Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in a Virtual Environment

Anjel Tozcu, Ph.D., *Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Monterey (CA)*
Dawn Bikowski, Ph.D., *Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Monterey (CA)*
Lorraine Miller-Nara, Ed.D., *Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Twentynine Palms (CA*)

Abstract

This paper explores the implementation of task-based language teaching (TBLT) at a military institution in the United States after face-to-face instruction transitioned to virtual mode with the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. The institution implemented TBLT before the pandemic. With the transition to the online mode, an online collaboration platform, designed for the business world, was adopted as a course delivery system to teach languages to military students. The paper gives an overview of TBLT, provides lesson plans showing the implementation of TBLT with intermediate and advanced learners from the French department, and shares feedback and reflections about using TBLT in online classes.

Keywords: *task-based instruction, language teaching and learning, virtual environment, lower-level tasks, higher-level tasks*

Introduction and Background

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 created a worldwide push toward online language teaching and learning, and language education changed greatly (Tao & Gao, 2022). As educational institutions were transitioned to virtual platforms, language instructors and learners had to teach and learn languages online remotely, often without adequate preparation and resources (Hodges et al.,

2020). This reality led to teaching that necessitated resilience, diligence, and creativity (Tao & Gao, 2022). Although the pandemic is behind us in most ways, there are many lessons learned and new practices that have emerged that deserve a look to inform our deeper understanding of teaching and learning in a virtual environment.

A main challenge encountered in learning and teaching languages in the virtual environment was, and still remains, how to enhance language learners' online learning experiences, motivate them, and design effective online activities (Tao & Gao, 2022). Boredom was unfortunately one key emotional experience shared by learners (Derakhshan et al., 2021) during the quick pivot called for by emergency teaching in the virtual environment. This boredom often resulted from undue teacher talk, limited student participation, technical issues, and monotonous tasks. Other disadvantages that continue to plague online teaching include but are not limited to learner engagement, uncertainty about learners' understanding of the content, and a lack of technological abilities by both educators and learners (Tarrayo & Anudin, 2023; Tarroyo et al., 2023).

This article describes how one military language institution transitioned to online teaching during the pandemic. The institution had been implementing TBLT face-to face before the pandemic, but moving to online instruction posed a challenge. An online collaboration platform was adopted by the institute as a course delivery system. The instructors quickly had to learn how to use this platform to be able to teach languages. An orientation session was provided to the learners to acquaint them with the platform. Although this institution historically conducted language instruction face-to-face, the use of this online collaboration platform provided a unique opportunity to explore the extensive use of this technology in this institution's language classrooms for TBLT.

The online platform was designed for business and combined chat, voice, video and file sharing. It was designed to be used by both local and remote groups in any company, to help teams stay organized, be connected, hold on-the-spot meetings, carry out conversations, and share files. While it was designed for businesses, the platform has many features that made it ideal for the synchronous (i.e., real-time) classes held by the institution. Class sizes were small, ranging from three to eight students. Even with the smaller groups, how to maintain student engagement and motivation using this platform was a concern, thus emphasizing the importance and potential of implementing TBLT.

Task-based Language Teaching

The concept of task-based language teaching is not new. In fact, TBLT has been popular for decades, providing benefits to teachers and learners. A task can be defined as a goal-oriented activity where learners use the target language to accomplish a specific outcome by using their existing language resources (Willis, 1996). According to Nunan (2004), it is "A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on … meaning rather than … form" (p. 4). The learners learn to communicate with each other through their interactions in the target language (Nunan, 1991). Skehan (1998a) describes a task as an activity which focuses on meaning and communication, is similar to real-world activities, and has a final product that can be assessed. As can be seen, meaning and communication are crucial and provide the vehicles for learning the language.

Long (2015) explained that TBLT "starts with a task-based needs analysis to identify the *target tasks* for a particular group of learners – what they need to be

able to *do* in the new language." Tasks are "the real-world activities" individuals can think of when planning or managing their day. With some modifications, the tasks are then used "as the content of a *task syllabus*, which consists of a series of progressively more complex *pedagogic tasks*" (p. 6). These pedagogic tasks are "the activities and the materials" that learners work with in the language classroom.

Interaction and negotiation are key to task-based learning. Long (1996) in his Interaction Hypothesis notes that negotiation connects input, the learner's attention, and output. Gass (1997) also emphasized the role of interaction, noting that it is the "means by which learning takes place" (p. 104) and that negotiation leads to increased learning (Gass, 2003). TBLT builds on these concepts of interaction and negotiation, being a learner-centered approach that reflects real-life language use, advocates student autonomy, and promotes communicative language use (Willis, 2004; Vieira, 2017). Lessons are centered around the completion of a task.

Learners interact by choosing to use the vocabulary and grammar structures they already know. The assumption is that language learning should be as natural a process as possible, with instructors aiming to "create contexts in which the learner's natural language learning capacity can be nurtured rather than making a systematic attempt to teach the language bit by bit" (Ellis, 2009, p. 222). Task features comprise "… focus on meaning, information gap, learner use of own resources, and outcome-orientedness" (Vieira, 2017, p. 695) with "the *principal* emphasis … on meaningful communication" (East, 2012, p. 16).

Two important concepts to consider for TBLT are task construction and task complexity. Tasks should be constructed to link language learning in the classroom with the real world, e.g., the use of language to fulfil language functions. Halliday (1973) explored the functional basis of language and identified seven social functions: instrumental (to satisfy personal needs or to accomplish things); regulatory (to control the behavior of others); interactional (for personal interactions); informative (to convey information); heuristic (to learn about things); ideational (to express content in terms of own experience); and personal (to express personal feelings). These functions can be used as a basis to create real-world tasks.

Skehan (1998b) defined the complexity of tasks in terms of code complexity (difficulty of the language factors), cognitive complexity (cognitive processing and cognitive familiarity), and communicative stress. The five potential sources of communicative stress include: pressure to finish something in a limited amount of time, productive tasks (i.e., writing or speaking) vs. receptive (listening or reading), the number of participants who are involved in the communication, the importance of the communicative task and tolerance of errors, and the amount of control the speaker has over the interactions. The careful planning required by TBLT is further complicated when teaching online.

Task-Based Language Teaching in the Online Environment

Antokhin et al. (2004) note that the implementation of TBLT in the online language learning environment can be challenging, especially in designing interactive learning units which encompass problem solving, synthesizing, and evaluation, per Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956) and Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). Educators have long argued for the importance of fostering higher-order thinking skills in language classrooms, noting the crucial role of students being actively engaged such as via accessing and interpreting information collaboratively to complete meaningful tasks, being involved in problem solving with a purpose, and engaging in tasks that are relevant to their

interests (Roy, 2014). Achieving these goals while teaching online requires expertise and careful planning, even though "distant learning and remote collaboration have now become the 'new normal' of education" as a result of the pandemic (Chen & Sevilla-Pavón, 2023, p. 118). While there are many options for teaching online, no one system provides an ideal set of features. The collaboration platform used for the online classes featured here has the advantage, however, of providing many key functionalities that make task-based learning possible. A description of the online collaboration platform follows.

Description of the Online Collaboration Platform

The online collaboration platform used for these classes is made up of channels, where conversations among team members take place. Each channel is allocated to a specific topic, department, or project. Channels are where the work actually gets done, where text, audio, and video files are shared, conversations among team members take place, and applications are added. Meetings can be joined from the application or on the web. Calls either one-on-one or with several people are a fast way for individuals to connect. They can be set ahead of time or can start on the spur of the moment and are a direct way of connecting to complete tasks.

The platform includes built-in software applications (e.g., word processing, spreadsheets, etc.), which can be opened in tabs when using chats, channels, and meetings. Relevant files and applications can be added to tabs at the top on any chat, channel, or meeting, facilitating collaboration. Additional features, i.e., class notebook, and assignments were added later. Each class notebook included a Content Library for instructors to share course content, a Collaboration Space for instructors and students to work together, and a private notebook for each student. The screenshots in Figures 1 and 2 show some of the aforementioned features of this online platform.
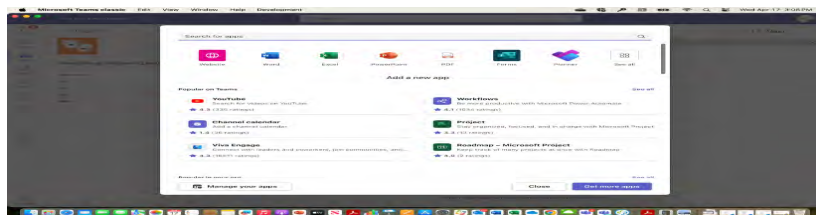
Figure 1

Screenshot for Chat, Calls, Channels, Course Modules, Sessions

March 2025
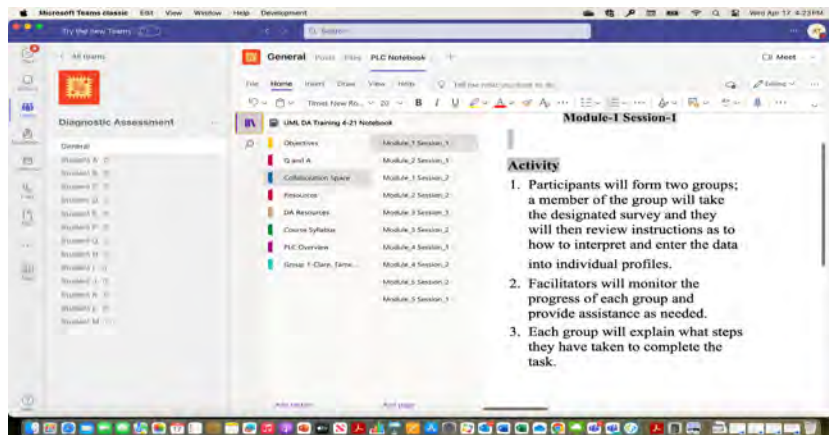
Figure 2

Screenshot for Applications

The following section describes the lesson plans from the French department for intermediate and advanced learners.

Lesson Plans and Context

At this military institution incoming instructors attend an Instructor Certification Course, where they are introduced to the principles and practices of TBLT. The teaching hours usually begin with the activation of schemata and are followed by the presentation of content. Subsequently, enabling tasks are made available to students using the practice mode to enhance students' language skills. The final task, which encompasses completion of a real-life task by students, strengthens what they have learned during that hour. Enabling tasks in the practice mode and the final task require student collaboration and an appropriate level of interaction in the form of pair work and group work in accordance with differentiated instruction principles. All students were in the military. At the end of their language study, each student is required to take standardized tests that assess their speaking, reading, and listening; only students who earn passing scores graduate. The written form of the language is learned and practiced, but not assessed for graduation requirements. Students only study language and culture (they do not take general education courses) and in a very compressed timeframe. Following are descriptions of two lesson plans for one-hour classes from the French department for intermediate and advanced learners. Two additional lesson plans for longer classes are found in Appendices A and B. All tasks and classes are conducted in the language being learned.

This task illustrates Halliday's (1973) *informative* task construction, meaning conveying information, as well as Skehan's (1998b) *communicative stress* complexity in terms of time pressure. Also, the activities promote real-life communicative language use, e.g., the use of language to fulfil language functions. The learners are able to communicate with each other through their interactions in the target language. The activities focus on meaning and communication similar to the real-world activities with a final product that can be assessed. Learners were given the vocabulary in advanced and asked to study it before class. If they could not recall a word during the task, they were encouraged to use circumlocution, just as would be the case for real-life communication.

Figure 3

Example of Task-Based Language Teaching for Intermediate Learners

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Topic: Society/Culture
Lesson Theme: Description
Week of Instruction: 26 of 38 weeks
Number of Students: 8
Proficiency Level: Intermediate
Time: 50 minutes

Objectives: Learners will be able to:
•   exchange personal information, using cohesive devices and key vocabulary
•   convey information and supply details and descriptions in speaking and writing

Activity 1—Pre-TBLT Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
Instructor and learners enter the online class. The instructor gives instructions about the F-O-R-T-E warm-up (talking about Family, Occupation, Recreation, Travel, Education) and assigns learners to breakout rooms, two per room. The instructor reminds them to speak in longer discourse, focus on fluency, and use linking words. Learners conduct the activity.

Activity 2—Task-Based Activity: Incident Report (15 Minutes)
The instructor provides instructions for the second activity:
1.   Find a room/area in your home/barracks (study area, bathroom, etc.).
2.   Leave your room and go to this room.
3.   Imagine a fictional incident related to the area, specifying 'when', 'where', 'who', and 'what.'
4.   Write an incident report based on the fictional story, adding any information as desired.

Activity 3—Task-Based Activity: Incident Report Sharing (30 Minutes)
Learners move into their breakout rooms, and in pairs, they share their incident reports, with a goal of using paragraph-level speech. The instructor circulates among pairs to ensure learners are on track, addresses questions, and provides feedback.

This lesson integrated writing and reading which, in turn, can incorporate micro-discussions on grammar. These micro discussions included errors in tenses, i.e., simple past tense vs. imperfect and the forms when describing events, spatial expressions, i.e., prepositions when describing places, and a variety of cohesive devices to connect ideas. Instructors used learner errors to identify areas which needed further instruction; if appropriate, explaining the error immediately, or if the error was unique to the student, communicating with the student directly. Not all errors were addressed. Only those that matched the lesson objectives or impeded meaning were addressed. An important advantage of the second activity was getting the learners off their screens and moving around, but in a short, manageable timeframe, to get learners out of the doldrums of being online all day. The third activity allowed for more creativity and helped students practice describing

an incident. Teachers from other language programs can easily duplicate this in their own languages. Any of the tasks can also be repeated with a second (or even third) partner, depending on the instructor's needs. Faculty may benefit from this, as it can help guide them to creative ways to use speaking tasks in the virtual classroom, while simultaneously boosting learners' motivation and participation. At DLIFLC, most speaking tasks are evaluated on the basis of global task and function, lexical control, structural control, sociolinguistic competence, delivery (pronunciation and fluency) and text produced. Students are familiarized with these tasks and how they are evaluated.

Performance measures (i.e., fluency, accuracy, complexity, word choice, clarification requests, confirmation checks and comprehension checks) (Skehan, 2003) were used to evaluate learner performance. The online platform's tools (e.g., built-in software applications, channels, and video conferencing capabilities) allowed teachers and learners to move through the tasks within the same system, meaning transitions were streamlined and required minimal time, and allowed for seamless communication via text or video.

The activities described in this lesson promote real-life communicative language use, e.g., the use of language to fulfill language functions. The activities that the learners conduct focus on meaning and communication similar to real-world activities. The task calls on Halliday's (1973) informative construction (conveying information) and heuristic construction (learning about things), as well as Skehan's (1998b) cognitive complexity, given the task's processing demands.

These lessons demonstrate how TBLT can be utilized in online classes, though implementing TBLT online did pose challenges, as noted by Antokhin et al. (2004), and as summarized in the following section. Feedback and reflections on conducting TBLT online follow.

Findings: Feedback and Reflections on Conducting Task-based Language Teaching Online

During the transition to online teaching, a Specialist Team comprised of faculty development specialists and a technology specialist was created in each school to assist instructors when they needed guidance in using this platform and designing and adapting tasks to the virtual mode. This section represents a summary of the feedback and experiences of 39 instructors, as captured in the report log from one member of a Specialist Team, and how those challenges were addressed.

Benefits of Conducting TBLT in the Virtual Environment

A common benefit noted by instructors was the ease of use of the virtual platform, particularly in terms of facilitating these types of activities. As an example, one instructor shared: "… The online platform and its features functioned smoothly and efficiently to implement TBLT. The platform easily facilitated the use of higher order thinking skills with level appropriate tasks matching students' proficiency levels. Tasks were presented to the learners by sharing screen or posting files. It was equally easy to assign learners to breakout rooms for individual work, and pair or group work to complete tasks assigned to breakout rooms for individual work, and pair or group work to complete tasks assigned them and reconvene the whole class back to the general meeting room after the learners completed their assigned tasks and were ready to present the task outcomes in various

Figure 4

Example of Task-Based Language Teaching for Advanced Learners

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Topic: Security/Military
Lesson Theme: Child soldiers
Week of Instruction: 33 of 38 weeks
Number of Students: 8
Proficiency Level: Advanced
Time: 50 minutes

Objectives: Learners will be able to:
• discuss a complex topic, calling on background knowledge and using appropriate grammar structures and vocabulary
• identify main ideas and details of a reading on a complex topic
• create and deliver a briefing on a complex topic in writing and speaking

Activity 1 – Pre-TBLT Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
Instructor and learners enter the online class and do an oral warm-up (brainstorming) about child labor, including the idea of children "employed" in war.

Activity 2 – Preparation for Task-Based Activity (10 Minutes)
Learners listen to a passage about child soldiers twice and answer questions about the main ideas and details. In pairs in the breakout rooms they discuss and justify their answers using the text. They return to the platform's main meeting room.

Activity 4 – Task-Based Activity: Create a Briefing (35 Minutes)
Learners read the task. In the breakout rooms in small groups they create a presentation (brochure, video, Power Point Presentation) using the platform's tab and the platform's recording capability (if they choose to do a video). They return to the main meeting room and share their presentation. Their classmates and the instructor ask questions about their proposed solution.

Task: You are deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and are part of joint exercises with DRC (and other francophone countries') forces. Local military leaders deal with armed insurgents who radicalize children and conscript them into their armed forces. They have asked that you create and lead a briefing on (1) how to identify children at risk of radicalization and conscription and (2) how to create programs to alleviate the societal stressors that lead to this. Consider local, cultural issues (familial hierarchy, economic fragility, political instability, etc.) when justifying your solutions. You will present your briefing to local forces' cadre as well as your own commander.

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formats (i.e., pamphlet, briefing, Power Point Presentation) to their peers and instructor on the platform." Other teachers added in-platform applications to tabs at the top on any chat, channel, or meeting to facilitate collaboration without having to leave the virtual classroom.

In addition to the ease of use of the technology, another benefit noted by instructors was the ability to communicate and customize content in the platform. Faculty were able to customize breakout rooms to suit classroom content, tasks, and targeted outcomes, and they held pre-and post-class meetings and discussions with learners from different locations via the chat and video functions. Faculty also shared with the Specialist Team member that students took advantage of the collaboration in the platform, as they shared resources, held mini-discussions, and exchanged ideas with each other. One learner shared: "…It wasn't just sitting, staring at a computer. … everyone in this class is ready to overcome whatever the future holds." Other learners told their instructors about the usefulness of the tasks to their learning and appreciated the connections to the real world. Yet, moving TBLT to the virtual environment did involve challenges, which are described below.

Challenges and Responses to Conducting TBLT in the Virtual Environment

Adapting tasks designed for face-to-face teaching to the virtual mode posed some challenges. One was that there was no curriculum in place for online teaching and learning. The instructors modified the tasks and relevant activities from the regular course curricula to the virtual mode and delivered instruction through this platform. There were also other constraints that the instructors had to manage, e.g., preparing supplemental materials to assist underperforming learners. Along with needing to learn how to use the teaching platform, these other tasks added tremendously to their workload. Veiera (2017) and Tarrayo and Anudin (2023) listed instructor workload, time constraints, and difficulties in covering the course syllabi as barriers to the implementation of TBLT.

Since some instructors were more successful than others in implementing TBLT online, on-going training was implemented to help all instructors hone their skills. This training was offered in addition to the one-on-one support offered by the team of faculty development specialists and technology specialists. It consisted of group training sessions to further familiarize the instructors with this platform and also to design and implement TBLT. Topics included engaging and motivating students via TBLT, structuring TBLT for virtual learning, and using technology features to increase communication.

Reflections on Professional Growth in Conducting TBLT in the Virtual Environment

The Specialist Team member noted that over time, the quality of the tasks improved. For example, instructors became more adept in preparing and executing meaningful enabling tasks with smooth transitions during the practice mode of the lesson leading to the final task. The quality of the final tasks also improved: the tasks were more authentic and focused on meaning, there was more skill integration with speaking, more tasks involved cognitive complexity, and there was more differentiation of instruction with learner-focused feedback. Instructors became more comfortable navigating through the online collaboration platform when uploading their teaching materials and conducting their lessons in real time. They noted that the training and resources were helping them improve their lessons and that students were becoming more comfortable studying online. The

virtual environment itself seemed to help students learn, as noted by one instructor, who shared that pair and group work in individual channels was more productive than face-to-face because it was more efficient, and that there was no distraction or background noise from other learners when they were collaborating with each other to complete their assigned tasks.

This online platform was used as a course delivery system from the onset of the pandemic in March 2020. until June 2021, when instruction transitioned back to face-to-face. It is still being used in the institution's language classrooms during inclement weather, when learners have to miss classes due to illness or travels, and as a teaching tool during regular in-person classes to support instruction, i.e., posting projects; accessing important links, documents, and other applications for teaching and learning; and engaging in online discussion forums.

Conclusion

This paper aims to contribute insights to the field of language teaching about teaching in the online environment, first initiated in response to COVID-19's call for a pivot. It showcases how TBLT can be utilized in online instruction, and its results also share lessons learned that might be used to enhance learning in a post-COVID time. Many articles focusing on technology and language learning describe a particular aspect of technology or measure their effects on affective factors, i.e., increased student motivation or enjoyment from learning (Golonka et al., 2014) and lack the specifics needed to fully understand how the online learning environment was utilized and managed to maximize student engagement and learning. This paper sought to contribute a useful level of detail in how online learning can include TBLT to help learners develop their language proficiency while also staying engaged and prepared for their future careers.

Faculty and administrators at the institution continue to benefit from the lessons learned from the COVID-19 emergency virtual teaching experience. Instructors have taken the technology skills they developed and apply them to face-to-face classes. This includes for in-class activities, for more engaging and tailored homework for students, and to offer students extra self-study resources as needed. Faculty and administrators have also streamlined their resources and information sharing, which has freed up time that can be spent with at-risk students. Faculty professional development now has a heavy technology component, not only for tool use but also for pedagogy. These are gains that will continue into the future, creating some positives out of a time period that posed many challenges for educators around the world.

Disclaimer

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Appendix A

Example of Task-Based Language Teaching for Intermediate Learners

Topic: Security
Lesson Theme: Crime
Week of Instruction: 11 of 38 weeks
Number of Students: 8
Proficiency Level: Intermediate
Time: 2 hours

Objectives: Learners will be able to:
•   relay information after analyzing a surveillance video of a crime and negotiate key information in the video
•   create talking points that narrate key moments in a crime, correctly choosing between *être* (to be) or *avoir* (to have) as helping verbs in past tense constructions

Task-Based Language Teaching

Time	Lesson Phases and Actions	Materials
20m	Instructor starts a call in the channel "Section A" and titles it "2e-3e heures" (2nd – 3rd periods). The learners join the call at the start of class. **Warm-Up and Contextualization** After initial greetings, the instructor shares screen with the warm-up video with sound loaded on it (topic: shoplifting in France). The instructor projects the first 21 seconds of the video twice: the first time as an attention-grabber, without any explanation. The second time, learners are instructed to take notes on what they think the general subject of the clip is. Following the second viewing, the instructor tells learners that they have 5 minutes to discuss the general topic of the video clip with a partner. All learners will be brought back to the main call. The instructor assigns learners to breakout rooms (2 per room) and shares the link to the video with all breakout rooms simultaneously, using the "Make an announcement" function of the platform. Using the "Join call" feature, the instructor circulates among breakout rooms during partner discussion to make sure learners are on track (timewise), answer questions, and give feedback. The instructor closes the breakout rooms and all learners are returned to the main call. The instructor solicits summaries of learner discussions, making sure that the class touches on the real-world relevancy of the topic: specifically, that shoplifting/petty crime remains a challenge in France today. Is it a similar problem in the US? Once the real-world significance of the topic has been established, the instructor shares with learners the theme of the lesson: how will *you* describe a crime that you witness? What tools in your language toolbox will help you do this task? (This and all subsequent exchanges as well as content/handouts will be in the target language).	Online Collaboration Platform Main video call & breakout rooms Surveillance Video: Shoplifting event in Granby, France
20m	**Awareness Raising** In the chat, the instructor posts an enhanced article (Handout 1) about a recent shoplifting event in France and the apprehension of the suspects. The instructor directs learners to look at the photo and read the text on page 1 only, e.g., just the title and the first two paragraphs. Learners work individually. After reading, the instructor tells learners that they will have 5 minutes to discuss with a partner the questions at the bottom of page 1: What do the underlined verbs have in common? (Answer: they are all past tense.) How are they different? (They have different helping verbs, i.e., they take *avoir* (to have) or *être* (to be) in the past. That not all verbs take *avoir* in the past is new information for the class.) The instructor starts the break-out rooms and circulates among pairs to make sure learners are on-track, give feedback, and answer any questions. After four minutes, the instructor announces that the learners have 1 minute left to discuss. At the agreed-upon time (the 5-minute mark), she brings back all learners to the main call. The instructor conducts an all-class verification of responses, making sure learners touch on the most important observation for the current lesson: that a small group of French verbs in fact take *être* in the past, instead of *avoir*. Once this observation has been made, the instructor asks: which specific verbs in this article are taking *être*? What sort of verbs are they? (Transitive? Intransitive?) Based on the verbs in this article, can learners guess which other verbs might also take *être*? Class brainstorms additional verbs that may take *être* in the chat. The instructor posts Handout 2, an explicit presentation of all verbs that take *être* in the past tense, in the chat of the online platform. The class reads over the information together. To help learners process and remember the new information, the instructor shares screen and draws the *Maison d'Être*, a visual depiction of all verbs taking *être* in the *passé composé* (Simple Past Tense). These verbs have been typically presented in the context of a house (to help students remember them) with the Miro app, taking questions as they come up. **—Class pauses for a 10-minute break—**	Main video call, chat, and breakout rooms Handout 1: Enhanced Text Handout 2: Explicit presentation of verbs that take être in the past, from the textbook Grammaire

15m	When learners return from break, the instructor solicits from learners (popcorn-style) all the verbs that take *être* in the past tense, based on the information in Handout 2 and the visual representation of the *Maison d'Être* (still being shared on instructor's screen).	progressive
	After the short recap, the instructor directs learners to finish the article (page 2 of Handout 1) with a partner, where a number of verbs in the past tense have been blanked out. Learners need to fill in the blanks with their partner, deciding between using *être* or *avoir* as helping verb for each one.	
	The instructor tells learners that they have 10 minutes to complete this activity and begins the break-out rooms.	
	At 9 minutes, the instructor sends an announcement to all breakout rooms that they have 1 minute left to finish the activity. At the 10-minute mark, the instructor brings them back to the main call. Once everyone has rejoined the main call, the instructor conducts an all-class verification of responses and solicits questions and take-aways.	
	Final Task	
	In the chat, the instructor posts a third handout (with the final task description), introduces the task to the class and explains that learners will have to apply their knowledge of how to construct the past tense in French to complete task.	
35m	The instructor assigns groups (2 total, with 4 learners per group) and group leaders. The instructor explains that the group leaders will make sure their group stays on task and that everyone contributes equally. Learners are instructed that they have 15 minutes to complete the task, at which point everyone will be brought back to the main call. The instructor starts the breakout rooms.	Handout 3: Task Description
	The instructor sends an announcement to the breakout rooms when learners have 3 minutes left to finish the task. At the 15-minute mark, the instructor brings back all learners to the main call.	
20m	**Presentations and Reflection**	Main video call & chat
	The two group leaders post their talking points to the chat and the groups present their talking points. Each group member presents at least one talking point.	
	Example talking points: (1) He entered (verb that takes *être* in the past tense: *il est entré*) the store. (2) He went (verb that takes *être* in the past tense: *il est allé*) to the second aisle. He (3) took (verb that takes *avoir* in the past tense: *il a pris*) a product and put (verb that takes *avoir* in the past tense: *il a mis*) it in his pockets. At the end of each presentation, the groups receive feedback from their peers and the instructor on the content and structure of their talking points.	
	Finally, the instructor asks learners to write in the chat one of three things (learners' choice): Something they learned during the lesson Something in the lesson that struck them as unexpected or strange One question they have now	
	Leaners can read each other's responses as they are posted to the chat. Responses can be discussed all together if time allows; if not, they will still give the instructor important information about what the learners are taking away from them – i.e., where the lesson was successful — and what might need to be revisited in the future. The instructor adjourns class and ends the video call.	

Tâche. [Task]

      You and three of your colleagues have been deployed to Granby, France. You leave your barracks to pick some things up at a neighborhood corner store. While there, you happen to witness a shoplifting on the store TV surveillance system! You want to go immediately to the police to tell them what happened – but first, you need to make sure you and your colleagues are clear on what exactly you witnessed, and what you want to communicate to the police. The store owner is grateful for your help and allows you all to watch the video several more times.

      Attention! What you communicate to the police needs to be concise: just 4-5 talking points total. You will need to negotiate with your group *the most important* moments in the crime to convey to the police, since you will not be able to talk about everything. Which details will you choose to include?

APPENDIX B

An Examples of Task-Based Language Teaching for Advanced Learners

      Topic: Environment and Technology
      Lesson Theme: Telework (working from home)
      Week of Instruction: 31 of 38 weeks
      Number of Students: 8
      Proficiency Level: Advanced
      Time: 2 hours

Objectives: Learners will be able to:
- explore and evaluate the environmental impacts (positive and negative) of telework
- negotiate a compromise on telework that supports national security objectives concerning environmental sustainability in particular

Time	Lesson Phases and Actions	Materials
25m	**Pre-reading** Instructor starts a call "3ᵉ heure" in the channel "Section B". Class joins. Instructor greets class and projects a slide with a picture of people protesting. Beside the image are the questions: What's happening? Who is doing it? Why? What is the *(CRS) Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité* (General Reserve of the French National Police)? Do a quick Google search if you are unfamiliar with the acronym. What do you find interesting in the picture? Surprising? Could you imagine a similar picture being taken in the United States? Why or why not? The instructor posts the same picture and questions in the chat of the online platform and tells learners that they will be discussing the picture and the questions with a partner in a breakout room of the platform before returning to the original call. Learners are assigned to four breakout rooms (2 learners per room). Instructor circulates among pairs in each breakout room to make sure learners are on track (timewise), address questions and give feedback. Once learners have returned to the main group, the instructor does an all-class check-in and solicits summaries of learners' discussions of the picture and questions, making sure elements that are key to the upcoming class are addressed (namely, that segments of the national police want to telework in France, and there is a debate around that. Why would there be a debate about it?). Once the real-world significance of topic is established, the instructor presents class objectives.	Online Collaboration Platform Main video call & breakout rooms
45m	**During-reading** In the chat, the instructor posts the link to Text 1 and Text 2, and the accompanying worksheet, then explains the reading activity: in pairs, learners have 20 minutes to read their assigned text (either Text 1 or Text 2) and 20 minutes to complete the worksheet together. The instructor assigns pairs and texts, then tells learners that they will be brought back to the main call and reminds learners to keep an eye on the time during pair work. The instructor starts the breakout rooms where learners read their assigned text individually and then complete the worksheet with their partner. As learners work, the instructor circulates among the breakout rooms to make sure learners are on track (timewise), give feedback, assist in summarization, encourage conversation, and monitor comprehension.	Main video call & breakout rooms Files for texts and worksheet Text 1: Environmental costs of telework Text 2: Environmental benefits of telework
50min	**Post- reading** The instructor posts an announcement that all students will be brought back to the main call in 3 minutes, so please finish discussions. The instructor closes the breakout rooms and learners are returned to the main meeting for a wrap-up of reading. Wrap-up includes a discussion of language structures, vocabulary, and take-aways from the texts. (Specifics regarding the texts' content will be addressed in detail during the subsequent task). In the chat, the instructor posts the link to a handout with a task description, and introduces the task to the class, summarizing key points from the task. The instructor then explains that the learners will use the content they encountered in Text 1 and Text 2 to complete the task. The instructor assigns groups and group leaders and explains that the group leaders will make sure their group stays on task and that everyone speaks equally. Each group is made up of two learners who previously read Text 1 and two students who read Text 2 (4 students per group). The instructor tells learners that they have 20 minutes total for the task and that everyone will return to the main call at the specified time. The instructor begins the breakout rooms and learners start the task. In order to complete the tasks, learners need to rearticulate and expand on ideas in their reading, make connections, and then synthesize different viewpoints. Upon reaching their agreement (see task description below), the group posts their memo in the form of bullet points to the class Padlet page (linked in task description). Learners are brought back to main class meeting at the specified time. Each group presents their memo and gets feedback from their classmates and instructor. The instructor solicits additional take-aways from the class if needed and adjourns class, ending the video call.	Main video call & breakout rooms File for handout: Task description Class Padlet Page

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

Tâche. [Task]

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Attention! What you communicate to the police needs to be concise: just 4-5 talking points total. You will need to negotiate with your group *the most important* moments in the crime to convey to the police, since you will not be able to talk about everything. Which details will you choose to include?

Anjel Tozcu (Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching, University of Arizona) is an Assistant Editor for Academic Journals in the Office of Standardization and Academic Excellence at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California. Her research involves vocabulary acquisition through computer assisted language learning (CALL), reading comprehension and speed, syntax, diagnostic assessment, intercultural competence and bilingualism. She has published in *Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages, NECTFL Review – Special Issue*, and International *Journal of the Sociology of Language*.

Dawn Bikowski (Ph.D. in Curriculum and Development, Instructional Technology, Ohio University) is an Associate Professor at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California. Her research interests include educational technology, global teaching and learning, and academic and professional communication. International conferences and workshops, curriculum development projects, and program assessments have taken her to several countries worldwide. She is the author of numerous journal articles and also co-authored the book *Teaching with a Global Perspective: Practical Strategies from Course Design to Assessment* (Routledge, 2019).

Lorraine Miller-Nara (Ed.D. in Instructional Technology and Distance Education, Nova Southeastern University) is currently the School Liaison in the Government and External Affairs Directorate for the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command. She has published numerous journal articles and papers, including her thesis titled *Teaching English to Japanese College Students Using a CORE Curriculum* and her dissertation titled *Perceptions of Post-secondary students on Community in Distance Education.* She has also published several books, among them *Designing a World Safe for Diversity: The Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk International School; First English Language School in Russia* and *A Cultural Approach to Language Learning.* Most recently, she edited (and wrote 3 of the chapters) a 300-page book titled *A Guide to Research for Researchers by Researchers* for the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center.