebrity endorsement, and that a group of three mannequins be placed in the centre of the rainwear area and surrounded by two rails of key products as promotional strategies for the new product line. These are some of the promotional strategies we have learnt from our Fashion Business classes. (Carrie)

However, despite evidence showing that both groups have made use of their specific purpose background knowledge and that their choice of topics are well justified with reference to the real world Hong Kong fashion market, the learners admitted that the contents of their PBL product outcomes, i.e. the written project reports and the oral presentation, are inadequate for a real life trade project. When asked how they would have approached the project differently if it were a real life fashion development project they engage in, the learners commented that much more research would have to be done:

Of course, we would have to do a lot more research, like more detailed market research, budget estimations .... (Louis)

And, we would also have to verify the information we got from the web. There're so many inaccuracies .... But we didn't think we had to verify the accuracy of the content of these web materials for this language project assignment. (Rachel)

Well, a lot more research. The content is not adequate for a real product development project.

A real one involves making profits or suffering losses. Adequate research is very important.

Also more details on the proposed new collection are needed. (Christine)

While admitting that the content is inadequate for a real life trade project, the learners nevertheless reckoned that their proposed new product line is feasible and they will

further develop this new product line for an upcoming real life fashion product development project, revealing a sense of ownership of their designed new collection they proposed for this PBL project resulting from the ‘indirectness’ of the PBL tasks.

Yes, I believe the development of a maternity wear collection is really feasible for a trade project. As we mentioned before, initial research really shows that that market is in need of fashionable maternity clothes. (Rachel)

In fact, we will consider further developing our ideas of maternity wear in our upcoming final year project for our Higher Diploma in Fashion Product Development. (Carmen)

We have decided to make use of our proposed details of the rainwear collection for our Fashion Business assignment. (Yan)

### Genuineness and Finder Authenticity

According to Widdowson (1978) who makes a distinction between the terms *genuineness* and *authenticity* as discussed in 2.5.1, *genuineness* is a characteristic of the passage itself. Texts are genuine if they are taken from the real world rather than contrived for language learning. *Finder authenticity* (van Lier 1996) refers to activities where learners go out and find texts (both written and spoken) for themselves to use in performing tasks. In carrying out the PBL tasks, the learners had to find genuine trade-related texts and they recognized that this process resembles that which a real life fashion product development project requires.

Yes, we tried to locate relevant information in various ways, going online .. right we visited some professional fashion websites, e.g. WGSN and Fashion Scoops. (Louis)

Also fashion magazines such as Vogue, Non-no and the like. We also referred to some of our fashion design text books as well. (Yan)

And also colour trend websites such as Pantone Colours. These are professional websites we usually visit when doing assignments and projects for our fashion subjects. (Carmen)

And I believe we'll refer to these sources for professional trade-related information when doing trade projects in our future fashion jobs as well. (Rachel)

The learners' accounts also show that they recognized the procedural authenticity in their interaction with these genuine texts, i.e. the procedures that the learner has to follow in interacting with the input data resembles those expected in the TLU domain:

Well, before the team discussion session, I collected some information about maternity wear from fashion magazines and the WGSN website. I summarized the information and highlighted some key points most relevant to our project topic. Yes, I think it's just similar to what we do for a trade project. (Yan)

And we looked up some terms we did not understand in the fashion dictionary and the glossary in fashion textbooks. That's what we often do when doing projects and assignments for our trade subjects. (Carrie)

I put some of the related pictures on the Powerpoint slides to be shared with my group mates during the team discussion session. (Christine)

### Indigenous Assessment Criteria and Authenticity

Despite the foregoing argument that the element of assessment of the PBL tasks has diminished authenticity in terms of the learners' interaction with the constructed CoS (e.g. Carmen mentioned that their group did consider adopting a project topic on which their group were confident to write enough words in order to fulfill the assessment requirement at the expense of a topic involving a new product line that is feasible and marketable in real life, a topic that they would have otherwise chosen for a real life fashion development project.), the following comments by Chai Chi and Christine, when asked about how the element of assessment affected their attitude and performance in the PBL tasks, are nevertheless revealing about authenticity as far as the element of assessment is concerned:

Well, knowing that the tasks are assessed made us take this project more seriously than just ordinary class work, and so... (Christine)

And so, this makes it more real, because in real life workplace tasks, your boss and clients are always evaluating your work. This affects your chance of promotion. In a way there's always an element of assessment involved. (Chai Chi)

Thus, it seems that in the perception of the learners, the element of assessment of the PBL tasks nevertheless has its correspondence with the real world, in that one's performance is always subject to being monitored by various participants in the TLU domain such as one's superiors, business partners, clients or other parties concerned. This has shed light on the importance of incorporating 'indigenous assessment criteria' (Douglas 2000) (i.e. the criteria used by participants in the TLU task to establish whether the performance of the task has been successful or not) in enhancing learners' perceived authenticity of the PBL tasks (to be further discussed in the concluding chapter of the thesis).

#### **5.4.4.2. Learners' Interaction with the Contextual Parameter *Tenor***

Doubts have been cast about the learners' interaction with the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS upon analysis of the data of the written project report and the oral presentation tasks in 5.4.1 and 5.4.2. Learners did demonstrate awareness of their role as Product Development Team member and that their audience are their superiors and company senior management. The data show that learners constantly used '*we*' to refer to 'the Product Development Team'. This reflects their awareness of their role as set up in the constructed CoS. There are also many instances of their attempt to use passive voice and the present subjunctive mood to achieve a formal, business-like tone in the written report, and this reflects the learners' awareness of their audience in the

constructed CoS. However, at the same time, their tone in the written report was found not consistently formal and there are instances of expressions of more of a conversational, rather than formal style. Moreover, from the oral presentation of both Carrie's and Carmen's groups, most learners did not show much awareness of the audience – most of them just read from their notes without demonstrating much attempt to involve and interact with the audience. The exceptions found were Christine and Carrie, who, apart from using body language such as hand gestures and enthusiastic facial expressions, also attempted to involve and interact with the audience by using the imperative and interrogative. The retrospective focus group interviews have followed up on some of the ambiguities shown in the above data.

When asked whether they were clear about their own role and the roles of reader/audience in the context of this product development project, it is obvious that the learners were well aware of the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS. All of them were able to verbalise that they were playing the role of the Product Development Team members and their reader/audience were their superiors/company management. However, when asked how much they really kept this reader/audience (as their superiors/company management) in mind when writing the project report and giving their oral presentation, the learners admitted that they considered the reader of the report more as the English language teacher and the audience of the oral presentation as the English language teacher and their classmates.

Yes, I know that in this product development project, we were supposed to be writing and presenting to our bosses to propose to them a new product line, but when we actually came to writing the report and giving the oral presentation, I didn't keep that in mind that often. That was not my focus.... (Louis)



Neither did I. I just considered the reader and the audience the English teacher and the audience also included our classmates. (San)

Well, I considered the reader and audience to be my English teacher more. (Carrie)

When asked how the reader/audience as the English language teacher (instead of the company superiors) has affected the way they approached the written project report and oral presentation tasks, the following comments from the learners were noted.

I think our English teacher wanted to look at how good our English is... (Louis)

Yes, that is why we had proofread the report several times to ensure good grammar. (Rachel)

I had practised reading through the scripts of the oral presentation many times so that I could be very fluent. (Chai Chi)

I did ask my teacher about the right pronunciation of some difficult words and practised hard before the oral presentation. (Yan)

It was also pointed out to the learners that they did not demonstrate effective oral presentation skills and awareness of the audience. Some of them responded as follows:

I was pretty nervous. It's difficult to pay attention to effective presentation skills like gestures, eye contact, and good language skills at the same time. (Louis)

Perhaps I focused more on fluent speech and correct pronunciation. (Chai Chi)

Effective presentation skills are important... important in a trade presentation. I'd have applied effective presentation skills if I could manage, but I think fluent speech and clear pronunciation will be more important for this project presentation. (Carmen)

The learners were also asked about the use of passive voice and the present subjunctive mood in their written report with a view to looking at whether this was their attempt to achieve a formal, business-like tone to address the *Tenor* set up in the constructed CoS. The explanations by the learners are rather revealing.

Yes, we used passive voice to achieve a more formal tone. We were taught to use passive voice in writing business reports. (Chai Chi)

Of course, we need a formal tone when addressing our boss in a report like this. I think the assessor of this report will look for passive voice and the present subjunctive mood because this has been taught in the English lesson. (Carmen)

From the above data analysis, it is obvious that while the learners were well aware of the *Tenor* of the constructed CoS, they nevertheless approached the written project report and oral presentation tasks as English language assessment tasks. They had in mind the reader/audience as an English language assessor rather than the company management staff as set up in the constructed CoS. At the same time, they have quite a narrow perception of ‘good language skills’ – good grammar, accurate pronunciation and fluency. As they perceived the audience as the language assessor, they focused on displaying ‘good language skills’. Comments from Christine and Carrie, who demonstrated more effective presentation skills, also reflected such a focus on displaying language competence:

I think fluency and good pronunciation are the most important. But I think I would be able to stage a better presentation with good body language and skills to involve the audience.  
(Christine)

Yes, indeed, effective presentations skills have also been covered in class before, and I think the assessor will also appreciate it I could demonstrate some. (Carrie)

Thus, the element of *language assessment* seems to be predominant for the learners in approaching the PBL tasks. The learners’ comments on their pre-arranged question-and-answer (Q&A) session lend further support to this. In the oral presentation of both Carmen’s and Carrie’s groups, it was observed that the question-and-answer

interactions were pre-arranged and thus were not spontaneous. The learners admitted that their Q&A interactions were indeed pre-arranged.

Yes, we arranged with a classmate in the audience beforehand. We gave her the question and rehearsed the answer, so that we could answer the question fluently. (Rachel)

We pre-arranged the Q&A because we worried that nobody in the audience would raise any questions. It would be better if there are some Q&A interactions at the end. It will make our oral presentation look more complete. (Carrie)

Of course, we'll be more confident if the Q&A is pre-arranged. If somebody really asks a question on the spot, we may not be able to answer the questions well.... (Chai Chi)

Yes, we may not be able to express our ideas fluently in English, and with lots of grammatical mistakes. (Yan)

Here, the learners pre-arranged the Q&A session to avoid demonstrating their language weaknesses and to display their 'fluency'. This again shows that they approached the tasks as language assessment tasks rather than authentic interaction and considered the audience the language assessor more than the company management of Chic Fashion House.

As for the team discussion session, it was observed that the learners showed authentic cooperation and group dynamics in their interactions as evidenced in the various types of positive interdependence they demonstrated (as discussed in 5.4.3). Indeed, in the retrospective focus group interviews, when asked about how they went about planning and working on this project *as a team*, the learners' accounts also cast light on this kind of *group dynamics*:

Well, in fact, the four of all us have been fellow group members for many projects for other subjects before. We know one another's work styles very well. So, things just operated so naturally ... (Louis)

We usually select a leader for the project first. Usually, our leader for the projects is Carmen because she's good at coordinating everything. So, she was the leader for this project ... (San)

After we came up with the idea of developing a maternity wear collection, we discussed the concept together and agreed on what type of information we needed in relation to the concept, who are our target customers, etc so that our research would be more focused. We discussed how to search for the different types of information. Then we came to the division of work.

(Carmen)

Things went quite smoothly for our team. (Rachel)

Carrie's group also reflected on their synergy of working together:

I think working as a team is better than working individually. We put our heads together and got more ideas. (Carrie)

Yes, very often other group members got some ideas I'd never thought of. (Yan)

Just like in the team discussion session when Chai Chi suggested using rayon coated with resin for our rainwear trench jackets, which was something really innovative... (Christine)

Yea, we jumped at the idea.... (Carrie)

Moreover, it was observed that the first person plural pronouns '*we*', '*us*' and '*our*' are used very often by the members in the discourse of the team discussion session showing that the members regarded themselves as a 'cohesive group' rather than individuals (Jacobs and Ward 1999), thus suggesting a sense of *cooperation* among fellow members. As discussed, it was pointed out that the referent of the '*we*' within the constructed CoS refers to 'the Product Development Team'. Thus, the learners' use of the personal pronouns '*we*' reflects that they recognized their role as established in the *Tenor* of the CoS. Similarly, when they used 'I', they referred to 'I' as a member of the Product Development Team. Thus, it can be interpreted that, in approaching this team discussion task, the learners were operating within the constructed CoS in terms of its *Tenor* (which refers to the role of the participants as members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House). However, as discussed, most of the '*we*'s found in the discourse of the team discussion session can

refer to ‘the Product Development Team’ and also the learners’ personal self, i.e. the ‘*real we*’. It can be interpreted that the learners were talking from their own personal perspective (as fashion students), while also consciously taking up the role of Product Development Team members, and there seems to be no conflict between these two referents in the context of the team discussion session here. This is particularly obvious with the use of the first person singular pronoun ‘*I*’:

I think you’ve made a good point here. (Christine)

I’ve collected some catalogues of maternity wear from some local boutiques. Let me share my findings with you. (Rachel)

I suggest using high waistlines for our maternity dress because that will make the wearer feel more comfortable. (Louis)

I have the experience of designing underwear for pregnant women before .... (Carmen)

As pointed out before, in these instances, there seems to be no conflict between the ‘*I*’ referring to ‘*I* as a Product Development Team member’ and ‘*I* as myself, a fashion student having a discussion in this second language classroom’. Thus, it seems that the learners, in approaching this team discussion task, operated within both the *internal CoS* and the *external CoS* in terms of the *Tenor*. To triangulate this in the retrospective interviews, the learners were referred to some of the instances when they used ‘*we*’ and ‘*I*’ in the team discussion session and were asked whether they referred to ‘*I/we* as (a) Product Development Team member(s) of Chic Fashion House’ or ‘*I/we* as myself/ourselves, (a) fashion student(s) having a discussion in this second language classroom’:

Perhaps both. We were supposed to be members of the Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House. But we were indeed expressing our personal opinions in the team discussion.  
(Chai Chi)

I think it doesn't make much difference whether we were Product Development Team members or fellow classmates in the team discussion session as, anyway, we were working towards the details of our proposed collection. (Carmen)

I didn't consciously make any distinction at that time. I just mean 'I' or 'we', like what I'm saying here. So perhaps it's the real 'I' and the real 'we'. (Christine)

Thus, the learners seem to be suggesting that there is some kind of harmony between the *Tenor* in the *internal CoS* ('I/we as (a) Product Development Team member(s) of Chic Fashion House') and the *external CoS* ('I/we as myself/ourselves, (a) fashion student(s) having a discussion in this second language classroom') of this team discussion task, and this kind of harmony seems to be absent between the *Tenor* in the *internal CoS* ('audience as superiors and company management of Chic Fashion House') and the *Tenor* in the *external CoS* ('audience as an English language teacher/assessor in this second language classroom') of the written project report and oral discussion tasks.

#### **5.4.4.3. Learners' Interaction with the Contextual Parameter *Mode***

The learners did show awareness of the role played by language in the constructed CoS for the written project report and oral presentation tasks and were able to verbalise it:

Our goal is to report the details of our research and persuade our bosses to accept our proposed new product line. (Carmen)

We did try to explain our product details clearly in the report and presentation. We did stress the selling points of our new collection. (Christine)

While the learners did demonstrate attempts to *explain* and to *persuade* (as shown in the data analysis of the written report and oral presentation), illustrating their awareness and interaction with the Mode of the constructed CoS, they nevertheless considered *content* to be peripheral. This was evident particularly when they admitted that the content is ‘inadequate’ in comparison with that required in a trade project, and that their focus was on displaying their language ability to the language assessor as discussed in 5.4.4.1 and 5.4.4.2. The comments they gave in the retrospective focus group interview reveal that they indeed viewed language and content as largely discrete. This is evident from the responses they gave when asked how they would have approached this product development project differently if it were a project for a trade subject:

Well, for this project, we were more concerned about the grammar thing. We proofread the report and checked grammar after we finished. For trade subjects, like Fashion Design, Visual Merchandising, Fashion Business and so on, well, the projects and assignments are also in English. So, the difference may not be big. But for trade subjects, we are not as concerned about the language thing. We focus more on content for these content subjects. For the English subject, we focus more on grammar and accuracy in the written report and fluency in oral presentation and the language used on the Powerpoint slides. (Chai Chi)

It very much depends on the subject. For content subjects, we pay more attention to content, do more research to enrich the content. For the English language subject, we pay more attention to language. (Louis)

Although the learners viewed content and language as largely discrete and they have different focuses for projects of trade and language subjects, they nevertheless recognizes that language competence is an integral part of their professional performance in a real life fashion development project in their future workplace:

If it were a real life project for our future workplace, our company, I would focus on both content and language. (Louis)

Yes, because if your language is bad, for example, your report is full of grammatical mistakes or your presentation not fluent and pronunciations very bad, your clients will have a bad impression and will not have confidence in you. This affects your company image. (San)

Right, if your image is bad, people will not be persuaded of what you propose. (Carmen)

Thus, this sheds light on the difference between how the learners approach this ESP PBL project and how they approach a real life workplace project as far as the roles of content and language are concerned.

As for the team discussion task, the learner also demonstrated awareness of the role played by language in the constructed CoS – to explain, share and exchange information and ideas in order to come up with a proposed collection.

We talked, explained our points, exchange ideas and so on.. well, in order to come up with ideas for our new collection. (Christine)

And we were quite efficient. We agreed on most of the details of the collection by the end of that session. (Chai Chi)

However, when asked whether they paid as much attention to language accuracy and fluency while they were taking part in the team discussion, their comments were quite unlike those they had on the written project report and oral presentation tasks:

Not so much. The team discussion task was quite different from the written project report and oral presentation tasks. This wasn't assessed in the first place, and the purpose was very different. This session was for us to share what we had collected and collaborate to develop the details of our new collection. (Carrie)

Right. This time no speech was scripted or 'pre-arranged'. Our responses were spontaneous. (Yan)

We did put our heads together and came up with our proposal. (San)



We didn't care so much about grammar or pronunciation. But we did try hard to get our ideas across to other members. We did come across difficulties in expressing ourselves sometimes.

We used body language and also helped each other to express. (Rachel)

Here, instead of treating language and content as discrete, the learners' authentic interactions reflect that language was used as a means to achieve their perceived goal and thus played an integral part in the team discussion session.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

### **5.5.1. Authenticity and 'Inauthenticity' Manifested**

The foregoing sections in this chapter have provided a detailed description and characterization of how and the extent to which the features of the constructed CoS of the case PBL task series engaged the learners, and thus the nature of interactional authenticity manifested. Data analysis in Chapter 4 on the task design of the case PBL task series has conceptualised two levels of situational authenticity. Chapter 5 has examined the nature of the learners' interaction with various features of this level 2 situationally authentic PBL task series. It was found that the learners indeed demonstrated awareness of and interacted authentically with the three parameters of the constructed CoS in various ways. On the other hand, some 'inauthenticity' was also manifested. Table 5.4 recaps the learners' *authentic* and *unauthentic* engagements with the PBL tasks. As with the foregoing discussions, authenticity is interpreted as the extent to which 'real world' (TLU) aspects of language use and interaction are reflected in the learners' interaction with the PBL tasks (i.e. the constructed CoS).

Authentic Engagement	Unauthentic Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engagement of specific purpose background knowledge</li> <li>● Genuineness and finder authenticity – the search for and use of (as <b>input data</b>) trade-specific genuine texts that are used for real life professional fashion development projects</li> <li>● Procedural authenticity – procedures that the learners followed in interacting with the <b>input data</b> resembles those expected in a real life trade project.</li> <li>● Choice of project topic, details of proposed collection – from the perspective of the Product Development Team and Chic Fashion House – really considered the feasibility of the new collection in relation to the real life Hong Kong fashion market</li> <li>● Proposed details based on research findings</li> <li>● <i>Indirectness</i> between <b>input data</b> and <b>responses</b> – engagement of learners' specific purpose background knowledge and creativity – resulted in a sense of ownership of the created new collection – to be further developed later for a trade subject project.</li> <li>● Recognised that in real life work projects there is also always an element of assessment – being evaluated by boss and clients</li> <li>● Positive interdependence – group dynamics in team discussion – reflecting authentic interaction in team cooperation and integration of content and language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 'Inadequate' content – admitted much more research would have yet been needed if it were for a real life fashion product development project</li> <li>● considered choosing a topic on which they had confidence to write 'enough words' to fulfill the language assessment requirement at the expense of a feasible topic they would otherwise use for real life trade purpose</li> <li>● mainly approached the written project report and oral presentation tasks as language assessment tasks – focused on displaying 'good language' to the language assessor</li> <li>● perceived separation between content and language in approaching the written project report and oral presentation tasks</li> </ul>

**Table 5.5: Summary of the learners' *authentic* and *unauthentic* engagements with the PBL tasks**

The left column in the above table summarises the learners’ authentic interaction with the constructed CoS in this case ‘level 2 situationally authentic’ PBL task series, while the right column shows the extent to which the learners’ engagement with the PBL tasks was inauthentic.

Apart from descriptive adequacy, a theory should also aim to achieve explanatory adequacy. Thus, to characterize the nature of the interactional authenticity manifested in the case PBL task series, apart from giving a detailed description and explanation of the learners’ authentic engagement with the tasks, it is also important to account for the ‘unauthentic’ interaction demonstrated in the task implementation, and explore how the ‘inauthenticity’ can in turn inform ways of enhancing authenticity in task design.

The following discussions attempt to account for the inauthenticity manifested as discussed above by again utilizing the CoS conceptual framework. Table 5.6 and table 5.7 recap the features of the *internal CoS* and *external CoS* as discussed in 4.4 of the case PBL product outcome tasks (the written project report and oral presentation) and project process task (the team discussion session) respectively. Indeed, an examination of the correspondence between the *internal CoS* and *external CoS* is revealing.

**Table 5.6: Features of the internal CoS and external CoS of the PBL product outcome tasks (the written project report and oral presentation)**

CoS parameters	Internal CoS	External CoS
<b>Field</b> (subject matter, activities taking	Collaborate with team members to carry out a product development project for Chic Fashion House – researching	An English language group project (with the subject matter of the project being trade-specific product development) (with

place)	and developing new fashion products	assessment weighting stated for each task); pedagogical language practice
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	As members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House, working with 3 fellow team members (reader(s) of project outcome 1 written report and audience of project outcome 2 oral presentation: boss and company management)	As language learners, working with 3 fellow classmates to form a group (reader of project outcome 1 written report: language teacher; audience of project outcome 2 oral presentation: language teacher and fellow classmate, with language teacher as assessor)
<b>Mode</b> (channel, role of language)	Channel: Written (research report); Spoken (oral presentation) Role of language: To explain and persuade Language and communicative performance as an integral part of professional performance	Channel: Written (research report); Spoken (oral presentation) Role of language: To explain and persuade Focus on language, with the actual design of the new product being peripheral

**Table 5.7: Features of the internal CoS and external CoS of the PBL process task (the team discussion session)**

CoS parameters	Internal CoS	External CoS
<b>Field</b> (subject matter, activities taking place)	An informal meeting among Product Development Team members to share research findings and arrive at details of a new collection for a product development project	An informal meeting among fellow group members to share research findings and arrive at details of a new collection for an English language project
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	As members of Product Development Team of Chic Fashion House, working with 3 fellow team members (interlocutors – fellow fashion product development team members)	As classmates on a fashion design course, working with 3 fellow classmates (interlocutors – fellow fashion design classmates)
<b>Mode</b>	Channel: Spoken	Channel: Spoken

(channel, role of language)	Role of language: To explain, share and exchange information and ideas	Role of language: To explain, share and exchange information and ideas
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The dichotomy of *internal and external CoS* can be utilized here to account for the unauthentic aspects of the learners' engagement with the PBL tasks. From the data analysis of the PBL project outcome products (i.e. the written project report and the oral presentation) and also the retrospective focus group interviews, it was found that, although the learners were well aware of the features of the constructed/internal CoS, it is evident that the learners did not always operate within the internal CoS. Instead, they shifted between the internal and external CoS. For example, while the learners did engage their specific purpose background knowledge and made reference to the 'real world' territory, i.e. the Hong Kong fashion market, which resembles the process of a real life trade project as governed by the *internal CoS*, it is also obvious that they were very conscious about this PBL project as a language assessment task in which they had to fulfill the word limit requirement governed by the *external CoS*. This kind of 'conflict' between the internal and external CoS becomes more obvious when it comes to the *Tenor* where the audience of the written report and the oral presentation is the company management of Chic Fashion House in the internal CoS whereas that in the external CoS is the language assessor (see Table 5.6). This 'non-correspondence' has thus resulted in the learners focusing on displaying 'good language' to the audience at the expense of authentic interaction, as exemplified in the learners' pre-arranged, scripted Q&A interactions. This kind of conflict between the *internal CoS* (a fashion product development project) and the *external CoS* (an ESP PBL assignment with an element of assessment) has led to the learners' perceived separation of content and language in their engagement with the PBL tasks, resulting in an 'inadequate' content and a preoccupation with form rather than meaning,

although, as shown in the retrospective focus group interview, the learners were well aware that language plays an integral part in a corresponding real-life product development project and thus the integration of language and content.

In contrast, in the team discussion session, instead of being preoccupied with form rather than meaning, the learners demonstrated authenticity in their cooperative interactions to achieve a common goal. As observed (and later verified by the learners in the retrospective focus group interviews), their interactions were spontaneous. The factors for their authentic, cooperative interactions, as they pointed out, are that this team discussion task was not assessed (and so they did not have any pressure to display ‘good language’), they had a genuine goal to achieve in this session – ‘to arrive at the details of an agreed new product line to propose’, and there was good group dynamics among the fellow group members.

This again can be explained utilizing the CoS model. While there is a conflict between the internal CoS and the external CoS of the written project report and oral presentation tasks (table 5.6) which has led to the inauthenticity discussed, there seems to be more harmony between the internal CoS and the external CoS of the team discussion task as can be seen in Table 5.7. Here, the *Field* of both the internal and external CoS governs that the subject matter is ‘an informal meeting’ and the purpose is to ‘come up with details for a new collection’, and there is no element of assessment in both the internal and external CoS.

In terms of the *Tenor*, there is harmony in particular, as discussed in the data analysis of the retrospective interviews, when the learners were referred to some of the

instances when they used ‘*we*’ and ‘*I*’ in the team discussion session and were asked whether they referred to ‘*I/we* as (a) Product Development Team member(s) of Chic Fashion House’ or ‘*I/we* as myself/ourselves, (a) fashion student(s) having a discussion in this second language classroom’. The learners’ remarks do illuminate the harmony between the internal and external CoS:

I think it doesn’t make much difference whether we were Product Development Team members or fellow classmates in the team discussion session as, anyway, we were working towards the details of our proposed collection, making use of our own design creativity.  
(Carmen)

I didn’t consciously make any distinction at that time. I just mean ‘*I*’ or ‘*we*’, like what I’m saying here. So perhaps it’s the real ‘*I*’ and the real ‘*we*’. (Christine)

Thus, the learners seem to be suggesting that there is some kind of harmony between the *Tenor* in the *internal CoS* (‘*I/we* as (a) Product Development Team member(s) of Chic Fashion House’) and the *external CoS* (‘*I/we* as myself/ourselves, (a) fashion student(s) having a discussion in this second language classroom’) of this team discussion task, and this kind of harmony seem to be absent between the *Tenor* of the *internal CoS* (‘audience as superiors and company management of Chic Fashion House’) and that of the *external CoS* (‘audience as an English language teacher/assessor in this second language classroom’) of the written project report and oral discussion tasks.

The harmony of the *Field* and *Tenor* between internal and external CoS also suggests harmony of the *Mode* – that the role of language in both the internal and external CoS is to explain, share and exchange information and ideas in order to arrive at an agreed new collection.

Thus, this section has utilized the dichotomy of *internal and external CoS* to account for the unauthentic aspects of the learners' engagement with the PBL project outcome tasks (i.e. the written project report and the oral presentation) and the authenticity manifested in the team discussion session. This dichotomy of *internal and external CoS*, the harmony of which leads to authenticity of the learners' interaction and the conflict of which leads to inauthenticity, indeed sheds light on a *third level of situational authenticity*, which complements the *2-level model of situational authenticity* conceptualised from the analysis of task design of the PBL task series discussed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 4, the two levels of situational authenticity discussed are:

Level 1: Provision of a constructed CoS (as context of situation is a necessary condition for any authentic real life communication event)

Level 2: Alignment of the constructed CoS with that of the specific purposes TLU domain

In the light of the discussion in this chapter on interactional authenticity, a third level of authenticity for this CoS model of task design has emerged:

### **Level 3: Alignment between internal CoS and external CoS**

In order to maximize authenticity in the design of tasks, apart from aligning the constructed CoS with that of the learners' workplace TLU domain, attention should also be paid to bring the internal and external CoS in harmony with each other in terms of Field, Tenor, and Mode. Aligning the internal and external CoS to bring about a third level of authenticity also addresses Breen's (1985) position that the



language classroom is an authentically social context as discussed in 2.8. Figure 5.1 represents this three-level authenticity model for task design.

<b><u>Situational Authenticity</u></b>	
<b>Level 3</b>	Alignment between internal CoS and external CoS
<b>Level 2</b>	Constructed CoS aligned with that of the specific purposes TLU domain
<b>Level 1</b>	Provision of a Constructed CoS

**Figure 5.1: Three-level authenticity model for task design**

### **5.5.2. Implications for a Level Three Situational Authenticity**

The establishment of this Level 3 situational authenticity for task design, informed by empirical data as discussed in this Chapter, lends support to the importance of the following as ways of maximizing authenticity, in that they serve to bring harmony between internal and external CoS:

#### **i) Incorporating ‘Indigenous Assessment Criteria’**

While it appears that the element of assessment involved in the external CoS of the PBL tasks has contributed to the learners’ unauthentic interactions with the tasks, the

following comments by the learners, when asked about how the element of assessment affected their attitude and performance in the PBL tasks, are nevertheless revealing about authenticity as far as the element of assessment is concerned:

Well, knowing that the tasks are assessed made us take this project more seriously than just ordinary class work, and so... (Christine)

And so, this makes it more real, because in real life workplace tasks, your boss and clients are always evaluating your work. This affects your chance of promotion. In a way there's always an element of assessment involved. (Chai Chi)

Thus, as discussed, it seems that in the perception of the learners, the element of assessment of the PBL tasks nevertheless has its correspondence with the real world, in that one's performance is always subject to being monitored by various participants in the TLU domain such as one's superiors, business partners, clients or other parties concerned. Indeed, as pointed out by Jacoby and McNamara (1999:224), 'performance assessment practices are part of any professional culture, from formal, gatekeeping examination procedures to informal, ongoing evaluation built into everyday interaction with novices, colleagues, and supervisors'. Thus, to align the internal CoS with the external CoS does not mean to remove the element of assessment altogether. Instead, the learners' comments above have shed light on the importance of incorporating 'indigenous assessment criteria' (Douglas 2000) (i.e. the criteria used by participants in the TLU task to establish whether the performance of the task has been successful or not) in enhancing learners' perceived authenticity of the PBL tasks. These indigenous assessment criteria have to be made clear to the learners in the *rubric* of the task, so that the learners will perceive that what the audience in the *external CoS* (the assessor) is looking for correspond to what the audience in the *internal CoS* (the people in the trade) is looking for. Again, as Jacoby

and McNamara (1999:224) point out, ‘rather than relying on external rating scales or handbooks, professionals typically call upon a rich inventory of tacitly known criteria in order to determine whether and to what extent some particular performance is competent or falls short of the mark’. Thus, the present study has shed light on the direction for further studies on *indigenous assessment criteria for ESP* as far as *authenticity* is concerned.

## **ii) Integration of ESP Projects with Trade Projects/ Collaboration between the Language Centre and Trade Departments**

In the context of most vocational institutions, ESP courses are run by the language centre, while trade courses are run by the respective parent departments. In other words, the language centre runs ESP courses for students from parent departments such as the Department for Business Administration, the Department of Fashion and Textiles, the Department of Information Technology, etc.. The case PBL module under investigation in the present study is one run by the language centre for students from the Department of Fashion and Textiles undertaking a Higher Diploma for Fashion Design and Product Development at a local vocational institution. The establishment of the Level 3 situational authenticity for task design discussed, which calls for the alignment of the internal and external CoS in maximizing authenticity, provides the rationale for the language-across-the-curriculum approach to learning and teaching with the collaboration between the trade departments and the language centre. (The need for the collaboration between the ESP teacher and the trade-content teacher has been advocated by ESP academics such as Hutchinson and Waters 1982: 56, Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998: 43, Almagro and Vallegro 2002, etc., and the

present study has further provided a rationale for this advocacy). In integrating an ESP project into a trade one of which language and communicative competence is an integral part, there will be minimal distinction and thus enhanced harmony between the internal and the external CoS (see Table 5.8).

CoS parameters	Internal CoS	External CoS
<b>Field</b> (subject mater, activities taking place)	Collaborate with team members to carry out a product development project – researching and developing new fashion products	Collaborate with team members to carry out a product development project – researching and developing new fashion products (with an element of assessment – indigenous assessment criteria)
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	As members of Product Development Team, working with 3 fellow team members (reader(s) of project outcome 1 written report and audience of project outcome 2 oral presentation: trade people)	As students of fashion product development, working with 3 fellow classmates to form a group (reader of project outcome 1 written report: trade people and language teacher; audience of project outcome 2 oral presentation: trade people, language teacher and fellow classmate, with trade teacher and language teacher as assessors)
<b>Mode</b> (channel, role of language)	Channel: Written (research report); Spoken (oral presentation) Role of language: To explain and persuade Language and communicative performance as an integral part of professional performance	Channel: Written (research report); Spoken (oral presentation) Role of language: To explain and persuade Language and communicative performance as an integral part of professional performance

**Table 5.8: Enhanced harmony between internal and external CoS: integrating an ESP project into a trade one**

In terms of the *Field*, the project product outcome will be for a realistic trade purpose. In terms of the *Tenor*, there is a real audience of trade people (and with the language assessor using indigenous assessment criteria), and the group members are real life

trade project teammates. In terms of the *Mode*, language and communicative competence as an integral part of the professional performance on the project.

The discussion above has also informed an alternative way, as presented below, of achieving this kind of alignment of internal and external CoS by integrating an authentic activity run by the language centre, the Pumpkin Festival, into a modified version of the case PBL task series in the present study.

### Project Brief

#### Designing a Fashion Product for the Pumpkin Festival

This is an e-mail the Language Centre has sent to all students.

To: Students of Fashion Design and Product Development  
<students\_fdpd@hkvi.edu.hk>  
From: Language Centre <lc@hkvi.edu.hk>  
Date: 10 September 2009  
Subject: Fashion Design Project for Pumpkin Festival 2009

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As you may be aware, the Language Centre is going to organise a Pumpkin Festival for all students of the Hong Kong Vocational Institution at the end of the coming October. One of the events of the Pumpkin Festival will be a Halloween Fashion Design Competition, and we have pleasure in inviting all students of Fashion Design and Product Development to join this competition.

Participants have to form design teams of 4-5 members and collaborate in this fashion design project:

1. To boost your team spirit, you should create a name for your design team.
2. Design a product/product line on the theme of Halloween (both **apparel** and **non-apparel** products will do).
3. Before doing the design, your team has to do some research on products available on the fashion market related to the theme Halloween. You have to explain the uniqueness of your own design among the products available.
4. Your team should submit a written report of 2000 words on your product development project detailing the following (a template for the report is attached for your reference):
  - a. the inspirations for the design
  - b. the target market

- c. detailed description of the product/ product line in terms of its special features, colour range, and fabric selection (if applicable).
5. Your team is invited to give a 15-minute oral presentation of your design to our Halloween Fashion judging panel.

Your team will be judged on the fashion sense and creativity demonstrated in the design of the product, as well as how well you present your ideas in the written report and the oral presentation. We have invited famous fashion designer, Mr William Tam from the Department of Fashion and Textiles and Ms Lily Davis, Head of the Language Centre to be our judges.

We offer very attractive awards for the winning teams. We very much look forward to your participation.

Best Regards  
Language Centre  
Hong Kong Vocational Institution

This is essentially an ESP project run by the Language Centre, with a real life fashion design competition integrated into it. With this integration, there will be no distinction between the internal and external CoS, and thus a complete harmony. In terms of the *Field*, the project product outcome in both the internal and external CoS will be for a realistic trade purpose. In terms of the *Tenor*, there is a real audience of trade people (with the language assessor using indigenous assessment criteria), and the group members are real life teammates for this fashion design project. In terms of the *Mode*, language and communicative competence is an integral part of the professional performance on the project, as made clear in the project brief.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

### **6.1. Contribution of the Present Study**

This thesis has explored the theoretical and practical issues concerning the notion of authenticity through a case study of a PBL module in an ESP curriculum, and has derived from the research findings a 3-level authenticity model for ESP task design. This Chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the contribution of the present study to knowledge, its pedagogical and research implications as well as its contribution to the Hong Kong vocational educational context.

#### **6.1.1. Claim to Knowledge**

The present study has explored how authenticity is a potentially useful notion for the conceptualization and realization of practical ESP task design and has both theoretical and practical significance for the field of ELT (and ESP in particular). As discussed in 1.2, this study is a response to the incompleteness of previous discussions on the ‘elusive’ definition of authenticity in terms of language learning tasks (Mishan 2004:1) and the lack of empirical research done on the extent to which authenticity is achievable in the second language classroom (Beckett and Miller 2006:28) despite the wide recognition of the vital role of authenticity in ELT and ESP discussed in literature. As Lewkowicz (2000:45) points out, ‘despite the importance accorded to authenticity, there has been a marked absence of research to demonstrate this characteristic,’ and that ‘such discussions [on authenticity] need to be empirically based to inform what has until now been a predominantly theoretical debate.’ (Lewkowicz 2000:53) Thus, the present study

has contributed to filling this gap in the existing literature. It has provided a logical link between Halliday's triad construct of Context of Situation within the Systemic Functional Linguistic model and Bachman's dual notion of authenticity. It has added to the body of knowledge concerning authenticity by positing that authenticity, apart from being a dual notion as suggested in literature, is also a three-level construct as far as ESP task design is concerned – Level 1 has to do with the provision of a constructed CoS to correspond to authentic real life communication events where context of situation is a necessary condition; level 2 concerns the alignment of the constructed CoS with that of the specific purposes TLU domain; while level 3 involves the alignment between the internal CoS and the external CoS. This 3-level authenticity model derived from the present study, apart from its theoretical contribution, has also significant pedagogical implications for practical ESP task design, which are to be discussed in the following sections.

### 6.1.2. Pedagogical Implications: Implications of the Research Findings for ESP Task Design

In the light of the research findings of the present study, a 3-level CoS model of authenticity for task design is derived as discussed in the previous sections. This model can be succinctly represented in Figure 6.1 as follows:

**Figure 6.1: CoS Model of Authenticity for Task Design**

<b>Level 3</b> Alignment between internal CoS and external CoS	<b>CoS</b> to be set up by means of intrinsic documents  Input data: + genuineness  + finder authenticity
<b>Level 2</b> Constructed CoS aligned with that of the specific purposes TLU domain	
<b>Level 1</b> Provision of Constructed CoS	



**Level 1** involves task design as the construction of a CoS (not necessarily directly relevant to the learners' future workplace TLU). The purpose of this constructed CoS is to provide the learners with a context of situation, which is a necessary condition for any authentic real life communication event. (Appendix V gives an example of a task of level 1 authenticity designed within this CoS model. This is a task designed for a class of L2 learners coming from a mix of various trade disciplines, and thus it is impossible to align the constructed CoS with that of the specific purposes TLU domain of the learners since they do not have a common specific purposes TLU domain.) **Level 2** involves the construction of a CoS aligned with that of the learners' specific purposes TLU domain. The case PBL task series for fashion students under investigation in the present study exemplifies this level of authenticity. **Level 3** involves the alignment of the internal CoS and external CoS. The fashion design project for the Pumpkin Festival 2009, which is an ESP project integrated with an authentic activity run by the language centre as discussed in section 5.5.2, illustrates this level 3 of authenticity.

The right column of the CoS model in Figure 6.1 suggests that the CoS can be set up and presented by means of *intrinsic documents* (a term used by Bambrough 1994 to refer to texts presented within the reality of the world of the simulation to achieve 'social and communicative reality'), an example of which is the e-mail sent to 'the Product Development Team members' in the project brief of the case PBL module (Appendix I). The *input data* can be either *genuine* or *simulated* texts and the **CoS** also governs whether the *input data* are to be found by the learners themselves (*finder authenticity*) or assigned by the teacher.

Although this 3-level model is an implicational hierarchy where an upper level of authenticity also subsumes features of the lower ones, it is not the position of this thesis to suggest that a designed task of level 3 authenticity is necessarily superior to one of level 2 authenticity in terms of pedagogical value. What the present study has aimed to achieve is to give a characterization of the nature of authenticity as manifested in the case PBL module, both in terms of task design (situational authenticity) and task implementation (interactional authenticity), and has derived from this characterisation a 3-level CoS model applicable for achieving authenticity in practical task design. A task of level 2, though lesser, as compared to a level 3 one, in terms of authenticity, can be of greater pedagogical value in other respects. For example, one aspect of the ‘inauthenticity’ manifested in this case PBL task series is the learners’ focus on displaying ‘good language’ and a perceived separation between form and content in an ESP project as opposed to their perception of language as integral in an authentic trade project. While this aspect of ‘inauthenticity’ makes this PBL task series fall short of level 3, the learners’ *focus on form* in approaching this ESP project may in a way facilitate second language learning as advocated by researchers such as Willis (1996), Long (1988, 1991), Ellis (2003), VanPatten (1996), Lightbown and Spada (1993) (as discussed in 2.3.8), who recognize the importance of ‘*consciousness raising*’ and the value in a form-focused component within the TBL (task-based learning) framework. Of course, further research is needed in order to explore how this aspect of ‘inauthenticity’ can be related to consciousness raising and its facilitation of second language learning.

Besides, as discussed in Chapter 5, the data from the learners’ written project report shows that the learners had low grammatical competence but they demonstrated an

awareness of and attempt to achieve the illocutionary functions (to *explain* and to *persuade*) as activated by the constructed CoS. This shows that the constructed CoS indeed establishes the discourse domain for the learners and engage their CLA (communicative language ability) (Bachman and Palmer 1996) in terms of their grammatical, textual and functional knowledge. The learners were well aware of (and this was also triangulated with the data from the retrospective focus group interviews discussed in 5.4.4.) and attempted to achieve the illocutionary functions required in the constructed CoS. Thus, *task design as the construction of CoS* (discussed in 4.4) has significance for both pedagogical and assessment purposes. From the perspective of assessment, as the constructed CoS establishes the discourse domain for the learners and thus informs them of the illocutionary functions they are expected to achieve in such a context of situation, this engages the learners' CLA and thus can distinguish learners of higher grammatical competence from those of lower grammatical competence attempting to achieve the expected illocutionary functions. Pedagogically, this shows what grammatical areas and other language items the learner is weak in for achieving certain illocutionary functions, and thus sheds light on those particular language items to focus on at a post-task stage. Thus, the CoS model can indeed complement Willis' TBL (task-based learning) framework (1996) discussed in 2.3.7, where a language focused component is needed at the post-task stage.

On the other hand, as the felicity conditions for level 3 authenticity may not always be practically met (for example, the integration of an ESP project and a trade project, though achieving level 3 authenticity, may involve plenty of coordination work between the language centre and the parent department, and thus is not solely within

the control of the ESP task designer.), Level 2 authenticity can be readily resorted to, and thus has the greatest relevance to ESP task design.

### **6.1.3. Pedagogical Implications: Applicability of the CoS Model to Non-PBL Task Design**

Indeed, the application of this 3-level authenticity CoS model conceptualised from the data of the present study is not confined to the design of PBL tasks. It is also equally applicable to the design of any non-PBL ELT tasks, both learning as well as assessment tasks. In the following I will exemplify the application of the CoS model for the design of a series of tasks for an ESP (non-PBL) module ‘Written Correspondence for Fashion Product Design Coordinators’. A full set of the student worksheets containing the actual tasks can be found in Appendix VI. This series of tasks are positioned at level 2 of the present CoS authenticity model since the lesson objectives (see Appendix VI) and the details of the following constructed CoS have been verified by practitioners in the fashion design industry and are thus aligned with those of the specific purposes TLU domain.

**Table 6.1: Features of the constructed CoS of a non-PBL task series**

<b>Field</b> (subject matter, activities taking place)	Dealing with incoming written correspondence in the workplace (at DesignDigital Fashion Co), giving information, explanation and professional advice
<b>Tenor</b> (Participants)	As Fashion Product Coordinator Reader/ interlocutors: Lesson 1 – Task 1.3 (client), Task 2.1 (superior), Task 2.2 (client) Lesson 2 – Task 1.2 (subordinates), Task 1.4 (fellow team)

	members), Task 2 (superior)
<b>Mode</b> <b>(channel, role of language)</b>	Written Spoken (Lesson 2 Task 1.4) To explain, make suggestions, and give advice

*Genuineness* of input data – mostly simulated texts, the contents of which are mainly extracted from genuine texts in the specific purposes TLU domain

*Finder authenticity* – input data are mainly given, except Lesson 2 Task 1.4 and Task 2 where learners can find some genuine source materials on their own to read/listen to before engaging in the tasks.

The constructed CoS (detailed in Table 6.1), i.e. information regarding the *Field*, *Tenor* and *Mode*, is mainly presented by means of various intrinsic documents, e.g. the e-mail (text 1) and the company webpage (text 3). The constructed CoS is realized in the form of a ‘skeleton context’ on which to hang all language tasks the learners have to perform for this ESP module.

Since this series of tasks constitute a learning package which guides the learners step by step towards the completion of some real world target tasks, the tasks in this package consist of, in Ellis’ (2003) terms, both exercises and tasks, or in Long’s (1985) terms, both pedagogical tasks and target tasks. A ‘task’ or ‘target task’ requires the students to function primarily as ‘language users’ in the sense that they must employ the same kinds of communicative processes as those involved in real world activities. In contrast, an ‘exercise’ or a ‘pedagogical task’ requires the students to function primarily as ‘learners’ (Ellis 2003:3). Thus, the fill-in-the-blanks exercises (tasks 1.2 and 1.3) and the question-and-answer exercise (task 1.1, 2.1a) of Lesson 1 and the

vocabulary exercises (task 1.3) of Lesson 2, etc. in this package (see Appendix VI) are ‘exercises’ or ‘pedagogical tasks’, which prepare the learners for completing the ‘target tasks’ – task 2.2 of Lesson 1, tasks 1.2, 1.4 and task 2 of Lesson 2, and the Assessment Task of Lesson 3.

This task series package has been developed within the CoS authenticity model and illustrates that this model, which is derived from the data collected from a PBL module, is applicable to task design for non-PBL modules as well. The constructed CoS, apart from engaging the discourse domain of the learners for performing the target tasks, contextualises all pedagogical exercises and target tasks and gives coherence and task dependency (Nunan 2004) to the whole series of tasks (including the assessment task in Lesson 3). Each individual task is self-contained but at the same time, all of them, including all tasks of Lessons 1 and 2 and also the assessment task of Lesson 3 are tied to and governed by the constructed CoS detailed in Table 6.1.

#### **6.1.4. Contribution to the Hong Kong Vocational Education Context**

As mentioned in 1.3.3, the issue of authenticity is explicitly stipulated as a requirement in the teaching and learning strategies in the syllabuses and curriculum documents of the leading vocational education institution in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education. The derivation of the *3-level authenticity model* for ESP (and ELT in general) task design by the present study is beneficial and serves as a practical guide for the ESP teachers and task designers who have to design authentic language learning tasks to meet the specific language needs of their learners within the Hong Kong vocational educational context. This authenticity model also

provides the rationale and sheds light on the direction for the collaboration between the ESP teacher and the trade-content specialist in the language-across-the-curriculum approach to learning and teaching in the vocational educational context, and has also addressed the various stakeholder needs as stated in 1.5.

## **6.2. Implications for Further Research**

### **6.2.1. ‘Inauthenticity’ and Focus on Form**

As discussed in the previous section, one aspect of the ‘inauthenticity’ manifested in this case PBL task series is the learners’ focus on displaying ‘good language’ and a perceived separation between form and content in an ESP project as opposed to their perception of language as an integral part of a real life trade project. Despite the fact that this constitutes an unauthentic aspect of the learners’ interaction with the task, it was suggested that the learners’ focus on form in approaching this ESP project may in a way facilitate second language learning as advocated by researchers such as Willis 1994, Long 1988, 1991, Ellis 2003, VanPatten 1996, Lightbown and Spada 1993, who recognize the importance of ‘consciousness raising’ and the value in a ‘form-focused component’ within the TBL framework. This calls for further research to explore how this aspect of ‘inauthenticity’ of an ESP task can be related to ‘consciousness raising’ and its facilitation of second language learning.

### **6.2.2. Further Studies on Indigenous Assessment Criteria**

The research findings suggest that although the element of assessment involved in the PBL tasks appears to have contributed to the learners' unauthentic interactions with the tasks, it nevertheless has its correspondence with the real world as perceived by the learners, in that one's performance is always subject to being monitored by various participants in the TLU domain such as one's superiors, business partners, clients or other parties concerned. Indeed, as pointed out by Jacoby and McNamara (1999:224), 'performance assessment practices are part of any professional culture, from formal, gatekeeping examination procedures to informal, ongoing evaluation built into everyday interaction with novices, colleagues, and supervisors'. Thus, to align the internal CoS with the external CoS to achieve level three of situational authenticity, incorporating 'indigenous assessment criteria' (Douglas 2000) (i.e. the criteria used by participants in the TLU task to establish whether the performance of the task has been successful or not) will enhance learners' perceived authenticity of the tasks with which they are engaged. These indigenous assessment criteria have to be made clear to the learners in the rubrics of the task, so that the learners will perceive that what the audience in the external CoS (the assessor) is looking for corresponds to what the audience in the internal CoS (the people in the trade) is looking for. Again, as Jacoby and McNamara (1999:224) point out, 'rather than relying on external rating scales or handbooks, professionals typically call upon a rich inventory of tacitly known criteria in order to determine whether and to what extent some particular performance is competent or falls short of the mark'. Thus, further research is needed on indigenous assessment criteria for ESP as far as authenticity is concerned, the findings of which will serve to enrich the CoS model derived from the present study.



### **6.2.3. Integration of ESP Projects with Trade Projects/ Collaboration between the Language Centre and Parent Trade Departments**

As discussed in Chapter 5, the establishment of the Level 3 authenticity in the CoS model for task design, which calls for the alignment of the internal and external CoS in maximizing authenticity, provides the rationale for the language-across-the-curriculum approach to learning and teaching with the collaboration between the trade departments and the language centre. In integrating an ESP project into a trade one of which language and communicative competence is an integral part, there will be minimal distinction and thus enhanced harmony between the internal and the external CoS. In this connection, in the light of the present study, further research should be done on the actual interactional authenticity as manifested in this kind of tasks at Level 3 authenticity, the findings of which can further inform the modifications of and thus enrich the CoS model derived from the present study.

### **6.3. Limitations of the Study**

This section highlights two possible limitations of the present study, which include the generalisability of the study and the exclusion of conducting observations in the specific purpose TLU field in ascertaining the situational authenticity of the PBL task series.

#### **6.3.1. Generalisability of the Study**

The present study focuses on a single case instead of covering a whole population, and thus one potential limitation is the generalisability of its findings. Critics of qualitative

and case study research have questioned the value of the study of single events and the *generalizability* of its findings. However, others believe that generalizability is possible from qualitative and case study research and that ‘the extent to which findings from case study can be generalized to other examples in the class depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type’ (Denscombe 1998: 36-7), i.e. through choosing a case that is typical of the phenomenon. As discussed in 1.4, the case PBL module selected for the present study is typical in the ESP curriculum for the final year higher diploma students from all disciplines (not only for students of Fashion Design) in the context of vocational education. Thus, the typicality of the chosen case in the present study may, to a certain extent, allow for generalizability.

Another approach to generalizability of case study findings is to place the responsibility for generalizing on the ‘reader’ or the ‘consumer’ rather than the researcher. In this way, it is the reader or user of the case study to decide the applicability of the findings in their own situation. This is termed *transferability* by Lincoln & Guba (1985). To ensure transferability, the researcher is obliged to provide a detailed description of the participants, the setting and context, so that the reader can compare their own situation with the case. The present study has attempted to provide detailed accounts to allow the reader to draw comparisons to their own context and situation related to authenticity in task design for their own ESP/ELT curricula.

### **6.3.2. The Exclusion of Conducting Observations in the Specific Purpose TLU Field in Ascertaining the Situational Authenticity of the PBL Task Series**

To address the specific research question on the extent to which the PBL task series are situationally authentic, on top of documentary analysis of the project brief, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two practitioners in the fashion industry to verify the situational authenticity of the designed tasks. Ideally, observations in the specific purpose TLU field should also be conducted so as to triangulate and to arrive at a more comprehensive picture of the authentic language use in the specific purpose TLU domain, and thus more validly ascertain the correspondence between the task characteristics of the PBL tasks and their real world counterparts. Unfortunately, due to practicality constraints, gaining access to the specific purpose TLU field to conduct observations on the practitioners' performance in product development projects was not feasible. Thus, instead of conducting observations in the specific purpose TLU field, the present study settled for using a method proposed by Douglas (2000: 97) as *subject specialist informants procedure*, which involves the use of subject specialists in the analysis of specific purpose target language use situations. In these semi-structured interviews for the present study, the fashion practitioners were asked to review the PBL tasks under investigation. This method is also what Wu and Stansfield (2001:198) propose as *verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field*. Wu and Stansfield propose that verification comments and critique by task performers in the field and TLU specialists are of vital importance in ensuring authenticity. Thus, in the present study, *verification of authenticity by practitioners in the field* was used to investigate the characteristics of the TLU (target language use) situation and to ascertain the extent of correspondence between the PBL tasks and TLU tasks, and thus the situational authenticity of the PBL task series. Since the informants here are specialists in the fashion industry but not language experts, they were not directly asked to comment on the linguistic features of the PBL tasks in relation to the TLU

tasks. Instead, they were prompted to comment on the task characteristics and the contextual features of the situation set up in the project brief. The informants' advice and views on the communication needs of the task performers in the workplace were solicited to provide insights into the role and functions of language in the specific purposes field (i.e. TLU context) in relation to the PBL tasks. The guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews were drawn up after the analysis of the design features of the PBL task series in the Project Brief (See Appendix II).

#### **6.4. Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, this study has explored authenticity as an under-developed area in ESP and a potentially useful notion for the conceptualization and realization of practical task design. It has addressed the educational policy shift in Hong Kong towards a more student-centred, communicative pedagogy. The derivation of the *3-level authenticity model* for ESP task design by the present study from empirical data has contributed to the Hong Kong vocational educational context by providing a practical guide for the design of authentic language learning tasks to address the needs of various stakeholders. In addition, as Harding (2007:7) points out, it is important particularly for ESP teachers to focus on the learner's specific needs instead of following any 'off-the-shelf' course book, as 'support materials are hard to find, limited, and often too sector specific'. In this connection, this *3-level authenticity model for task design* is beneficial and of practical value for any ELT/ESP teachers and task designers who have to design authentic language learning tasks to meet the

specific language needs of their learners instead of relying on any ready made textbooks.

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### **Hong Kong Educational Curriculum Documents:**

- Action Plan to Raise Language Standards in Hong Kong. 2003. Hong Kong Standing Committee on Language Education and Research.
- Curriculum Development Council. 2000. *Learning to Learn: Key Learning Areas: English language education*. Consultation document. Hong Kong Government.
- Assessment Report 2009. IVE.
- Review of Education System: Reform Proposals. 2000. Education Commission.
- Syllabuses of English and Communication Modules. 2005. IVE.
- Syllabuses of English and Communication Modules. 2007. IVE.

## **Appendix I: Project Brief of Case PBL Module**

### **Project Brief: Notes to Students**

#### **Project Task 1: Written Project Report**

In this project, you need to form groups of 4 and write a project report of 2000 words. To prepare for the report, your group has to carry out some research and, based on the findings of the research, propose new fashion products for Spring/Summer 2009. For details, please refer to the Research Project ‘Situation Brief’.

This written research report takes up 50% of the total marks of the project.

#### **Objectives of the Written Research Report:**

1. To describe the background, rationale and purpose of the research
2. To explain clearly the research question and methodology
3. To present findings including fashion trends, market scope, target customer profile, design inspiration, colour and fabric selection, etc.
4. To make recommendations based on findings

#### **Deadline for Submission**

You team has to submit your proposal by \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Project Task 2: Persuasive Oral Presentation**

For details of situation of this oral presentation, please refer to the ‘Situation Brief’.

The oral presentation will be conducted as detailed below.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
				50%

#### **Preparation**

This is the Persuasive Oral Presentation task of the Research Project. You are given the Research Project Brief 10 weeks before the oral presentation.

In this task, you will be required to work with your team members and give an oral presentation of your research and proposed fashion product (line) for 15 minutes to persuade the audience (i.e. the senior management of your company) to accept your proposal. The presentation will be followed by a 3-minute question-and-answer session in which your team invite and answer questions from the audience. Prepare the

presentation as a team. Divide the presentation among team members so that each member will have around 4 minutes for presentation.

Your teacher will draw lots to decide the order for each team's presentation.

**Objectives of the Oral Presentation Task:**

Your marks will be determined by the following competencies:

- To organize information from a written text into spoken discourse for a particular audience and purpose.
- To explain a research question to an audience
- To outline appropriate solutions/findings to the research question
- To use persuasive language and communication techniques
- To handle questions from an audience

You will receive an individual mark based on your performance in the overall group presentation.

**Team Discussion Task (to be held in Week 5)**

After your group has decided on a research topic, divide up the research work among your members. In Week 5, group members have to attend a team discussion session. In this session, members have to share their research findings and work together to come up with details of the new product line your group is to propose.

### **Project Brief: Situation Brief**

You are a member of the Product Development Team (consisting of 4 members) of Chic Fashion House, which specializes in menswear, womenswear, as well as children's wear. Read the following e-mail from the Product Development Manager. Then carry out some investigative research and work out a product development proposal as requested.

To: Product Development Team <product\_dev\_team@chic.com>  
From: Product Development Manager <product\_manager@chic.com>  
Date: 21 October 2008  
Subject: Product Development Proposal for S/S 2009

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Dear Team Members

Our company would like to develop a new product/product line for the coming season, and I would like your Team to do some research and work out a proposal for the development of new fashion products for Spring/Summer 2009. To carry out the research, your team has to:

1. Identify a problem/a need/ an opportunity related to the Hong Kong/ China / international fashion market. (e.g. the potential of a particular fabric type for a S/S 2009 collection, proposal for the development of a line of oriental style Disney branded apparel products, etc.)
2. Make sure that the merits and potential of your proposed product(s) are well justified by research findings.
3. Carry out an initial Internet search on your chosen topic to see if you can find substantial information about it.
4. You have to investigate the market needs as well as the fashion trend (including colour, fabric, silhouette trends etc.)
5. You have to analyse your major competitors as far as the proposed product is concerned and develop your target customer profiles.

6. For the investigative research (in 4 and 5) into fashion trends, market needs, customer profiles, you have to decide what methods (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, observations, documentation analyses, etc.) you would employ to obtain findings to address the research issues.
7. Carry out the research. Discuss how you would organize and present the findings to justify your proposal.
8. Based on research findings, your proposal should detail the design of the proposed product/ product line (including the special features, colour selection, choice of materials, lines, patterns and silhouettes, and technical information) and the target market.
9. You should also present your strategies for the new product/ product line. For example:
  - Branding, packaging, other product features (guarantee, etc.)
  - Pricing strategy
  - Promotion (What advertising, product launch and sales promotion?)
10. Prepare a written project report of about 2000 words (excluding references and appendices) which include details of your research as well as your proposed product (line). (Project Task 1)
11. Give an oral presentation of your proposal in the next staff meeting to persuade the senior management to accept your proposed product (line). (Project Task 2)

Peter



## **Appendix II: Interview Schedule for Semi-structured Interviews with Subject Specialist Informants/Practitioners in the Specific Purpose TLU Domain**

The participants were asked to read through the Project Brief of the PBL task series.

Guiding Questions:

1. How much do you think the subject matter and activities of this project task series (i.e. researching and developing new fashion products for a fashion firm) mirror those in your workplace/ in the real world fashion industry?
2. Which post(s) in the fashion industry are more likely to be involved in this kind of project?
3. Could you please take a look at the 'e-mail' in the Project Brief? Do bosses often give instructions/assignments to subordinates in the form of an e-mail like this in your workplace?
4. As a fashion designer/product developer, what kind of reading do you usually need to do? What kind of sources do you rely on for input if you are involved in a fashion product development project?
5. What kind of post(s) do you think the learners of the case ESP PBL module (graduates of Higher Diploma in Fashion Design and Product Development) are likely to take up in the fashion industry? Are they likely to be involved in this kind of product development projects in these posts? If so, what role do they usually play in the projects?
6. Usually how formal (in terms of the atmosphere and language used) are the project team meetings in your workplace?
7. What kind of language skills do you think a successful fashion designer/product developer need, particularly for involving in this kind of projects?

### **Appendix III: Interview Schedule for the Focus Group Interviews**

#### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How did your group arrive at the selected topic for the project? (i.e. the development of a maternity wear collection/ rainwear collection) How did your group make the decision?
2. How much, if any, do you think you have made use of your professional knowledge of fashion in this project?
3. How would you have approached this project differently if it were a real life fashion development project you engage in in your future workplace?
4. Do you think your proposed new collection of maternity wear/rainwear is feasible for a real life product development project?
5. How and where did you locate suitable information/useful texts as input for this project?
6. To what extent do you think the procedure you followed in using these texts resembles what one does for a real life trade project?
7. How did the element of assessment affect your attitude in approaching this project?
8. Are you clear about your own role and the roles of the reader/audience in the context of this Product Development Project?
9. How much did you really keep this reader/audience (as your superiors/company management) in mind when writing the project report and giving your oral presentation? How has that affected the way you approached the written project report and oral presentation tasks?

10. Did you notice that most of you didn't demonstrate effective oral presentation skills such as body language, interaction with audience, etc.? How important do you think effective presentation skills are for this project?
11. Please take a look at the use of passive voice and the present subjective mood such as 'It is recommended that organic fabrics be used for the new collection.' Why did you choose to make use of these structures in your report?
12. It was observed that the interactions in the Q&A session seemed pre-arranged and scripted. Was this the case? If so, why?
13. How did you go about planning and working on this project as a team?
14. Please refer to some of the instances when you used 'we' and I' in the team discussion session. (Then part of the video of the team discussion session was played to the participants.) Did you refer to 'I/we' as 'Product Development Team members of Chic Fashion House' or as 'myself/ourselves – fashion students having a discussion in the second language classroom'?
15. What purpose do you think your written project report and oral presentation should serve for this Product Development Project?
16. Did you pay as much attention to language accuracy and fluency while taking part in the team discussion as you did in the oral presentation?

## Appendix IV: Worked Samples of Data Analysis: Coding and Memoing

### Sample Coding of Project Brief

Extract from project brief	Codes
<p>To: Product Development Team &lt;product_dev_team@chic.com&gt;  From: Product Development Manager &lt;product_manager@chic.com&gt;  Date: 21 October 2008  Subject: Product Development Proposal for S/S 2009</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Dear Team Members</p> <p>Our company would like to develop a new product/product line for the coming season, and I would like your Team to do some research and work out a proposal for the development of new fashion products for Spring/Summer 2009. To carry out the research, your team has to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify a problem/a need/ an opportunity related to the Hong Kong/ China / international fashion market. (e.g. the potential of a particular fabric type for a S/S 2009 collection, proposal for the development of a line of oriental style Disney branded apparel products, etc.)</li> <li>2. Make sure that the merits and potential of your proposed product(s) are well justified by research findings.</li> <li>3. Carry out an initial Internet search on your chosen topic to see if you can find substantial information about it.</li> <li>4. You have to investigate the market needs as well as the fashion trend (including colour, fabric, silhouette trends etc.)</li> </ol>	<p>Intrinsic document</p> <p>Simulated text</p> <p>Authentic workplace scenario</p> <p>Group interaction</p> <p>Use of specific purpose background knowledge – indirectness of interaction between input and response</p> <p>Genuineness, finder authenticity</p>

### Sample Coding of Learners' Project Report

Extracts from learners' project report	Codes
<p>Nowadays, most of people pursue a high quality lifestyle. Although pregnant period just ten months, there still many pregnant women desire suitable pregnant clothing when they are pregnancy. They not only need comfortable pregnant clothing but also is fashionable clothing. In Hong Kong, there are many women need to work during pregnant, especially they are working ladies and need to wear formal dressing due to their work nature. To consider these factors, developing pregnant clothing which combine fashionable and formal has its potential in the Hong Kong fashion market.</p>	<p>Establishing the territory – making reference to real-life HK fashion market context</p>
<p>In Hong Kong garment retail market, most of companies and brands mainly put their resources into Men's, Women's /Ladies even Kids product line. Thus pregnant clothing always is ignored.</p>	<p>Establishing a niche – making reference to real-life HK fashion market context</p>
<p>As noted in WGSN's fashion trend analysis, floral prints, animal prints and geometric prints will become popular:</p> <p><i>"Print is a key fabric direction for spring/summer 2008. Flora is a driving force, with abstract, flat florals and illustrative wild flowers joined by the occasional animal pattern. Extravagant-scale geometric prints imbued with a "summer of love" feel, evocative of the 1970s."</i></p>	<p>Use of trade-specific genuine input text</p>

### Sample Coding of Retrospective Focus-group Interviews

Extracts from retrospective focus-group interview data	Codes
<p>.... we suggested high waistlines with ties at the side to adjust the fit. We also made use of an innovative high-technology metal net, which is repellent to electromagnetic wave emitted by computers and photocopiers in the office, as the raw material for the garment to provide a kind of protective function for pregnant women. (San)</p> <p>We have learnt about the importance of the waistline for maternity clothing in our fashion design classes. (Louis)</p>	<p>Use of specific purpose background knowledge – 'indirectness' in the interaction between input and response</p>

Yes, we tried to locate relevant information in various ways, going online .. right we visited some professional fashion websites, e.g. WGSN and Fashion Scoops. (Louis) Also fashion magazines such as Vogue, Non-no and the like. We also referred to some of our fashion design text books as well. (Yan)	Finder authenticity  Genuineness – use of genuine texts as input data
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### Sample Coding of Team Discussion Session

Extracts from observation notes of team discussion session	coding
<p>The team discussion session began with each member taking turns to present the information and findings of the part of research they were responsible for. Members jotted notes.</p> <p>Carrie pointed to the computer screen and explained:</p> <p>‘Take a look at the pictures here. These are some common styles of raincoats and rain boots available on the market nowadays. Very colourful, aren’t they? But the styles are very few.... These are .....’</p> <p>Christine chipped in:</p> <p>‘Excuse me. Are these from Marks and Spencer? Do you mean they....’</p> <p>Chai Chi interrupted:</p> <p>‘No, not from Marks and Spencer. I’ve seen these before.... from Esprit...’</p> <p>Learners occasionally helped each other to express meanings fellow members had difficulties with:</p> <p>‘Using cotton and silk as the raw material will increase the .. th....comfort-abi-lity? of the ....’ (Carmen)</p> <p>‘the comfort...’ (Louis)</p> <p>‘Yes, Yes, will increase the <i>comfort</i> of the dress because cotton and silk is so.. so.. er.....’ (Carmen)</p> <p>‘breathable?’ (San)</p> <p>‘Right, <i>breathable</i>.’ (Carmen)</p>	<p>Resource interdependence</p> <p>Active response of fellow team members as listeners</p> <p>Language resources interdependence</p>

## Sample Coding Memo for the Analysis of the Project Brief

Higher level code: **Situational Authenticity in the form of Constructed Context of Situation**

Related codes:

- Authentic workplace scenario
- Skeleton context
- Task dependency
- Intrinsic documents
- Context of situation

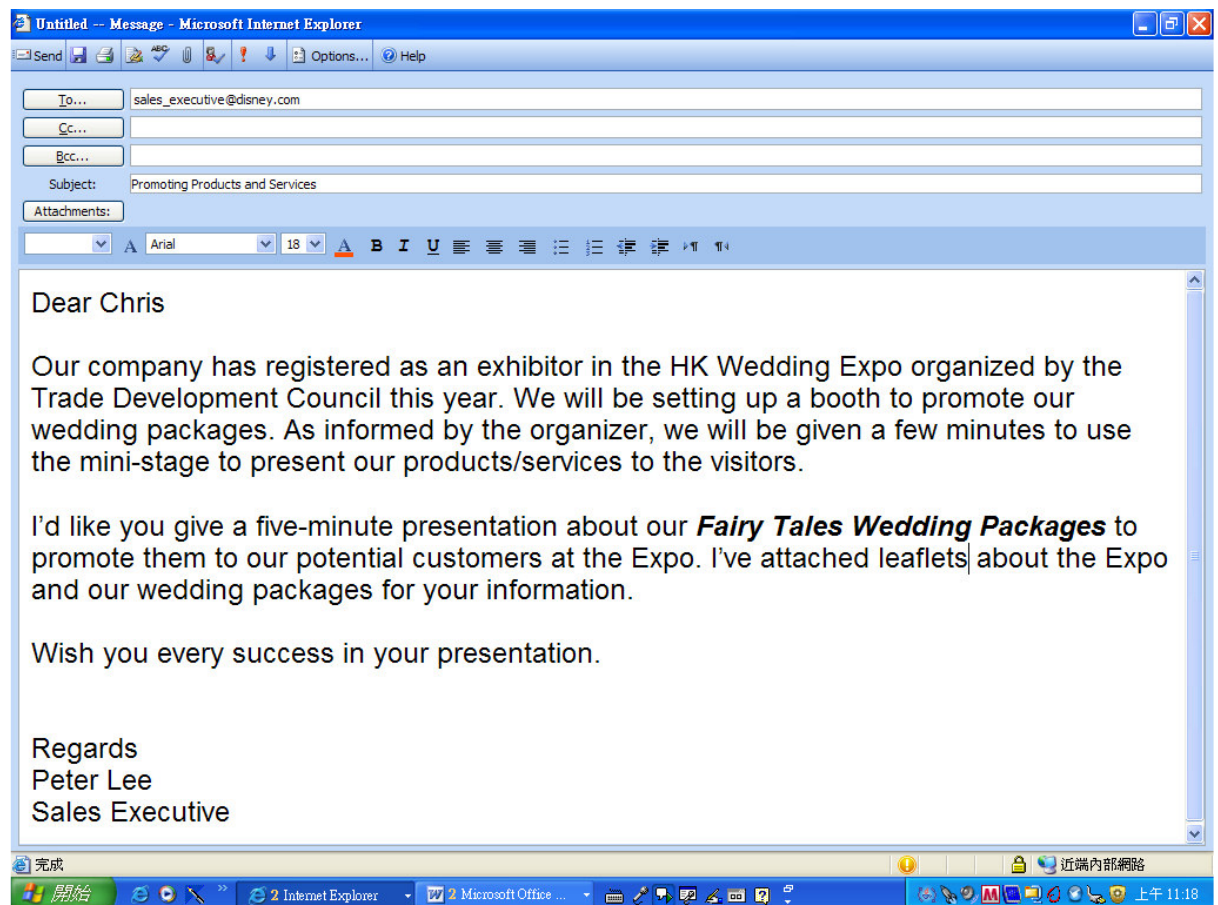
An *authentic workplace scenario* (Chic Fashion House calling on its Product Development Team to conduct research and propose new products for the forthcoming season) is given here to serve as a *skeleton context* on which to hang the series of language tasks the learners have to perform (reading and listening to trade-related texts, group discussions, writing a project report, oral presentation, etc.). In this way, by means of this ‘skeleton context’, one task leads realistically to the next. (Thus, it is also this ‘skeleton context’ that renders what Nunan (2004:35) calls *task dependency*). Learners are informed of key features of the communicative event including the subject matter, their role, role functions, the various tasks, etc. through the use of ‘*intrinsic documents*’. The construction of this ‘skeleton context’ for the PBL tasks echoes Halliday (1978) that where authentic communication takes place, there is always a *context of situation*, whose three parameters are: field, tenor, and mode.

## Appendix V: An example of a task of level 1 authenticity within the CoS model

### Promoting Products/Services at a Trade Fair

#### Situation

You are Chris Wong, working as Sales Executive for Hong Kong Disneyland. The following is an e-mail you have received from the Sales Manager, Peter Lee.





## Hong Kong Wedding Expo 2009

"Hong Kong Wedding Expo 2009" is one of the most grand & reputable wedding exhibitions organized in Hong Kong. This year, the Expo will be held in the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre from 11th to 15th April 2009. In the last Expo, the number of visitors reached about 50,000. It has brought fruitful business and revenue to the exhibitors.



The aims of the Expo are, on the one hand, to meet the need of those nuptial couples who are planning to get married. On the other hand, it provides a golden opportunity for the exhibitors to promote their products/services and make businesses.

Since the first wedding exhibition organized in 2000, wedding exhibition has developed to become a necessary place for the brides and grooms to visit. The couples can collect all the latest wedding information at one time in the exhibition. Budding brides-to-be can kill all their nagging worries under one roof: what wedding dress is in vogue, which shaped bouquet suits their dress, what table-decorations are in fashion...along with other things most don't even think about. There are even wedding planners to give professional advice on your wedding banquets as well as where to go for your honeymoon!

### **Task:**

1. You are the representative of your company (Hong Kong Disneyland) joining the Wedding Expo.
2. Give a five-minute presentation to promote the Fairy Tale Wedding Packages at the Wedding Expo.
3. You should visit the website of HK Disneyland ([http://park.hongkongdisneyland.com/hkd/en\\_US/eventPlanning/weddings/listing?name=WeddingPackagesPackages](http://park.hongkongdisneyland.com/hkd/en_US/eventPlanning/weddings/listing?name=WeddingPackagesPackages)) to find out more information about the wedding packages you are going to promote.
4. The presentation will be done in **week 7**. You are given 2 weeks' time to prepare for this task.
5. Apply the skills of promoting products (Lesson 3) and oral presentation skills (Lesson 4) in this presentation.
6. You should use Powerpoint slides or any other visual aids to make your presentation more persuasive and interesting and easy for the audience to follow.