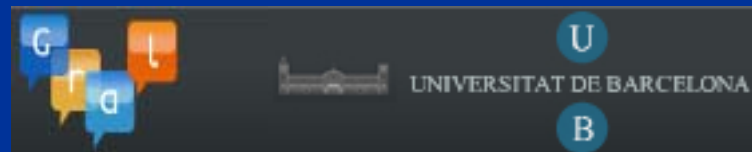# The role of tasks in CLIL program development

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I International Round Table on CLIL programmes

Goal

• The goal of this paper is to discuss the role of tasks and task-based research may play in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) program development.

QUESTION: What are some of the aspects of research into tasks that CLIL can benefit from?
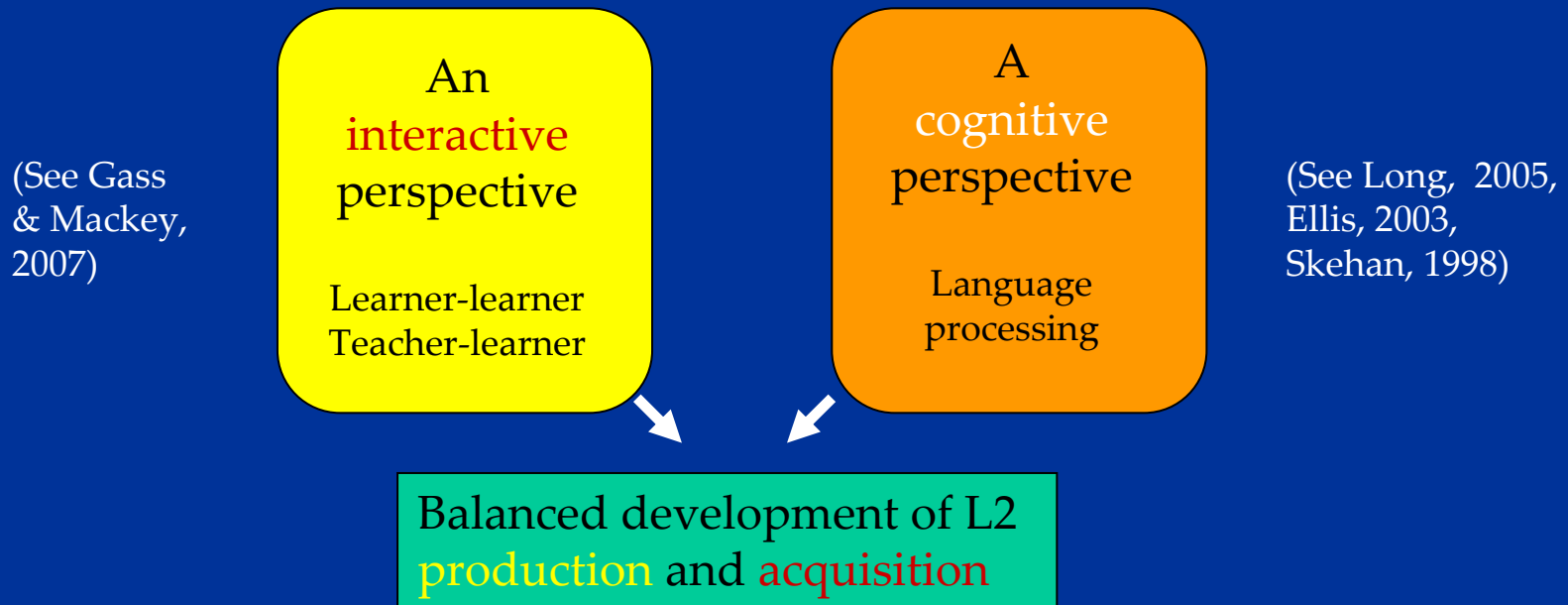
Some assumptions

1) Task-approaches and CLIL share common principles:

-They are "analytic" approaches to language teaching (i.e. learner analyzes the language)

- Teaching is mainly driven by meaning but there is room for "attention to form"

- Language learning happens mainly implicitly, although there is room for explicit learning.

Some assumptions
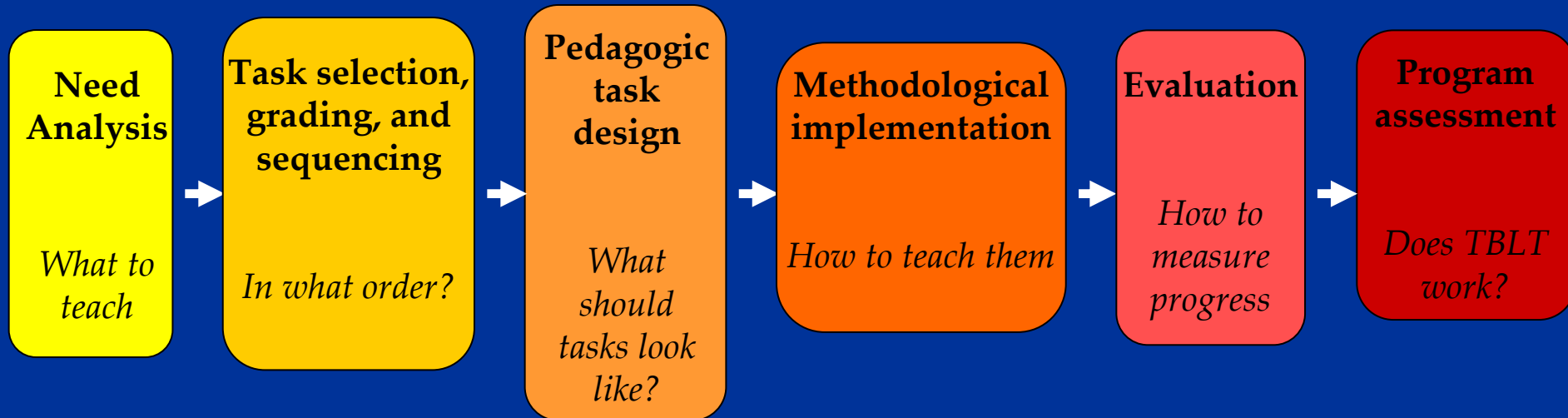
2) Evidence from task-based research can be useful for and complementary to current research into and implementation of CLIL.

In the last three decades...

(See Gass & Mackey, 2007)

An interactive perspective

Learner-learner
Teacher-learner

A cognitive perspective

Language processing

(See Long, 2005, Ellis, 2003, Skehan, 1998)

Balanced development of L2 production and acquisition

TBLT program design

Need Analysis		Task selection, grading, and sequencing		Pedagogic task design		Methodological implementation		Evaluation		Program assessment
What to teach	→	*In what order?*	→	*What should tasks look like?*	→	*How to teach them*	→	*How to measure progress*	→	*Does TBLT work?*

As an illustration of a <u>task-based</u> program:

Blanquerna School of Communication Studies (URL)

(journalism, advertising and P.R. and media studies)

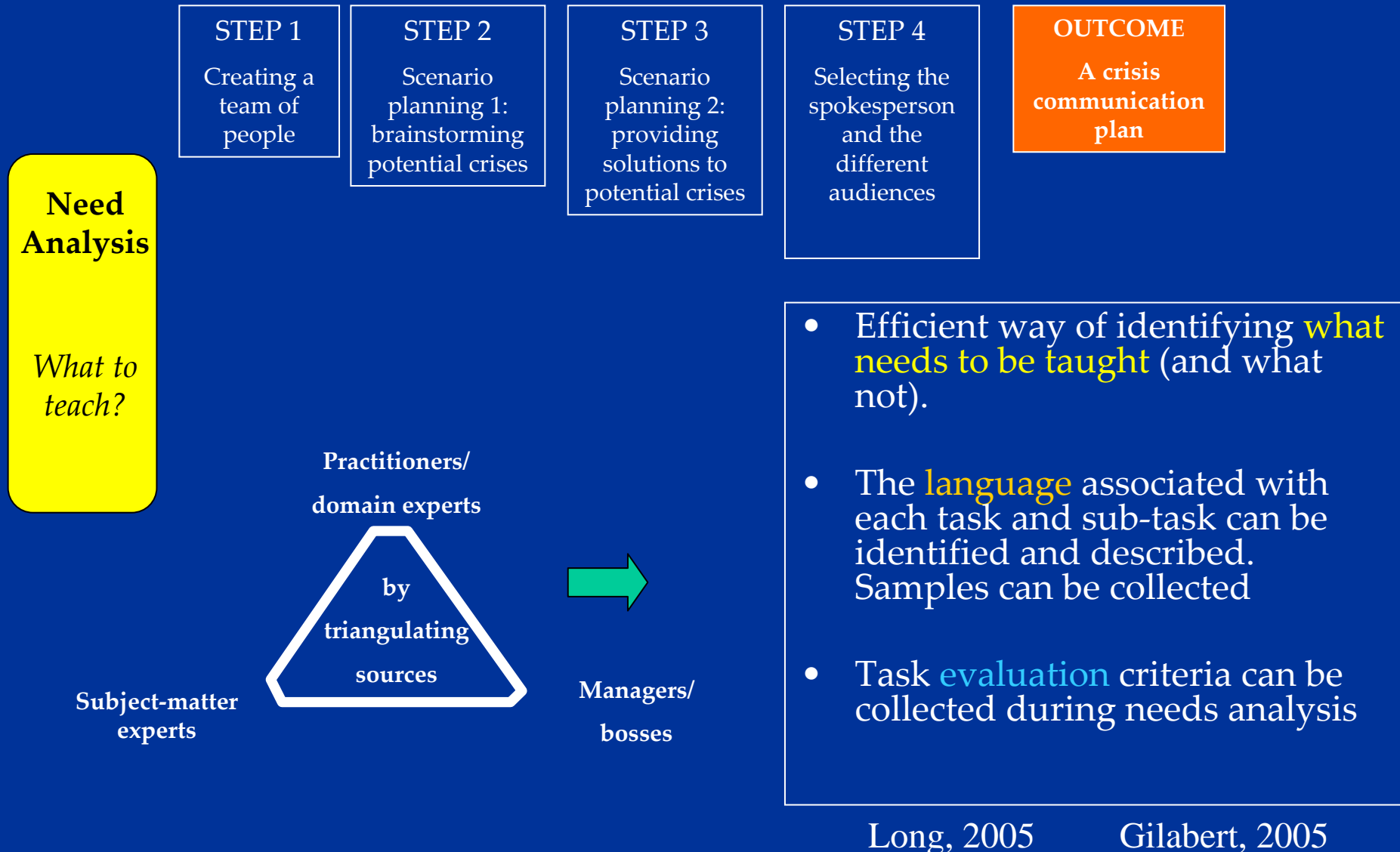Academic and professional orientation

Task is the unit in all areas of TBLT program design

A definition

A task is a differentiated <u>goal-oriented</u> process, with a number of steps, which draws on a series of <u>cognitive</u> and <u>communicative</u> procedures, and that has a defined <u>outcome</u>. Additionally, tasks are sequenceable and can be subject to pedagogical intervention.

When organized into a syllabus, their goal is to prepare speakers/learners for real-life performance.

Task-based NEEDS ANALYSIS has shown that the "task" is a useful unit of analysis: example of a crisis communication plan (P.R.)

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	OUTCOME
Creating a team of people	Scenario planning 1: brainstorming potential crises	Scenario planning 2: providing solutions to potential crises	Selecting the spokesperson and the different audiences	A crisis communication plan

Need Analysis

What to teach?

Practitioners/
domain experts

by

triangulating

sources

Subject-matter experts

Managers/
bosses

- Efficient way of identifying what needs to be taught (and what not).

- The language associated with each task and sub-task can be identified and described. Samples can be collected

- Task evaluation criteria can be collected during needs analysis

Long, 2005   Gilabert, 2005

Conclusion about Needs Analysis

- CLIL can benefit from research conducted within task-based needs analysis (e.g. task as a unit of analysis).

- Subjects which are taught through CLIL (e.g. chemistry, physics, gymnastics, etc.) may be described in terms of tasks.

- However, can all subjects be taught through tasks? How do we integrate tasks and texts?

Traditional grammar-based programs have relied on general consensus to sequence units

TBLT program design

Skehan (1998): task sequencing by difficulty

language   *task difficulty*   *learner factors*

> **balanced development of fluency, accuracy and complexity**

Robinson (2007): sequencing by complexity

cognitive   *interactive*   *learner factors*

> **language development and acquisition**
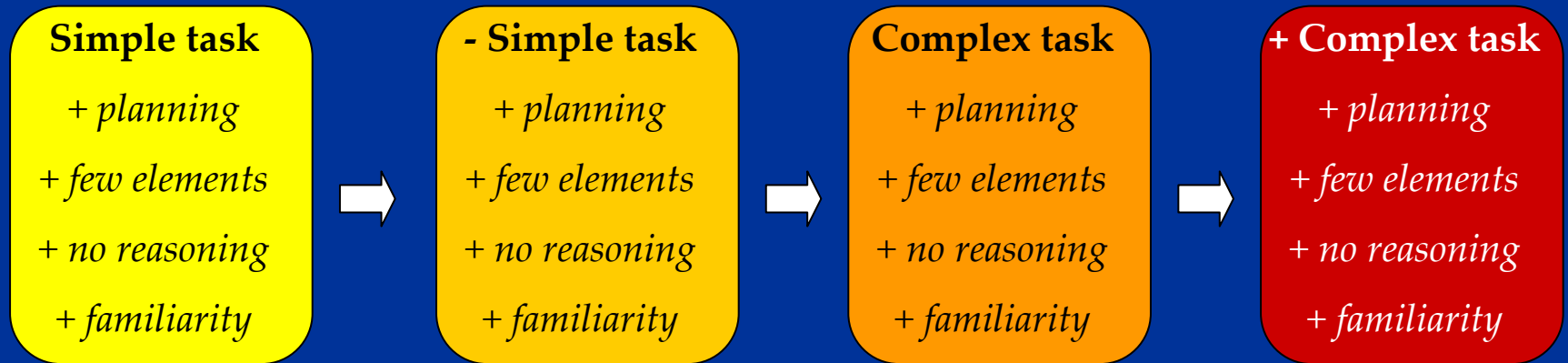
Van den Branden (2006): sequencing by intuition

> **learning**

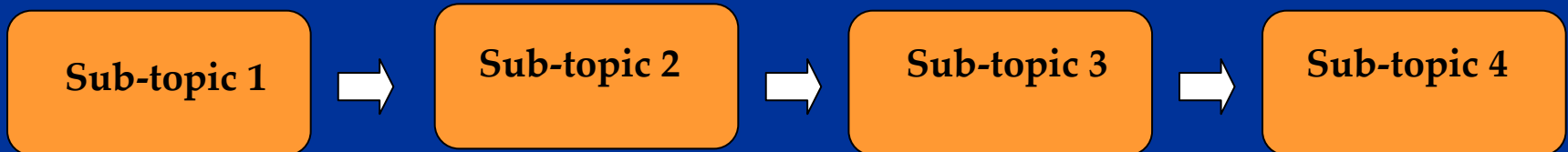*Task sequencing should be decided on by teachers*

Current research on task sequencing

Sequencing by complexity

Simple task	- Simple task	Complex task	+ Complex task
+ *planning*	+ *planning*	+ *planning*	+ *planning*
+ *few elements*	+ *few elements*	+ *few elements*	+ *few elements*
+ *no reasoning*	+ *no reasoning*	+ *no reasoning*	+ *no reasoning*
+ *familiarity*	+ *familiarity*	+ *familiarity*	+ *familiarity*

Sequencing by topic

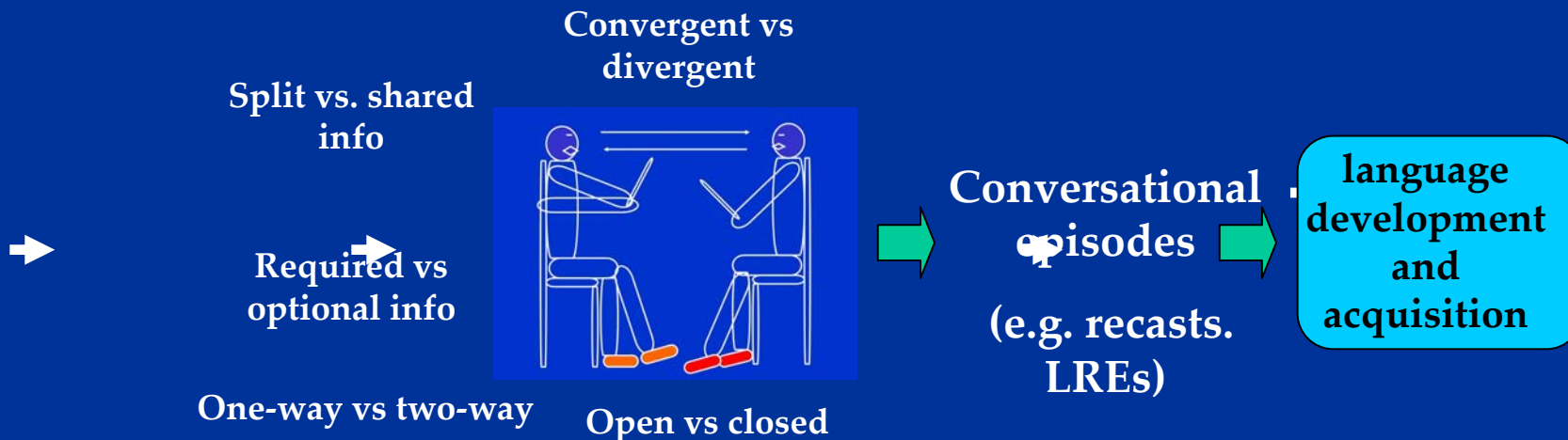Sub-topic 1 → Sub-topic 2 → Sub-topic 3 → Sub-topic 4
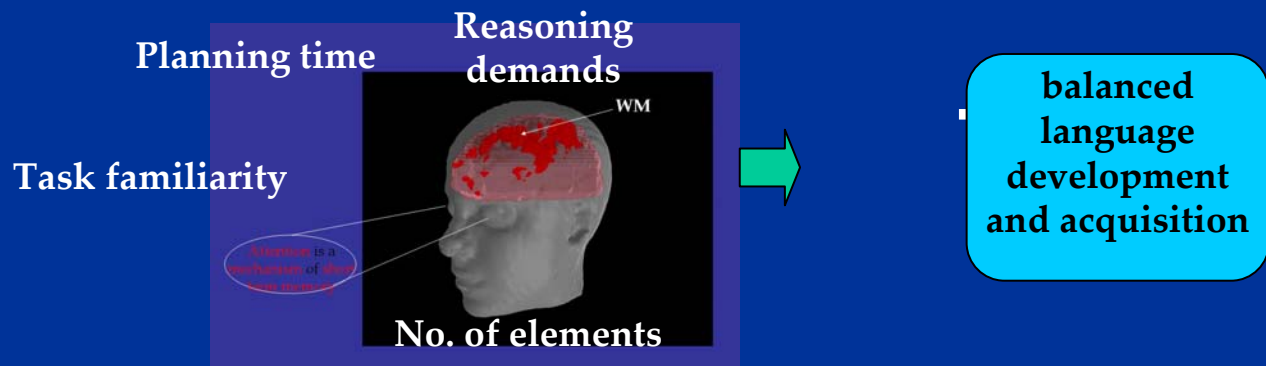
Conclusion about sequencing

- Research into sequencing is of utmost importance since it may contribute to L2 development (i.e. it may draw attention to form).

- Research into sequencing is minimal. There are many suggestions but very few findings, so it's an unresolved issue.

- What provisions is CLIL making for sequencing content/units/tasks?

This is the area that has received most of the attention

TBLT program design

Research agenda interested in how INTERACTION may lead to acquisition (See Gass & Mackey, 2007 for a summary)

Split vs. shared info

Convergent vs divergent

Required vs optional info

One-way vs two-way

Open vs closed

Conversational episodes

(e.g. recasts. LREs)

language development and acquisition

Research agenda interested in how COGNITION may lead to balanced development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity and acquisition

Planning time

Reasoning demands

Task familiarity

No. of elements

WM

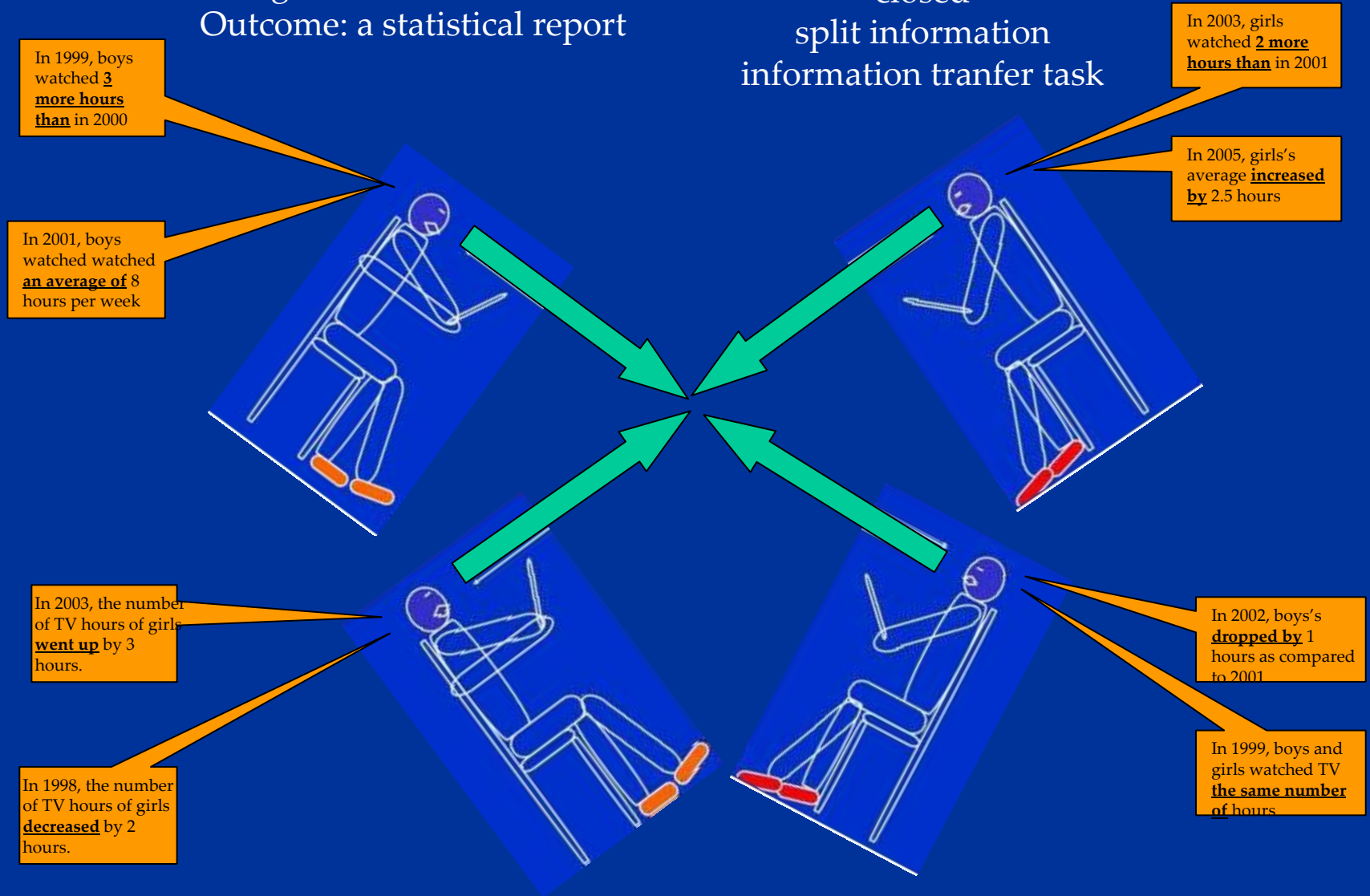balanced language development and acquisition

TASK GOAL and OUTCOME

Goal: To gather, share, and organize information about TV-watching habits of boys and girls around the world.
Outcome: a statistical report

TASK FEATURES

multiple-way
convergent
required
closed
split information
information tranfer task

In 1999, boys watched **3 more hours than** in 2000

In 2001, boys watched watched **an average of** 8 hours per week

In 2003, girls watched **2 more hours than** in 2001

In 2005, girls's average **increased by** 2.5 hours

In 2003, the number of TV hours of girls **went up** by 3 hours.

In 1998, the number of TV hours of girls **decreased** by 2 hours.

In 2002, boys's **dropped by** 1 hours as compared to 2001

In 1999, boys and girls watched TV **the same number of** hours
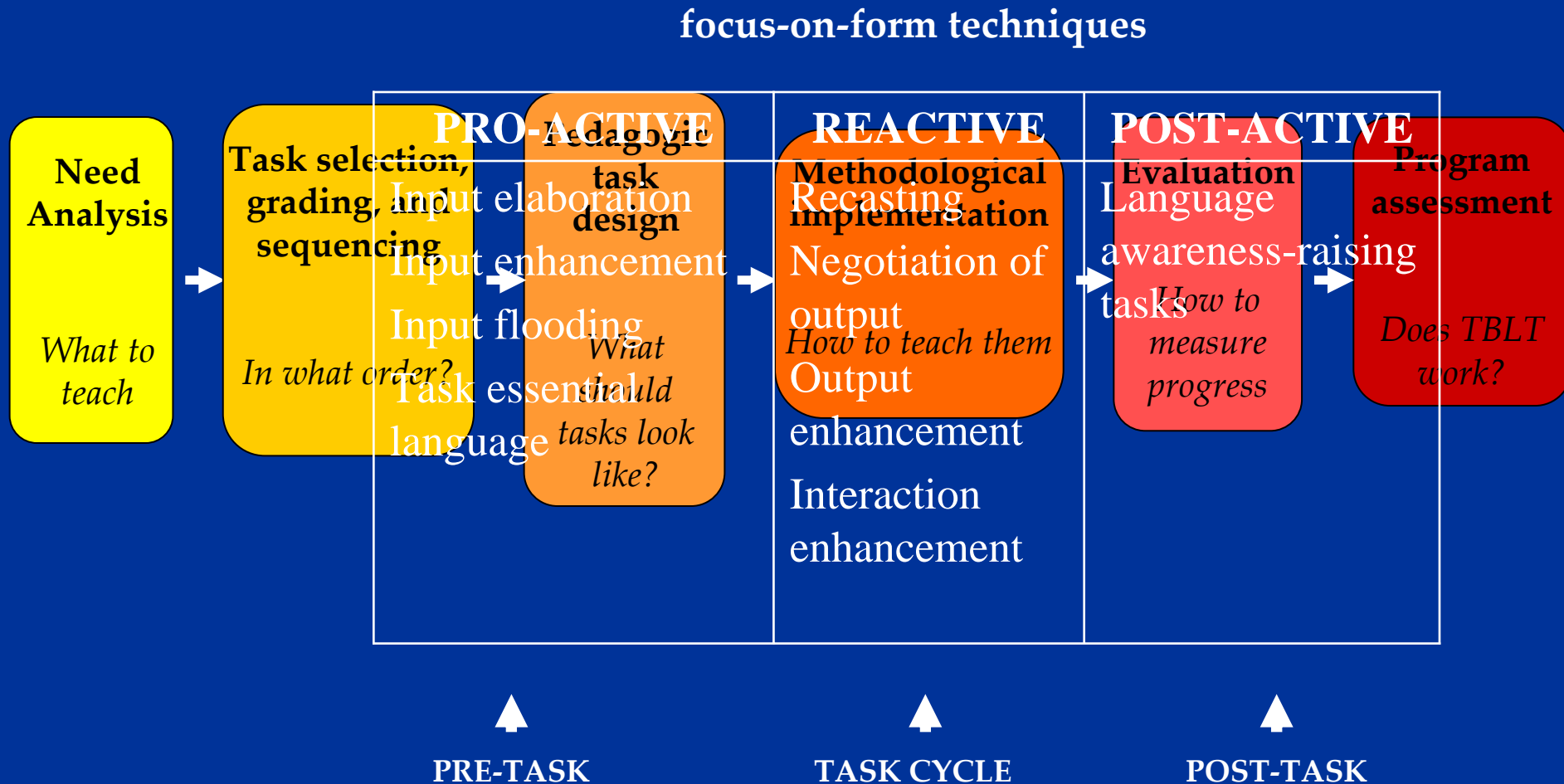
Some advantages of such a task design

Evidence shows that:

- Main focus is on processing meaning
- It guarantees balanced participation of all members
- Certain linguistic features can be targetted, so it encourages focus on form
- It generates interactional episodes (e.g. clarification requests, recasts, LREs) that draw attention to form
- It's challenging and motivating

Conclusion on pedagogical task design

- Research into task design, both from and interactive and a cognitive perspective, can inform material/task design within CLIL by promoting focus-on-form during interaction and task performance.

- Small changes in task design can make a world of a difference.

This is the area in which TBLT and CLIL most clearly share some techniques

TBLT program design

focus-on-form techniques

PRO-ACTIVE

REACTIVE

POST-ACTIVE

Need Analysis *What to teach*	**Task selection, grading, sequencing** *In what order?*	**Pedagogic task design** *What should tasks look like?*

Input elaboration

Input enhancement

Input flooding

Task essential language

Methodological Implementation

Recasting

Negotiation of output

How to teach them

Output enhancement

Interaction enhancement

Evaluation

Language awareness-raising tasks

How to measure progress

Program assessment

Does TBLT work?

▲ **PRE-TASK**　　　　▲ **TASK CYCLE**　　　　▲ **POST-TASK**

	PRO-ACTIVE	REACTIVE	POST-ACTIVE
Methodological implementation *How to teach them*	Input elaboration Input enhancement Input flooding Task essential language	Recasting Negotiation of output Output enhancement Interaction enhancement	Language awareness-raising tasks
	▲	▲	▲
	PRE-TASK	**TASK CYCLE**	**POST-TASK**

The story begins when Norman Bates, who is an employee in a motel, is looking through a hole in the wall of his motel office. In the other room, a woman is going to take a shower. She undresses. She then starts taking a shower. She likes it a lot. Suddenly, behind the shower curtain, you can see the silhouette of a person near her. The person pulls the shower curtain

The story begins when Norman Bates, who runs a small a not-very-busy motel, is peeping through a hole in the wall of his motel office. In the other room, a beautiful blond woman, who is a guest at the motel, is getting ready to take a shower. She slowly takes off her clothes. She actually takes off her nightgown. She then starts taking a shower which she seems to

The story begins when Norman Bates, who runs a small a not-very-busy motel, is peeping through (or looking through) a hole in the wall of his motel office. In the other room, a beautiful blond woman, who is a guest at the motel (that is, someone who is staying at a hotel or motel), is getting ready to take a shower. She slowly takes off her clothes (or she undresses). She

The story begins when Norman Bates, who is an employee in a motel, is looking through a hole in the wall of his motel office. *(simplified text)*

The story begins when Norman Bates, who runs (or is responsible for) a small and not-very-busy motel, is peeping through (or looking through) a hole in the wall of his motel office. **(elaborated text)**.

horrified when he sees the body. He even covers his mouth with his left hand. Norman pulls the dead woman's body out of the bathtub. He then sees his hands are blood-stained and washes them. He finally mops the floor before he takes her body into the trunk of his car.

out of) the bathroom. The blond woman is dead. She's laying face down on the bathroom floor. After that, Norman Bates runs down from a nearby house and is horrified when he sees the woman's dead body. He even covers his mouth with his left hand. Norman pulls (or takes) the dead woman's body out of the bathtub. He then sees his hands are blood-stained (or covered in blood) and washes them. He finally mops (or cleans) the floor before he takes her body into the trunk of his car.

The story begin**S** when Norman Bates, who run**S** (or is responsible for) a small a not-very-busy motel, is peeping through (or looking through) a hole in the wall of his motel office.

Methodological implementation

How to teach them

PROACTIVE	REACTIVE	POST-ACTIVE
Input elaboration Input enhancement Input flooding Task essential language	Recasting Negotiation of output Output enhancement Interaction enhancement	Language awareness-raising tasks

▲ PRE-TASK   ▲ TASK CYCLE   ▲ POST-TASK

Corrective reformulations of students' erroneous utterances.

Student: "and then he said he *go* there."

Teacher: "OK, and then he said he *went* (with emphasis) do it" (implicit)

Methodological implementation

How to teach them

PRO-ACTIVE	REACTIVE	POST-ACTIVE
Input elaboration Input enhancement Input flooding Task essential language	Recasting Negotiation of output Output enhancement Interaction enhancement	Language awareness-raising tasks

PRE-TASK **TASK CYCLE** **POST-TASK**

Conclusion on methodological techniques

- Research into techniques that may draw learners attention to FORM before, during, and after task performance will be beneficial for both TBLT and CLIL programs.

Thank you !