

# Voices from the classroom

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## **Pedagogical Realities of Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching**

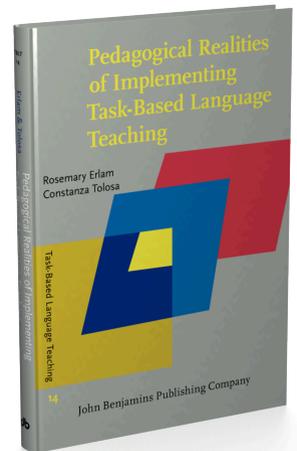
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## CHAPTER 5

# Voices from the classroom

Today in Japanese, I learnt how to carry on a fluent conversation in Japanese and then report back the information to the class. I also learnt how to say what sport you do as well as the place you do your sport in the same question.

(Year 10 student's questionnaire response, at end of lesson, Task 2)

In the Introduction to Part 2, we describe how we identified 10 tasks in the lessons we observed, taught by six teachers, on average 4 years after learning about tasks and TBLT, in the TPD professional development programme. We now look at these tasks as they were implemented in the classroom, and ask the following questions:

- How were the teachers using tasks?
- To what extent is there evidence that the use of tasks opened up opportunities for language learning?
- What did students report learning as they completed tasks?
- How did students view lessons where they worked at tasks?

In this chapter, then, the main focus is on how the tasks we observed may have created learning opportunities. An important contribution are the voices of the students, both in terms of what they reported learning, and their affective responses. A positive response to tasks may indicate willingness and motivation to engage with them and this, albeit indirectly, could be facilitative of opportunities for learning.

In summary, our analysis will contribute to our ongoing understanding of the task as a pedagogic tool and of the different ways tasks may be used to promote learning.

### Data sets

Four main sets of data inform this chapter. The first are the transcripts of teacher and student classroom discourse recorded during task completion. We also, drew at times, on documents (i.e., handouts/worksheets/books/PowerPoints) that the teacher made available to us during or after the lesson. The third main data set comprises our observation notes. We were able to document, for example, teacher use of the whiteboard, information about classroom organisation, grouping of students

and student engagement. The last data set was the written responses to questionnaires that students completed at the end of lessons (described in the Introduction to Part 2) providing information from the students in terms of what they thought they learnt and their opinions of these lessons.

### Analysis of classroom transcript data

In this section we describe how we analysed the transcripts of teacher and student discourse. Firstly, in examining the classroom transcripts, we selected the part of the lesson which was evaluated as the task (excluding any part of the lesson which was labelled as “pre-task”; an exception is Task 7). This was to enable us to focus on opportunities for learning which were facilitated by the task. As we worked through the transcripts we identified examples of opportunities for language learning. These included:

- student exposure to extensive language input (Ellis, 2005) and elaborated input (Oh, 2001);
- student pushed and/or scaffolded use of the target language (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009; Loewen, 2005);
- student reuse and recycling of target language promoting fluency and automatization (DeKeyser & Robinson, 2001).

Within the analysis of each task that we present in this chapter, we discuss, and at times quantify, these opportunities for learning.

At the same time, we identified language-related episodes (LREs) (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) in the transcripts of task discourse. This was for two main reasons. Firstly, they are known, from the literature, to be likely to provide opportunities for learning. They were also frequent in our data set, given that our transcripts of classroom discourse tended to provide examples of interaction, both teacher–student, and student–student.

We defined a LRE as: “any part of a dialogue where students talk about language they are producing, question their language use, or other or self-correct their language production” (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 326). These opportunities to attend to language form have also been referred to as “form-focused episodes” (FFE) (Ellis et al., 2001). A FFE is any occasion where “participants attend to some aspect of linguistic form” while engaged in meaning-focused activities or tasks (Ellis, 2012, p. 205). Ellis (2012) explains that the term LRE tends to be used in contexts where learners are interacting in pair or group work and FFE tends to be used in more teacher-fronted lessons. For purposes of consistency, we will use the term LRE to refer to both types of opportunity to focus on language form, recognising that in this study the focus on form tended to occur in group or pair work. However, as we explain below, we only included in our data set those LREs where there was evidence of a gap in the learners’ knowledge.

These LREs are examples of, and a subset of Long's definition of opportunities to focus on form, defined: "Focus on form... overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements that arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (Long, 1991, pp. 4–5).

We examined the transcripts of classroom discourse for all LREs, identifying those occasions where there was a move from attending to meaning to attending to form, and where this move was initiated by an apparent gap in student knowledge. This move to a focus on language form was most often triggered by an error or by a question about some aspect of language. The end of an LRE was marked by a return to a focus on meaning. See Example (6), from Task 4, as an example of a LRE.

#### Example 6. A reactive LRE

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comment	
1	Student	<i>Est-ce que tu [unintelligible language] *plus grand?</i>	Did you... bigger?	Part of utterance not intelligible but error is use of incorrect comparative to refer to age.
2	Teacher	<i>Plus grand? Plus âgé ou plus jeune?</i>	Bigger? Older or younger?	Teacher draws learner attention to error and gives correct comparative forms that refer to age.

\* signals an error

We would claim that, in this LRE in Example (6), there is opportunity for learning because the student makes an error, demonstrating a gap in their knowledge, and the teacher gives a form of explicit corrective feedback (Ellis et al., 2006) in drawing attention to the error and proposing alternative forms. This opportunity to attend to language occurs at the same time as s/he communicates meaning (Long, 2015). We therefore call this a reactive LRE, that is, a response or reaction to an utterance that was problematic or unclear (Ellis et al., 2001).

In our data set we also found examples of LREs initiated by students, in anticipation of language that they did not know but that they needed in order to be able to communicate successfully. We called these preemptive LREs. They also provided evidence of a gap in learner knowledge. In Example (7) (taken from Task 4), the student initiates the focus on form, asking how to say police officer in French. In this LRE, there is an opportunity for the student to focus on and potentially learn this vocabulary item.

#### Example 7. A preemptive LRE initiated by a student

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comment	
1	Student	<i>Comment dit-on police officer?</i>	How do you say police officer?	Student initiates request for word
2	Teacher	<i>Un policier</i>	A police officer	Teacher supplies word

As explained above, we excluded from our data set LREs that did not provide a definite evidence of a gap in learners' knowledge and that may not have provided an opportunity for students to learn language they did not know. An example is given below (Example (8)), also taken from Task 4. The teacher, Margaret, preempts by asking students if they know a form that she considers necessary for the task. However, we cannot be sure that it was an opportunity for them to learn language they did not know; there was, as we see, at least one student who knew this language form. While LREs like Example (8) were excluded from the LRE data set, we acknowledged that they provided opportunities for focus on form as defined by Long (1991), in that learners' attention was directed to linguistic elements of language in contexts where there was a focus on meaning.

**Example 8.** A preemptive LRE initiated by the teacher, excluded from our data set

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comment
1	Teacher	How are you going to say I didn't have?	Teacher initiates attention to language form, not in response to gap in learner knowledge or error.
2	Student	<i>Je n'avais pas</i>	I didn't have.
3	Teacher	<i>Je n'avais pas. Oui.</i>	I didn't have. Yes.

Within the LREs that we identified, there were a number of ways in which learner attention to form could take place. These included, but were not limited to:

- negotiation of meaning – including clarification requests and confirmation requests; (see T.3 in Example (9))
- provision, by the teacher, of explicit metalinguistic information; (see T.2 in Example (10))
- student uptake of target language (Loewen, 2004); (see T.3 in Example (10))

In Example (9), taken from Task 1, we have a LRE within which there were several opportunities for the learner to focus on language form. This LRE is initiated by the student as they query the meaning of the word “aikido”, indicating a gap in their knowledge. The teacher provides the word and at the same time gives elaborate and extended language input. Then the student initiates a confirmation request, at the same time using or “uptaking” the language input that the teacher has provided. In response to the request for confirmation the teacher provides more extensive and elaborate language input (T. 4).

**Example 9.** Opportunities for language learning within a LRE

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comment
1	Student	Miss, what's <i>Aikido</i> ?	Student initiates with request for information.
2	Teacher	<i>Aikidou ne! Aikidou wa Nihon no supootsu. Nihon no supootsu desu</i>	Ah, aikido! Aikido is a Japanese sport. A Japanese sport.
3	Student	<i>Nihon no supootsu desu ka?</i>	A Japanese sport? Student uptakes & requests confirmation.
4	Teacher	<i>Hai. Eeto, aikidou wa ne, juudou to sukoshi karate ga haitteiru nihon no supootsu. Aikidou wa tabun hitori de shimasu. Hai. Hitori de shimasu.</i>	Yeah. Um, aikido is a Japanese sport like judo with a little bit of karate thrown in. You'd probably do aikido by yourself. Yes. By yourself. Teacher provides <b>extensive &amp; elaborated input</b> in the target language & models preselected task language (categorisation of sport).

In Example (10), also from Task 1, we have an example of the teacher, Tania, providing scaffolding to help the learner produce language related to task goals. The LRE is teacher initiated, but reactive and in response to a learner problem (T.1). The teacher provides explicit metalinguistic explanation (T.2) which leads to uptake (T.3). At this stage, that is, at T.3, we would consider that the LRE is complete, in that the problem is resolved and there is a return to a focus on meaning. However, the teacher goes on to continue the interaction, providing scaffolding (T.4), which leads to correct production (T.5).

**Example 10.** Opportunities for language learning within a LRE

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comments
1	Student	<i>Ku ri ke</i>	Student is finding it difficult to decipher katakana.
2	Teacher	That's a little <i>tsu</i>	Teacher responds by giving <b>explicit metalinguistic explanation</b> to help student read word.
3	Student	<i>Kuriketto</i>	Cricket
4	Teacher	<i>Kuriketto. Sou desu. Yoku dekimashita. Kuriketto wa chiimu no supootsu desu ka?</i>	Cricket. That's right. Well done. Is cricket a team sport?
5	Student	<i>Chiimu supootsu desu.</i>	It's a team sport. Student uses question form to help form correct response, producing <b>correct output</b> .

In working through the transcripts we identified and quantified all the LREs. We discuss the incidence of these in the analysis of each of the ten tasks we present in this chapter. At the same time, as documented earlier, we also refer to other opportunities for learning that we noted in the transcripts.

### Analysis of questionnaire data

We now explain how we dealt with our second data set, the student questionnaires. Students who had consented to participate in the study, were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 4) to complete at the end of the lesson. This data was analysed to establish answers to the following questions:

- What did students say that they learnt in the lesson?
- How did students rate their enjoyment of the lesson?
- What did they report liking and enjoying about the lesson?

For each of the tasks, we present the data we have that answers these questions within the discussion of the task. It is important to point out that, given that the questions asked about the lesson as a whole, we cannot always attribute information that students provided to the task. Students were also able to give more than one answer to questions asking about what they learnt and enjoyed, so the number of responses are not necessarily indicative of the number of respondents.

### The 10 tasks

We now present each of the tasks, using a template which includes goals, relationship to previous work and resources. We evaluate the task against criteria (Ellis & Shintani, 2014) to determine task-likeness (see Introduction to Part 2). In the Comments section, we briefly discuss the task, as a precursor to a more in-depth discussion in Chapter 6. We describe other phases of the lesson and then discuss the “task-as-process”, identifying opportunities for language learning. Lastly, we analyse the student questionnaire answers.

## Tania's classroom: Task 1. Categorising sports

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### Task description

A sorting task that required students to categorise sports and activities according to whether they are practised individually, in pairs or in teams

Year 10 (approx. age 14) class of 22 students of Japanese (14 students completed questionnaires)

### Task objectives/goals

Produce language independently

### Learning intentions

(as explained to students)

Talking about sport

Categorising sports as team/individual/pair

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### Skills involved

Spoken production (main focus)

Listening comprehension and reading comprehension (to be able to decipher questions, word cards).

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### Relationship to previous work

Previous lessons had focused on sports.

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### Pre-task (5 mins)

Charades: students are placed in groups. One student acts out a sport and the others guess what it is in Japanese. They can refer to vocabulary lists in katakana in their books.

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### Task input/resources

- cards with sports written in hiragana/katakana on one side and English on the other.
- handout of formulaic expressions written in katakana and English containing phrases such as “is this a team sport?” “(sport) is a team sport,” “I think you’re wrong” etc.
- large sheet of paper divided into four categories labelled team/pair/individual/other in katakana.

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### Task implementation

(16 mins., 30% of class time)

Students working in groups of approximately four, each group has a leader who records the category decisions.

Examples of sports are: chess, archery, ballet, surfing, cricket etc.

Examples of student utterances: [translations for the reader]:

*Sukii wa hitori de shimasu ka?* [Do you ski by yourself?]

*Booringu wa hitori de shimasu.* [I do bowling by myself]

*Hine chan no ban.* [It's Hine's turn]

At the end of the task the teacher asks the students to write a sentence to summarise a conclusion e.g., *aerobikkusu was chiimu de shimasen.* [Aerobics is not done in a team] 3 mins.

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**Table 23.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users communicating opinions about how the different sports are played
some kind of gap	yes	A reasoning gap required agreement on classification of sports
rely own resources	no	Japanese words for team/pairs/individual taught in lesson. Students are given language support (cards and handout) in written katakana and English
outcome	yes	The classification of the sports into categories

### Comments

In Chapter 6 this is described as a “focused” task in that the intended language use was highly preselected. However, at the same time there were opportunities for students to produce language independently and spontaneously.

This task was categorised as not fulfilling Criterion 3 (see Table 23) in that key phrases were taught prior to the lesson and students were given a handout of language they needed to complete the task. However, students needed to decipher the hiragana/katakana; they were not provided with any romaji (Japanese words written using the Roman alphabet).

### Other phases of this lesson

In the first part of this lesson, the teacher had students review katakana symbols they knew and also taught them some new symbols. At the end of the lesson, after the task, they also reviewed katakana in pairs.

### The task-as-process

A transcription of the teacher’s discourse allowed for an analysis of the interactions she had with students. During the 16 minutes of the task, she interacted with at least 11 different students whose names were recorded in the lesson transcriptions. It is possible that this figure was much higher, because a large number of interactions involved unknown students. From this transcript of teacher discourse, four examples of LREs were identified, including Examples (9) and (10), discussed above. Recordings were also made of student interactions but unfortunately, there was so much classroom noise that the transcriber was unable to decipher these.

## Student feedback

The 14 students who completed the questionnaire reported learning aspects of vocabulary (e.g., names of sports) or language structures. Table 24 summarises these responses (some students reported learning more than one aspect of language).

**Table 24.** Student report of learning during Task 1

Vocabulary/characters	No of students	Language structures	No. of students
team/pair/individual	6	expressions for categorising sports as team etc.	6
names of some sports/activities	5	questions for categorising sports	5
katakana	10	“Yes, I play X” or “I don’t play X”	3
		“Your turn”	2

Further evidence of student learning during this task came from an incident that the teacher recounted during the interview, where one student demonstrated that they were able to apply the language they had just been using in the lesson to their own context. She talked about how, at the end of the lesson, she observed one student talking to another classmate:

He was talking to one of the other boys and said “Oh what have we got next?” “I’ve got PE.” “Oh, what are we doing?” “Oh yeah, we’re doing these three sports.” And I said to him “Oh you can say that in Japanese you know.” And then he just said it in Japanese “Oh we’re playing etc. etc., and we’re going to play etc. etc., and that one’s a team sport, and that one’s a pair sport” and we’d just been using it, and he used it without looking at any of the notes or anything.

The 14 students reported enjoying the following aspects of this lesson that could, possibly, be related to the task (see Table 25).

**Table 25.** Student affective responses to Task 1

Students reported enjoying	No. of “likes”
Conversations with friends	3
[Learning while] having fun	5
Categorising/learning about sports	3
Playing games	2

Five students reported that they enjoyed the part of the lesson where they learnt or reviewed katakana.

The overall satisfaction with this lesson, reported on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “really not enjoyable” and 5 being “very enjoyable,” was 4.07.

## Tania's classroom: Task 2. Conversation

This was Tania's second lesson, taking place the next day after the previous lesson.

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**Task description**


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Students had a conversation in Japanese in pairs or small groups

Year 10 (approx. age 14) class of 22 students of Japanese (15 students completed questionnaires)

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**task objectives/goals**

Free conversation/opportunity to talk in the third person

**learning intentions**

(as explained to students)

Extended conversation/ natural speaking conversation.

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**skills involved**

Spoken production (main focus)

Listening comprehension (to be able to participate in conversation).

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**relationship to previous work**

Previous lessons had focused on sports.

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**pre-task (11 mins)**

Students play a game where they have to ask a question e.g., "*otousan wa nan no supootsu wo shimasu ka?*" [What sport does your Dad play?] and/or give an answer e.g., "*sakkaa wo shimasu*" [He plays soccer]. They are given cards with the question & the word for the sport e.g., "*sakkaa*" [soccer]. The aim is to find someone with the same question & answer.

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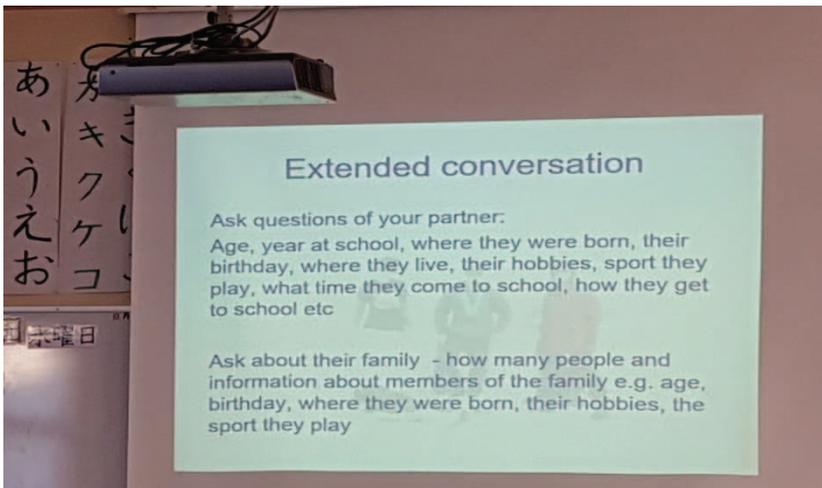
**task input/resources**

– PowerPoint (see below)

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**Task instructions**

(given in English)



The teacher outlined possible topics and questions that could be asked. She also gave the following guidance.

The person who is talking to you... might correct you. And that's okay. They're not telling you you're wrong, they're just helping you get the right word... and if you make your own mistake... and partway through you realise... correct yourself.

Two minutes after the task had started, the teacher stopped the class and said: "at the end of this I am going to get you to give me some information about someone else that you talked to."

### Task implementation

(24 mins., 44% of class time)

Students put into groups of four to have conversations

Examples of student language:

*Chichi no namae wa nan desu ka?* [What is your Dad's name?]

*Gonin imasu. Haha to ane futari to imouto desu.* [Five people. Mum and my two big sisters and my little sister].

Teacher stops the class (after 12 minutes) & asks them to make notes of the information they have learnt so they can report back in Japanese. The students appear to make notes in English.

One student writes (in English):

H. was born on the 23rd December, was born and raised in W. There are 4 people in her family, her Dad and Mum and younger brother. She has 2 dogs, Kate and Trixie. She plays soccer and does swimming. Her Dad was born and raised in W. She comes to school at 8:30.

Teacher calls on students to share what they have learnt about their classmates (in Japanese).

Examples of student language:

*Otousan no namae wa X. Otousan no tanjoubi wa juugatsu desu. Otousan wa chokoreeto ga suki desu.* [Her Dad's name is X. Her Dad's birthday is in October. Her Dad likes chocolate].

*Otousan no namae wa W. W ni sunde imasu. Ragubii wo shimasu.* [Their Dad's name is W. He lives in W. He plays rugby].

**Table 26.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users communicating about their lives.
some kind of gap	[yes]	Some students reported finding out things about their classmates, but teacher confirmed this may not have been the case for all.
rely own resources	yes	No language support provided; students could refer to their class books if necessary.
Outcome	yes	Reporting to the class something they had learnt about a classmate.

## Comments

In Chapter 6, this is described as an “unfocused task” in that the intended language use was free and drew on all the language resources that the students had. In the interview, the teacher said, “we haven’t had a conversation... we haven’t done anything that free.”

This task was categorised as only partially fulfilling Criterion 2 (see Table 26). We consider this notion of gap important because learners are likely to be more motivated to listen to a classmate giving information they might not already know. It is also worth noting that the outcome of reporting back something that they had learnt during the conversation (Criterion 4), was mentioned only after the task had begun.

## Other phases of this lesson

After the task, students completed a reading comprehension activity. They were given a passage in hiragana and katakana and questions in English. They had to ask these questions of their partner in Japanese who looked for the answers in the text.

## The task-as-process

As in Task 1, recordings of student interactions could not be used as there was too much classroom noise.

Seven examples of LREs were identified from the recording of the teacher discourse. Six were student-initiated and in five, information was given in the target language (see Example (11)). There were also examples of the teacher co-constructing dialogue with students and giving them interactional support.

### Example 11. Student initiated LRE from Task 2

Turn	Interlocutor		Translation	Researcher comments
1	Student	Miss, how do you reply like My Dad’s name’s this?		Student initiates request for <b>language support</b> .
2	Teacher	So you go <i>chichi no namae wa</i> so if someone goes <i>outosan no namae wa nana desu ka?</i> you say <i>chichi no namae wa</i>	So you go My Dad’s name is so if someone goes what is your Dad’s name? you say my Dad’s name is	Teacher provides answer, then models question and answer. [Background noise means we cannot know whether there was any uptake from this student].

During the 24 minutes that this task lasted, the teacher interacted with at least seven different students, but it is possible that this figure was much higher. Classroom noise meant that sections of the teacher transcript were also unintelligible.

### Student feedback

As shown in Table 27, students reported, most frequently, that they learnt how to use language to give or ask for specific information (here coded as language structures). The quotation given at the beginning of this chapter is an example of one learner's response. Four students reported learning something about (a) fellow classmate(s) that they didn't know, indicating that they were focused on meaning as a learning outcome.

Table 27. Student report of learning during Task 2

Reported learning	About each other	How to have a conversation in Japanese	Vocabulary	Language structures	Katakana
	4	3	3	10	1

Students reported enjoying the following aspects of this lesson (see Table 28) that could, possibly, be related to the task they completed:

Table 28. Student affective responses to Task 2

Students reported enjoying	No. of "likes"
Having a conversation	4
Interacting/working with friends/classmates	4

The overall satisfaction with this lesson, reported on a scale of 1 to 5, was 3.9.

What we would conclude from Tania's two lessons containing Tasks 1 and 2

In these lessons, there was evidence of an approach typical of focus on formS in that much of the language use (especially in Task 1) was prescribed, preselected and even formulaic. At the same time, within this context where students were attending to and using particular language formS, they were also attending to meaning. This was particularly the case during the conversation (Task 2), where learners had the chance to encode and decode messages and opinions that were personal and true for them and their peers. However, this was also the case during Task 1, where even although the language that students used to classify sports could appear to be formulaic, the

built-in cognitive challenge of reasoning and sorting these sports required a focus on meaning.

The information that students gave about their learning, furthermore, indicated attention to both language forms and meaning. Some students gave examples of language structures they had learnt, while others (e.g., in Task 2) reported “learning about each other,” indicating that for some there were language, and for others, communicative outcomes. Interestingly, some students reported learning from, and enjoying, parts of the lessons that were not task-like and where there was a definite focus on language as an object, in particular, the memorisation of katakana characters.

These students had not been learning Japanese for a full year (the previous year they had had 6 months only), and they were timetabled for only 4 hours of classes a week. Taking account of these factors, it is, perhaps, difficult to imagine students working at tasks where the language use was significantly less prescribed and preselected than it was. However, even when the use of language tended to be formulaic, we found, as in Van den Branden (2009), the kind of interactions likely to promote language learning: negotiation of meaning, recasts, explicit metalinguistic information, clarification of meaning, pushed output and scaffolding. There were opportunities for learners to use language as a tool and construct form-meaning-function relationships. Furthermore, as already documented, we found these learning opportunities both in the context of more prescribed, and less predictable language use.

There was a high level of student engagement during both lessons. Evidence of this was the noise as students engaged in interaction. In both lessons, learners reported a high level of enjoyment. A number of students gave, as a reason for rating these lessons highly, the fact that they enjoyed working with each other and having conversations.

The teacher had a role as facilitator during both lessons, organising and motivating students to complete the task. However, arguably her role as conversational partner was the most important. She provided corrective feedback, extended and elaborated language input and met the language needs of different students in a variety of ways. She also prepared students to be effective conversational partners for their first conversation in Japanese, encouraging them to help and correct each other and trying to help them see that making errors was an expected part of the learning experience. Philp et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of teachers providing guidance in order to maximise the potential for interaction to be effective.

We conclude that even in completing a task where the language use was preselected, students had opportunities to use language communicatively and to engage in the types of interactions that are known to promote language learning.

We now turn to consider Tasks 3 and 4 from Margaret’s classroom.

## Margaret's classroom: Task 3. The teacher at age 6

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**Task description**

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Students asked the teacher questions to find out about her life at age 6 years. They made notes of her answers and had 2 minutes to learn these. In groups they had to compete to see who could remember the most information about her.

Year 11 (approx. age 15) class of 11 students of French (questionnaire completed at end of following task)

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**task objectives/goals**

Students learn *imparfait* (imperfect) in French and work towards NCEA assessment standard

**learning intentions**  
(explained to students)

Preparation for NCEA writing assessment

Focus on *imparfait*

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**skills involved**

Listening comprehension (main focus)

Spoken, written production and reading comprehension

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**relationship to previous work**

No information available

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**pre-task (9 mins)**

Students have brought baby photos; teacher puts these on board and numbers them. Students have to guess which photo belongs to whom.

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**task input/resources**

- questions written in French on paper strips
- same questions on PowerPoint

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**Task implementation**

(33 mins., 55% of total lesson time)

Each student is given a question e.g., *Quel était ton livre préféré?* [What was your favourite book?] on a strip of paper. They take turns to ask their question (displayed on a projector) of the teacher. Everyone listens and takes notes of the teacher's answers to all questions (18 minutes).

Students then have 2 minutes to memorise facts. In groups of between three and four students, they recall, in French, as many things as they can about their teacher (12 minutes).

Two groups collaborate to share facts.

Group 2 wins with 25 facts, followed by Group 1 with 22.

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**Table 29.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users learning about their teacher's childhood.
some kind of gap	yes	Students did not know the answers to questions that they had to ask their teacher.
rely own resources	yes	Students not taught language they needed and had to recall facts about teacher with no language support.
outcome	yes	To see which group could write down the most facts about their teacher at the age of 6.

### Comments

This task was focused in that the teacher planned to create opportunities for students to use the imperfect tense. It was the only task in our data set that featured listening comprehension as the main language skill, and that had a post-task. This task was coded as fulfilling all criteria (see Table 29).

### Other phases of this lesson

Following the task, the teacher read out a paragraph about herself as a 6-year-old which contained factual errors. The students were asked to identify these.

### The task-as-process

As mentioned above, there was a post-task where Margaret asked the students if there was anything they had wanted to say but did not know how to. Two students asked questions, one asked how to conjugate the irregular verb *vouloir* (to want) in the imperfect. The teacher explained, and at the end of the lesson wrote the imperfect tense endings on the board. There were also instances of focus on language form at the beginning of the task, where learners asked about the questions that were displayed on the projector.

Because this task involved students having to listen to the teacher give information about herself, it was possible to have a record of all classroom discourse during a period of 18 minutes (excepting where students may have talked to each other rather than listen to the teacher). During these 18 minutes we identified at least 14 LREs. Five of these involved errors with correct production or pronunciation of the

imperfect tense. In four of these, the teacher provided explicit negative feedback which was output-prompting, that is, it was designed to explicitly draw students' attention to the error and then required them to make a response. See Example (12).

**Example 12.** Reactive LRE from Task 3

Turn	Interlocutor		Translation	Researcher comments
1	Student	<i>*Est-ce que vous entendez bien?</i>	Do you get on well?	Student uses present tense verb when asking about the past.
2	Teacher	<i>Entendez or entendiez?</i>	Get on or got on?	Teacher draws attention to error by repeating it and modelling correct form using intonation to get student to respond.
3	Student	<i>Entendiez</i>	Got on	Student <b>uptakes</b> to repeat correct word after the teacher.

Three groups (a total of nine students) were also recorded interacting in small groups to recall, in French, facts about their teacher. An analysis of these transcripts shows that there were, during 6 minutes of recording, a total of nine student–student LREs (these did not include the teacher–student LREs mentioned earlier). There were also numerous examples of students scaffolding each other's production; see Example (13) which also contains a LRE in Turns 4 and 5.

**Example 13.** Students scaffolding each other's production in Task 3

Turn	Interlocutor		Translation	Researcher comments
1	Student 1	<i>Elle a un frère</i>	she has a brother	Together students <b>scaffold</b> each other to produce information about their teacher's childhood.
2	Student 2	<i>Oui</i>	yes	
3	Student 1	<i>Il s'appelle R</i>	his name is R	
4	Student 2	<i>*Ils battions</i>	they used to fight	Student 2 makes 2 mistakes – omitting the reflexive form & using the incorrect imperfect verb form.
5	Student 1	<i>Oui ouah *ils se battions souvent</i>	yes yeah they used to fight a lot	Student 1 <b>recasts</b> the utterance, to correctly model the reflexive form but the verb is still incorrect.
6	Student 2	<i>mais maintenant</i>	but now	Student 2 carries on but doesn't uptake the correction.

## Margaret's classroom: Task 4. My childhood

Margaret's second lesson, featuring Task 4, took place on the same day, after morning interval.

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### Task description

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Students interviewed each other about their childhoods. Then they shared, with the class, interesting things they had learnt about each other.

---

Year 11 (approx. age 15) class of 11 students of French (nine students completed questionnaires).

---

### task objectives/goals

Students learn *imparfait* (imperfect) in French & work towards NCEA assessment standard

### learning intentions

(same as for Task 3 and explained to students)

Preparation for NCEA writing assessment

---

### skills involved

Spoken production (main focus)

Listening comprehension (to be able to answer questions)

---

### relationship to previous work

Followed on from preceding lesson. Focus on having learners produce output after exposure to input in the previous lesson.

---

### pre-task (4 mins.)

Teacher goes through the questions used in the task to make sure that all students understand them.

---

### task input/resources

Two sheets of paper with the same questions on each e.g., *Est-ce qu'il y avait des animaux chez toi?* [Did you have any pets?] One set of questions was for them to answer in relation to themselves, the second set of questions was for them to pose to a classmate.

---

### Task implementation

(50 mins., 80% of class time)

Teacher gives out a piece of paper with questions about students' childhood. Students have 5 minutes to write answers.

Example answers from one student:

*Une petite maison à J.* [A small house in J.]

*Un chat qui s'appelait Sox* [A cat called Sox]

*J'allais au J School Primary* [I went to J primary school]

*\*J'entendais bien avec mon frere* [I got on well with my brother]

Students have 2 minutes (timed) to memorise their answers. They then move into new pairs and interview each other, asking and answering these same questions.

Teacher calls everyone to attention and asks students to share interesting things they learnt about their partner.

---

**Table 30.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users communicating about their childhoods.
some kind of gap	yes	They did not know the answers to the questions they asked their classmates.
rely own resources	yes	No language support provided.
outcome	yes	The sharing of interesting facts about their classmates.

### Comments

This was a focused task with the teacher's intention that students have opportunities to use the imperfect tense in French, after being exposed, during the previous lesson, to language using this structure, and language related to the topic of childhood. Once again, this task was coded as fulfilling all criteria (see Table 30).

### Other phases of the lesson

There was no other clearly identified lesson phase.

### The task-as-process

Unfortunately, approximately 10 minutes of discourse was not recorded due to recorder malfunction. At one stage, the teacher stopped students and reminded them that they would need to note answers that their classmates gave them in the third person form: "Think about the verb ending. The *il* and *elle* form."

In the 41 minutes that we have of Margaret's discourse as she moved around and interacted with students during the task, there were at least 46 LREs (unfortunately, there were many instances where the learner speech was unclear). This was over one form-focused episode per minute, a relatively high incidence of LREs (Erlam & Pimentel-Hellier, 2017.) At least 22 of these were student-initiated queries where students were asking for language support to be able to say what they wanted to.

There were a variety of ways in which Margaret gave learners feedback about their language production and information about language in response to requests. In Example (14), she provided explicit metalinguistic information.

**Example 14.** LRE from Task 4 incorporating explicit metalinguistic information

Teacher	Translation
<i>Je n'aimais pas – je n'aimais pas les brocolis.</i> Do you remember whenever you talk about things that you don't like you use <i>le, la, les</i> ?	I don't like – I don't like broccoli...

It is highly likely that this information was given to the student who wrote on his questionnaire form (underlining as in the original): “I learned that when you don't like something you don't need to put an “*un*” in front of it, i.e., *I put je n'aimais pas d'un broccoli*, but you are meant to put... *pas les broccoli*.”

Recordings were made of five pairs of students interviewing each other and an analysis of transcripts showed that, during a 16-minute period, there were a total of 30 LREs. This was almost two LREs per minute, a much higher rate than that reported in a review of task research conducted in EFL settings (McDonough, 2015). Once again, there were numerous examples of students scaffolding each other's production. Example (15) gives an example of a LRE which extended over several turns and involved a series of clarification requests (T. 3, 5 & 7) on the part of one of the students.

**Example 15.** Student scaffolded exchange from Task 4

Turn	Interlocutor		Translation	Researcher comments
1	Student 1	<i>Eh est-ce que tu avais des animaux chez toi?</i>	Did you have any pets at your place?	
2	Student 2	<i>Oui j'avais des poissons</i>	Yes, I had some fish	
3	Student 1	<i>Des poissons?</i>	Some fish?	Student 1 is querying what S. 2 has said.
4	Student 2	<i>oui</i>	yes	
5	Student 1	<i>*Une poisson</i>	one fish	S. 1 checks whether S.2 intended to say one fish (making a gender error with the article).
6	Student 2	<i>Des poissons</i>	Some fish	S. 2 repeats original phrase.
7	Student 1	<i>Des?</i>	Some?	S. 1 queries meaning of <i>des</i> .
8	Student 2	<i>Some</i>		S. 2 provides this in English.

## Student feedback

The learning that nine students reported for two lessons (containing Tasks 3 and 4), is given in Table 31.

**Table 31.** Student report of learning during Tasks 3 and 4

Reported learning	Imperfect tense	What a classmate/teacher was like as a child	A specific structure in French
	9	3	3

Students reported enjoying the following aspects of both of Margaret's lessons (see Table 32).

**Table 32.** Student affective responses to Tasks 3 and 4

Students reported enjoying	No. of "likes"
Learning about their teacher/classmates	5
Interacting/working with friends/classmates	4
Speaking in French	2
Using a variety of language skills	2

Students rated this lesson at 4, indicating that they found it enjoyable.

## What we would conclude from Margaret's two lessons containing Tasks 3 and 4

Margaret was the teacher whose practice, was, according to our analysis, the most task-based, in that she was the only teacher who taught, in both lessons, a task that fulfilled all criteria. Ironically, however, she was the teacher who was most focused on the importance of language forms, in terms of her goals for the lesson (see Chapter 7). Her objectives, given to the students, were that they would focus on the imperfect and work towards an assessment task. Moreover, in her corrective feedback, she consistently oriented students to the imperfect, requiring them to choose between her repetition of their error and the correct form. The students were very aware of this language focus; all nine who completed the questionnaire reported that they had learnt the imperfect.

At the same time, Margaret's lessons provided lots of opportunity for learners to attend to meaning. Margaret's pre-task (Task 3) oriented students to the topic of the lesson rather than to language. In both lessons, students had opportunity to attend

to language in the context of communicating meaning. The incidence of LREs, at a rate of 1.3 per minute in Task 3 and almost 2 (1.9) in Task 4, was the highest of all the tasks and lessons that we analysed as part of this research. These estimates are conservative because there were parts of the discourse that we could not decipher and, furthermore, we did not include teacher-initiated, preemptive focus on form as some studies do (because, as already explained, these did not necessarily indicate a gap in students' knowledge, although they may have represented opportunities for learners to focus on language form).

It is interesting to consider, in Task 4, whether the open-ended nature of this task may have accounted for the higher rate of LREs. According to Ellis (2003), the orientation of Task 4 is divergent, in that learners were unrestricted in the information they could provide whereas, in Task 3, it was convergent, in that learners were trying to recall a limited and determined set of facts (information about their teacher). While the quantity of LREs may have varied between the two lessons and tasks, the range, however, did not. In both, we found examples of negotiation of meaning, recasts, explicit metalinguistic information, pushed output and scaffolding. Relevant form-meaning-function relationships were being formed. Students' reports of what they learnt (facts about their teacher and each other) and of lesson enjoyment indicated engagement with content.

As in Tania's lesson, Margaret remained an active conversation partner, tailoring information and feedback to the needs of her students.

In summary, Margaret was a teacher who ascribed considerable importance to a focus on formS or to grammar (see Chapter 7). She carefully designed a lesson sequence, working from providing students with input, to scaffolding them to produce output. Students consistently encountered and practised the *imparfait*, which they knew was the target structure for the lesson. Yet, at the same time, students were focused on meaning and there were many opportunities for creative and unpredictable language use, promoting the types of interactions known to afford opportunities for learning. The incidence of LREs was high; this is also attributable to the higher language proficiency of these students who were in their third year of learning French.

## Linda's classroom: Task 5. Making predictions

This lesson took place at a private school for girls. It was the second lesson observed in Linda's classroom. The first lesson did not contain a task (i.e., did not fulfil three of the four criteria).

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**Task description**


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Students were watching the film *Viva Cuba*. They had to predict what the main characters (two young children) would take with them as they ran away from home, and what problems they might encounter.

Year 11 (approx. age 15) three students (two absent) of Spanish (students did not fill out a questionnaire for this lesson).

---

**task objectives/goals**

Learn about life and culture in Cuba as they learn about language.

**learning intentions**  
 (explained to students)

To think about what to take when running away and to predict problems which would arise.

---

**skills involved**

Spoken production (main focus)

Listening comprehension as they watch film (however, they also have English subtitles).

---

**relationship to previous work**

Students were part way through a unit on Cuba and had already watched approx. 30 minutes of the film.

---

**pre-task (20 mins. approx)**

Discussion about topic and their own experiences of moving – orienting students to plot of the film where the main character does not want to leave Cuba.

---

**task input/resources**

– DVD – Viva Cuba

---

**Task implementation**

(30 mins., 50% of class time)

Students watch movie (8 mins) then stop to predict, in discussion with the teacher, what the characters will take with them (3 mins)

Examples of the things they suggest:

*Un bolso con comida* [a bag with food]

*Pantalones cortos y una camiseta* [shorts and a tee shirt]

Students watch (5 mins) and realise they haven't thought of items like *una brújula* [compass].

They then predict problems characters may face (5 mins), e.g.,

\**Son demasiado joven* [they are too young]

*No lugar para dormir* [nowhere to sleep]

*Andar y tener hambre* [walk and be hungry]

Students watch to see whether their predictions are true or not (9 mins).

---

**Table 33.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users watching film.
some kind of gap	yes	They do not know what happens in the film.
rely own resources	yes	No language support provided
outcome	[yes]	To see whether or not they have made the correct predictions, however there is no acknowledgement of outcome completion (especially for 2nd set of predictions) in the lesson.

### Comments

In the interview, Linda told the researcher that a goal for the unit she was working on was that the students would learn about Cuba as they also learnt Spanish. She believed that the unit would offer many opportunities for language learning.

This task was unfocused. It did not fulfil the last task criteria because there was no discussion as to how successful their predictions had or had not been (see Table 33).

### Other phases of the lesson

The lesson started with one student giving a speech in Spanish that she had prepared as part of the requirement for her external assessment. The others listened.

### The task-as-process

There were 20 LREs during the task; this also included time watching the film (approximately one every 1.5 minutes). Because the discussion was teacher-fronted, the students ( $n = 3$ ), all had access to these LREs. Linda, tended to help students in two ways as they endeavoured to make predictions in Spanish. Firstly, she provided the words that the learners needed (see Example (16): Turns 1 & 2). Secondly, Linda recast or reformulated errors (Ellis et al., 2001) that students made. In this way, she provided negative evidence, that is, information about language use that is not possible or correct in the target language (White, 1991) (see Example (16): Turns 3 & 4).

**Example 16.** LREs from Task 5

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comments
1	Student	They have a compass	Student doesn't know how to say the phrase in Spanish.
2	Teacher	<i>Si, pero tienen una brújula.</i>	Yes, but they have a compass
3	Student	<i>*No pueden duchar</i>	They can't shower
4	Teacher	<i>Ducharse, si, exactamente</i>	Student makes an error by not using the verb "duchar" as a reflexive verb.
5	Student	<i>*No es bien</i>	Teacher recasts error into correct form.
			Student makes a mistake by using the adjective instead of the adverb to mean "That's not good" Discussion continues.

**Student feedback**

Questionnaires were not completed for this lesson. However, it is interesting to note that all four of the five students who completed questionnaires in the previous lesson, reported that they had learnt more about Cuba.

**What we would conclude from Linda's lesson containing Task 5**

Of all the lessons we saw, this was the one that most embodied content and language integrated learning. The focus of the unit was that students would learn about Cuba, with the goal that, at the same time, they would have opportunities to make Spanish language gains. In the other lessons and units we observed, the topic/content provided the focus for the language used, but did not also provide a learning objective. The content-focused nature of Linda's lessons meant that the task was unfocused. These students, in Year 11, and in their third year of Spanish, had higher proficiency. The small class size ( $n = 5$ ) and the fact that they students had access to a Spanish-speaking language assistant, could also have accounted for their level of language proficiency.

During the lesson there were opportunities for students to attend to language form in the context of communicating meaning. Over the whole lesson (which also included time watching the film) LREs were at a rate of almost 1 per minute.

In summary, Linda's task contrasts with the previous four that we have documented from Tania's and Margaret's lessons. We suggest that Linda's approach is more aligned with what some of the literature would predict would be typical of the

TBLT classroom. There appears to be no predetermined set of structures underlying this lesson and unit but there were opportunities for learners to attend to language form that arose incidentally from the lesson.

In the next section we document two lessons from Emily's Chinese language classroom; these are Tasks 6 and 7 of our data set of 10 tasks

### Emily's classroom: Task 6. Treasure Hunt

This and the following lesson took place in an all-boy's school.

Task description
Students completed a Treasure Hunt where they looked for QR codes hidden around the school. They scanned each QR code to obtain a word (in Chinese) relevant to where the treasure was hidden, and a clue for the next QR code. The words needed to be assembled so that the hiding place of the treasure could be revealed.
Year 10 (approx. age 15) 24 students of Chinese (15 students completed questionnaires).
task objectives/goals
Find directions, work independently in teams
learning intentions
skills involved
Reading comprehension (main focus) Spoken production
relationship to previous work
Part of a unit on giving directions
pre-task (5 mins)
Students complete a vocabulary quiz on their phones of the words they will need in the task. They choose the correct character and pinyin corresponding to an English word or vice versa. The top five students get prizes.
task input/resources
– handout (see below) – students' phones
Task implementation
(38 mins., 63% of class time)
Students are put in groups of approx. four. Each group looks for the same clues but works at finding & solving these in a different order. Groups scan QR codes, obtain a word relevant to the location of the treasure and a clue to find the next QR code.
Some examples of the clues are: 在新体育馆和科技楼中间 [In the middle of the new gym and the science building] 在社会楼和艺术楼中间的椅子上。 [It's on the chair in the middle of social and arts buildings]
Students complete the task outside in groups and the teacher, along with the Mandarin language assistant, are available for support.

**Table 34.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users and completing a Treasure Hunt
some kind of gap	yes	They did not know where the treasure was hidden
rely own resources	yes	Students using familiar language in a new context and allowed to use online resources to work out the meaning of words they did not know
outcome	yes	To find out where the treasure was

### Comments

This task was rated as one that was focused, requiring students to understand language for directions, school subjects and buildings, written in Chinese characters. It fulfilled all task criteria (see Table 34).

### Other phases of the lesson

There was no other clearly identified lesson phase.

### The task-as-process

The teacher was audio-recorded during this lesson, but the students were not, as they had not returned their signed ethics sheets in time.

There were seven examples of LREs in the teacher discourse transcript. We also found examples where the teacher provided language support or scaffolding for students as they completed the task, but where the focus on language, was, as far as could be ascertained from the recording, preemptive. This means that there was no clear evidence that her scaffolding met a gap in terms of learner knowledge (see Example (17)). However, it is hard to be sure of this as learners were working with written clues and may have been showing the teacher language they needed help with, rather than asking about it.

It is entirely probable that examples like Example (17) may have afforded opportunities for language learning in that students got repeated exposure to language they had already encountered in class. What is more, this focus on language was motivated by the task and students were encountering the language in a context in which they needed to engage with meaning.

**Example 17.** Preemptive teacher-initiated focus on language

Interlocutor		Translation	Researcher comment
Teacher	下面是什么?下面 is the clue。	What's " <i>Xiamian</i> "? " <i>Xiamian</i> " is the clue.	<i>Xiamian</i> means "under."
Student	下面。	Under	
Teacher	写下面,这里。在科学楼和社会楼中间。科学是什么?什么是科学?科学?	Please write here. In the middle of science and social building. What's <i>Kexue</i> ?	<i>Kexue</i> means "social."

At the same time as she provided language support for students, Emily also adopted a number of other roles demonstrating the importance of the teacher in task implementation. She continually monitored task conditions so as to help students achieve the task purpose. In each instance below, Emily used Chinese as she:

- organised students into groups  
Samuel, 太多人了, 不可以五个人。  
[Samuel, too many people. You can't have five people in one group]
- ensured students had the equipment they needed for the task  
你应该有手机, 你的手机可以 scan QR code。你们有手机吗? 把手机拿出来。你有手机  
[You should have a phone, your phone can scan QR code. Do you have your phones? Take out your phones. You have a phone]
- suggested access to support they might need for the task (Teacher Liu is the Mandarin language assistant).  
你应该去看刘老师, 找刘老师。刘老师在橄榄球场。对, 好。  
[You should go and see teacher Liu, find teacher Liu. Teacher Liu is in the rugby court. Yes, OK.]  
你可以用 Google translate, 你可以用字典。  
[You can use] Google translate. [You can use a dictionary.]
- monitored the pace as students completed the task  
你们去数学楼。好, 快点。快快快。加油加油。  
[You are going to the maths building. Ok, hurry up. Hurry, hurry. Good luck]

## Student feedback

Two students reported that they did not learn any new language but that they revised language. This emphasises the role of this lesson in enabling students to recycle language they already knew.

**Table 35.** Student report of learning during Task 6

Instructions/directions in Chinese	Vocabulary	Working in a team	How to read in Chinese
7	School subjects	2	2
	School buildings	2	2
	Colours	1	

Students reported enjoying the following aspects of this lesson (see Table 36).

**Table 36.** Student affective responses to Task 6

Students reported enjoying	No. of “likes”
being outside the classroom/ moving around	9
working in groups	4
a fun activity	4
getting prizes	3

The students rated satisfaction with this lesson at 4.9, indicating that, for most, it was highly enjoyable.

## Emily’s classroom: Task 7. Working with Mazes

Emily’s second lesson, featuring Task 7, took place on the following day. In this lesson, we describe three tasks, following on from what Emily described as the pre-task phase. While we incorporated the third task, as Task 7, in our data set of 10 tasks (see Introduction to Part 2) because it took the most time, we decided to include the two preceding tasks here in our lesson description because of the way in which they scaffolded students towards completing Task 7.

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**Task description**


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Task 1: Students played a game *Laoshi shuo* (Teacher Says) based on Simon Says.

Task 2: Students took turns to give directions to another blindfolded student so that they could draw their way out of a maze projected onto the class whiteboard.

Task 3: (Task 7 in our overall data set): Students had a handout of four mazes. They first wrote and then read out instructions in Chinese for finding one's way out of one of these; their classmate had to decide which maze the instructions corresponded to.

---

Year 10 (approx. age 14) 24 students of Chinese (no questionnaires completed due to limited time).

---

**task objectives/goals**

Giving directions

**learning intentions**
**skills involved**

Spoken production (main focus)

Written production

---

**relationship to previous work**

Part of a unit on giving directions and following on from previous lesson, giving students opportunity to use language of directions in output.

---

**pre-task (8 mins. approx.)**

Students completed a "Finding Directions Sheet." They wrote translations in English next to a series of Chinese phrases and words.

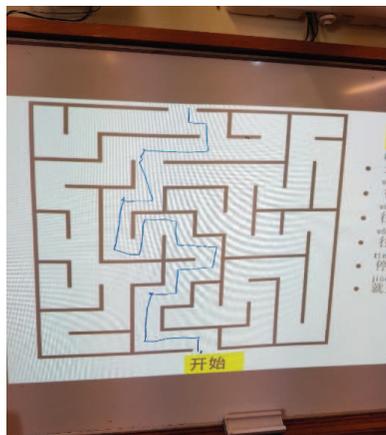
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**task input/resources**

- Task 1: the teacher projected on to the board, in English/characters and pinyin, direction phrases/words. She removed the English partway through the game.
  - Task 2: students had access to pinyin and characters.
  - Task 3: students were given a handout of task instructions, written in English. The language students needed was listed in pinyin and characters on this handout.
- 

**Task implementation**

(Tasks 1-3, 24 mins. approx., 72% of the total lesson time; Task 3, 19 mins., approx. 32% of class time)



- Task 1: Students play *Laoshi shuo* (Teacher says). The teacher calls out commands in Chinese [“teacher says back, teacher says front”] and the class follow when these are prefaced with “teacher says.” Students who respond incorrectly are eliminated from the game. The teacher then gives individual students the chance to be the *laoshi* and call the commands [10 mins.]
- Task 2: The teacher projects a picture of a maze on the board (see image above). She blindfolds one student and has another student give directions while the blindfolded student traces a line through the maze. The language needed for this task is to the right of the maze. Students take turns at giving the directions [14 mins.].
- Task 3: (task 7 in our overall data set) In groups of two, students first write instructions in Chinese for one of four mazes on their handout. They then give their partner these directions. He has to establish which maze they have chosen [19 mins.].

Some examples of language students used:

往前走, 停, 往右拐, 停, 往前走。 [Go forward, stop. Turn right, stop. Go forward.]  
 往左拐, 往后走。 [Turn left, go back.]

**Table 37.** Evaluation against task criteria for Tasks 1–3

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users and playing <i>Laoshi shuo</i> [1] & a puzzle game in Mandarin [2 & 3]
some kind of gap	yes	Following teachers’ and classmates’ instructions [1] Understanding and communicating how to get through the maze [2]. They did not know which maze their partner had chosen [3]
rely own resources	[yes]	They had not just been taught this language. However, most of it was available for them on the blackboard [1 & 2] or handout [3], which may not have facilitated automatisisation
outcome	yes	Not getting eliminated from the <i>Laoshi shuo</i> game [1], getting out of the maze [2] and finding out which maze was the correct one [3]

## Comments

We rated Task 3 (Task 7 in our data set of 10 tasks, as described above) as another focused task. However, in our opinion (as explained in our description in the Introduction to Part 2), it did not fulfill both questions for requiring learners to rely on their own linguistic resources (see Table 9). Students had not been taught the language they needed prior to working at the task (Question 3a answered), however, the fact that the language they needed to complete the task was on the worksheet handout did not, in the researcher’s opinion, fully allow for automatisisation (Question 3b not fulfilled). This judgement was made because students had

had a lot of opportunity to hear and use this language as they played *Laoshi shuo*. Additionally, in Task 2, there was further opportunity to hear and use this language, which could have meant that less language support would have been necessary in Task 3. In other words, it was not unreasonable, in the researcher's view, to expect that students could have been required to rely more on the linguistic repertoire that they had built up of this language and having it available on their worksheet did not necessarily foster this independence.

An interesting feature was that a third student joined each pair to note the language used in the interaction with the aim of establishing which pair used the most target language. However, this information was not discussed with the students, perhaps because of time limitations, nor did students comment on it in the questionnaires.

### The task-as-process

The teacher was recorded during this lesson but there was too much classroom noise for any recording of student interaction to be decipherable. Four LREs were identified in the transcript of teacher discourse.

This lesson built on the preceding where students had to read, decipher and follow directions in Chinese. Here the expectation was that they would have opportunities to produce directions in spoken Chinese. In Task 1, five students had the opportunity to give instructions, and in Task 2, six different students went to the front of the class and gave instructions to a blindfolded classmate. The whole class was focused, at times calling out instructions and commenting when an error was made. From the audio data we were able to document how many times the target formulaic phrases, for directions in Chinese, were produced by students. This output, of course, also constituted input for all learners. As we can see from Table 38, the instruction "forward" was spoken 10 times by students during Task 1, as was the phrase "go forward" (spoken a total of 34 times during Tasks 1 and 2). In Task 3, students had the opportunity individually, in pairs, to use these instructions.

**Table 38.** Student output of target formulaic phrases

Direction in Chinese	Task 1	Task 2	Totals
	No of times directions spoken by students		
go forward	10 [forward 10]	24	34 [44]
turn right	8 [right 8]	15	23 [31]
turn left	4 [left 9]	13	17 [26]
go back	6 [back 14]	8	14 [28]
stop	2	31	33
	30 [41]	91	121 [162]

What we would conclude from Emily's two lessons containing Tasks 6 and 7

The language of both these tasks, primarily, that of giving directions in Chinese, was predetermined, prescribed and formulaic. There was little opportunity for creative language use. The students were in their second year of learning Chinese, and were being encouraged to read characters rather than just rely on pinyin. These two lessons were carefully planned to move students from comprehending directions in Chinese, to also being able to produce them. In the second lesson, a series of tasks scaffolded students towards this goal.

In these lessons, students were exposed to and used the language of directions over, and over, again. In our conservative estimate (NOT including the 19 minutes where students interacted in pairs), students produced 162 direction phrases in Chinese during lesson 2, which also served as input for their fellow classmates. An interesting feature of both lessons is the relatively limited occurrence of LREs. This may be due to the fact that in the second lesson the use of language was related to a visual response, that is, tracing a route on the board or on a worksheet. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the occurrence of LRES is not, in itself, a guarantee of learning.

This was a class of noisy and boisterous young men, but they were all engaged in these lessons and loved calling out when their classmates made an error in tracing a route through the maze. The Treasure Hunt was highly rated; this class of 14-year-olds appreciated the chance to get outside the classroom and move around the school in teams. The teacher played the crucial role of task organiser, motivator, and support giver.

In summary, the students in these lessons were like those in Tania's (Tasks 1 & 2) classroom in that they were beginners, and they were learning a new writing system at the same time as learning a new language. Emily planned lessons, as Margaret did, that exposed learners to extensive language input and then provided scaffolded opportunities for them to produce this same language. While the language was heavily preselected and predetermined, students had the opportunity to engage with it in the context of decoding and encoding meaning. The learning opportunities came not so much from opportunities to focus on language in LREs, but from opportunities to repeatedly hear and produce the same language, thus automatising these forms and developing language fluency. Researchers claim that language learning is gradual. Learners need to be exposed to massive amounts of input and have many opportunities to encounter the same meaning-form-function relationships (Dupuy, 1999; N. C. Ellis & Wulff, 2015; Keenan & MacWhinney, 1987; Lightbown, 2014). They also need the chance to recycle, by engaging in meaningful practice, the language they have started to acquire (DeKeyser, 2007; Ortega, 2007).

We now turn to another Japanese classroom and a very different approach to the use of tasks.

## Shona's classroom: Task 8. Murder mystery

## Task description

As part of a Murder Mystery unit, students were completing a Suspect booklet which contained profiles of potential suspects. They were reading and processing information that had been given to them in a worksheet entitled "Suspect clues 2."

Year 11 (approx. age 15) 13 students of Japanese (questionnaires completed by seven students).

## task objectives/goals

Establish who each suspect is for the Murder Mystery Unit as they use the language of descriptions

## learning intentions

Start to determine the murder suspects

## skills involved

Reading comprehension (main focus)

## relationship to previous work

Students working on a Murder Mystery Unit in a flipped mastery classroom. They need to establish who murdered the deputy principal in their school, where and their motivation for doing so.

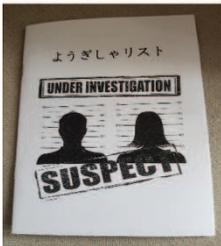
## pre-task

Work completed previously, see "other phases of the lesson"

## task input/resources

Worksheet "Suspect Clues 2" containing clues about suspects, Suspect book (both written entirely in hiragana/katakana/kanji).

## Suspect Clues 2



## ようざしA Suspect A:

かみのけが ながくて、きんぱつです。目はいいろで、めがねをときどきかけています。

Their hair is long and blond Their eyes are grey. They sometimes wear glasses.

## ようざしB

かみのけがみじかくて、きんぱつです。目があおくて、いつもめがねをかけています。

## ようざしC

かみのけがくろくて、みじかくないです。でもながくないです。かたまであります。

目がちいろです。マオリ人だともいます。めがねをかけていません。

## Task implementation

(time taken undetermined, as students worked at own pace)

Students working mainly in pairs. They have a worksheet (see Suspect Clues 2, above, with translation included for the reader) and are using it to fill out their Suspect book (see above). Students take their book to the teacher who checks that all entries are correct.

**Table 39.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students functioning as language users decoding language to establish murder suspects
some kind of gap	yes	They did not know who the suspects were
rely own resources	no	They were learning the language (of description) they needed for the task as they worked at it
outcome	yes	The drawing-up of a correct list of suspects

## Comments

Shona's students were working at a Murder Mystery unit, aiming to solve who had murdered their deputy principal and with what motive. In this flipped mastery classroom, students completed a series of situational grammar exercises, activities, and tasks as they worked, mainly in pairs, through the unit. The unit was scheduled to extend over 4 to 5 weeks. In the lesson observed, two pairs of students were working on Chapter 2 of the unit in order to establish the murder suspects. The task described above was part of this chapter, and one that a number of students were working on. It did not take the whole focus of the lesson.

This was rated as a focused task. It did not fulfil Criterion 3 (see Table 39), because students had been taught the language that they needed, immediately prior to working at the task. It was one of only three tasks in our data set that was input-based, requiring students to decode written text in Japanese.

## Other phases of this lesson

Immediately before this task, students had completed a series of activities or situational grammar exercises, with the aim that they would learn the different verbs for “to wear”. They had:

- watched a video about verbs “to wear”
- written notes on verbs “to wear”
- completed (situational grammar) exercises in their workbook

When these exercises had been checked off by their teacher, students worked on the task described above.

After completing this task, students sat a vocabulary quiz, and then a “Descriptions mini test” at which they had to gain at least 75%. In this test they had to give the English for a number of Japanese words, list the verbs for “to wear,” and write a description of someone in Japanese given some key descriptive words in English. They worked at this test in pairs.

## The task-as-process

The teacher was recorded, as were three pairs of students who worked at this task. The fourth pair was not recorded because one student had not consented to be involved in the study.

During the lesson, all three pairs of students took their Suspect booklet to the teacher who checked it and established that everything was complete and correct.

An interesting aspect of this lesson was that, in the interview, the teacher explained that the students were free to use whichever language they liked. Consequently, there was more English language use than in other tasks. This may also have been a reflection of the stage of the task. All pairs of students had completed the “Suspects Clues 2” worksheet and were working together to establish, using a photo and list of teaching staff at their school, who the six suspects were. They did this almost exclusively in English and only used Japanese when addressing the teacher, Shona.

There was a total of 9 LREs during the task phase of the lesson, seven out of which involved the teacher, who almost exclusively spoke to the students in Japanese.

## Student feedback

Five students reported learning who the suspects were. Students also reported learning aspects of language associated with objectives for Chapter 3 (i.e., “before” sentences, daily verbs, plain form of verbs), which they moved on to work at after completing Chapter 2.

There were two main aspects of this lesson that the seven students reported enjoying. These were:

- establishing the murder suspects (four students)
- working at their own pace (three students)

Four of the students said that the lesson was fun. One reported: “having fun while incidentally learning Japanese.”

Five of the students rated this lesson at 5, as very enjoyable. The total rating for the seven students was 4.3.

## What we would conclude from Shona’s lesson containing Task 8

Shona’s flipped mastery classroom was very different from the others we observed. The first obvious difference was that students were working at their own pace, in pairs or small groups, through the Murder Mystery unit Shona had designed. The second difference was that there were two levels of task (see Chapter 6). The first was the “target task,” at the level of the unit, where students had to solve the Murder Mystery.

Within this target task, were other smaller tasks, which we call “pedagogic tasks,” such as the one we describe in this lesson. However, there were also examples of activities that would not meet our criteria of task. We referred to these as situational grammar exercises because the students were focused on formS, working with language that was decontextualised, and functioning as language learners rather than language users.

There are several important points to highlight about the attention to language formS and to language as object. Firstly, the decontextualised language activities (including tests) that students worked at enabled them to learn the language required to decode the clues they needed to solve the Murder Mystery, a task which was cognitively demanding in that it required the processing and analysis of a wide range of information. So, the language formS were not only necessary, but also became contextualised in the context of the Murder Mystery. In other words, they enabled learners to establish meaning, bridge a communicative gap and, ultimately, arrive at an outcome (who killed the deputy principal). Through this process, the students alternated between functioning as language learners and language users.

Despite the considerable focus on language as object, the seven students rated the lesson as enjoyable, with five reporting that it was highly enjoyable. Interestingly, it seems that the student who reported having fun “while incidentally learning Japanese” may have considered completing the quizzes and tests as part of this experience. The learners appeared happy to work at decontextualised language activities (including tests) so as to learn the language required to decode clues. In other words, the cognitive challenge of solving the Murder Mystery seemed to lead to learner engagement. The student who was “so excited” and whose quote is referenced at the beginning of Chapter 6 is evidence of this. The fact that students also worked in pairs and that there was evidence of competition (in the transcripts) may have contributed to the enjoyment.

In our data set, the incidence of LREs as students completed the task, at an average of 0.25 per minute, or 1 every 4 minutes, was low. On the other hand, the rate of opportunities to attend to language during the “descriptions test” phase of the lesson where students were functioning as language learners rather than language users, was much higher, at an average of 1.4 per minute. During this second phase, students collaborated to write a description, in Japanese, of a fictional person called “Kate,” according to information given. There were also instances of students scaffolding each other to co-construct this written description.

What stands out, is that the students were not under any requirement to use Japanese as they interacted and worked together. This could, perhaps, be seen as all the more surprising, given that these Year 11 students were in their third year of learning the language, and consequently more proficient in the language than students in some of the other classes involved in this study. They were, of course, required to use Japanese to complete the various worksheets, quizzes and tests that constituted the different chapters or sections of the unit.

In summary, the students in Shona’s class were working at a task within a task. The target task was to solve the Murder Mystery, and, as part of this, they had to complete

the smaller (pedagogic) task of establishing a profile of murder suspects. They were also completing situational grammar exercises which introduced them to new language. They therefore moved back and forwards between the roles of language learner and language user. The cognitive challenge of the target Murder Mystery task appeared to account for the fact that they seemed to find all aspects of the lesson, whether the focus was on language as object or on language as a tool to communicate, enjoyable.

We now turn to Toby's class as we focus on the last two tasks in the series of 10 that we are describing in this chapter.

Toby's classroom: Task 9. How well do you know your classmate?

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**Task description**

Students were each given the name of one of their classmates. They had to answer a series of 20 questions in Spanish, which asked about a range of preferences, giving the answers that they imagined this classmate would give. Next, they had to go and actually ask this classmate the same questions and compare actual responses with the ones they had guessed. The aim was to see how many answers they had guessed correctly.

Year 10 (approx. age 14) 24 students of Spanish (questionnaires not completed for this lesson).

---

**task objectives/goals**

Ask for and give opinions

**learning intentions**  
(explained to students)

Ask for and give opinions/ speak a lot of Spanish

---

**skills involved**

Listening comprehension & spoken production

---

**relationship to previous work**

Information not available

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**pre-task**

Students had to complete three sentences where they had the chance to express an opinion. E.g., *la música de Justin Bieber es...* [Justin Bieber's music is...]

---

**task input/resources**

A handout with the 20 questions; each student received a piece of paper with a classmate's name.

---

**Task implementation**

(22 mins., 37% of class time)

Teacher assigns a classmate to each student. He reads out the 20 questions and checks that students understand them. Students write the responses to each question that they think their classmate would make.

Examples of questions are:

*¿Prefiere el verano o el invierno?* [Does s/he prefer summer or winter?]

*¿Le gusta más perros o gatos?* [Does s/he like dogs or cats most?]

The teacher then tells students they have to go and ask their classmates these questions, compare the answers they get with their guesses, and see how many they got right.

---

**Table 40.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students answering questions according to what they think their classmates' preferences are.
some kind of gap	yes	It is unlikely they will know the preferences of their classmate.
rely own resources	no	There is very little opportunity for students to rely on their own language knowledge; the questions are on the whiteboard and on the handout.
outcome	yes	To discover how accurate they were in guessing their classmate's preferences.

### Comments

This was a focused task. It did not fulfil the third criterion (see Table 40) because the teacher went through each question, ensuring students knew the relevant vocabulary, and because students had a handout listing all questions (e.g., *¿preferire tarta o galletas?*), so they were not encouraged to formulate any independently.

The pre-task was considered to be the only one in our data set that activated the language needed for the task according to discourse type, that is, expressing an opinion or preference.

### Other phases of the lesson

After the task the students completed an online quiz where they had to express opinions and give reasons for these in Spanish. They then did an exercise where they listened to a dialogue and completed sentences. Finally, they were put into pairs where they had to give an opinion about a singer whose picture was displayed on the whiteboard. They were encouraged to state reasons for their opinion.

### The task-as-process

After Toby had finished going through the 20 questions (approximately 10 minutes), he reminded students, before they moved into pairs, to change them from the “he and she” form to the you informal form “*te gusta*” (do you like?). He also checked that students understood how to answer these questions, eliciting from students the forms “*me gusta*” (I like) and “*prefiero*” (I prefer). Toby also encouraged them to extend their language by adding a reason for why they liked something. At the end of the task, Toby asked students how many correct guesses they had made. The student with the most (19), was given a sweet.

During the approximately 7 minutes students were interacting in pairs, we identified five LREs in the teacher–student interaction discourse. See Example (18), which contains a LRE and an example of Toby encouraging a student to produce pushed output.

**Example 18.** LRE from Task 9

Turn	Interlocutor	Translation	Researcher comments	
1	Student	<i>Me gusta más Superman.</i>	I like Superman more.	
2	Teacher	<i>¿Por qué C, ¿por qué?</i>	Why C, Why?	Teacher <b>pushes</b> student to give a reason for his preference.
3	Student	Ahhh... I am not sure.		Student replies in English.
4	Teacher	<i>Vale. No sé</i>	Ok. I don't know.	The teacher provides <b>scaffolded</b> help by giving the correct form.
5	Student	<i>No sé.</i>	I don't know.	The student <b>uptakes</b> this language form.

The interactions of four students were recorded as they asked and responded to the questions that were part of the task. Table 41 presents the number of utterances produced during this task by these students. This data does not include utterances produced by the different conversation partners. An example of a question that Christopher asked was: “¿Prefieres panqueques o gofres?” (do you prefer pancakes or waffles?) and an example of an answer, in response to another question was: “*Me gusta el verano*” (I like summer better).

**Table 41.** Student output of target language

Student	No of questions asked re preferences	No of answers stating preferences	Total no of utterances
Christopher	11	5	16
Sarah	18*		18
Imogen	6*		6
Annabelle	Little interaction, spoke English only		

\* Sarah and Imogen only recorded, in their interactions, the questions they asked their conversation partners.

## Toby's classroom: Task 10. Finding a friend

The lesson in which this task features took place 7 days after the previous lesson. Workload and timetabling issues did not allow for the researcher to return any earlier to Toby's class. There were between three and four intervening lessons between Tasks 9 and 10.

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### Task description

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Students gave, in writing, their opinion about a genre of TV programme (e.g., *el telediario*, news; *programas de deportes*, sports programmes etc.) presented at five different stations located around the room. They had to put their name next to each written opinion. Students were then given the opportunity to go and visit each station, read what had been written and decide who was compatible with them in terms of preferences, that is, who might be "a good friend."

---

Year 10 (approx. age 14) 24 students of Spanish (all completed questionnaires).

---

### task objectives/goals

Ask for and give opinions.

### learning intentions (explained to students)

Ask for and give opinions/ find some new friends.

---

### skills involved

Reading comprehension and written production.

---

### relationship to previous work

Clear connection to Task 9, carrying on with goal of having students express and ask for opinions.

---

### pre-task (5 mins.)

Quiz competition requiring recall of some of vocabulary used in task.

---

### task input/resources

Big sheets of paper at each station, listing a TV genre.

---

### Task implementation (30 mins., 50% of class time)

Teacher numbers students (1–4) to form the groups that will go together to each station. At each station there are different TV programme genres, e.g., news, horror shows, reality shows, soap operas, written on big sheets of papers. Students need to write a sentence in Spanish giving their opinion about each type of programme.

Before beginning the task, the teacher checks understanding of words and formulaic expressions: *me gusta*; *porque*; *creo que*; *pienso que*; *me da igual*.

Examples of written student responses are:

\**En mi opinión los documentales es muy aburrido* [I think that documentaries is very boring]

*En mi opinión me gusta mucho telediario porque es interesante* [I really like news because it is very interesting]

\**En mi opinión no me gustan los telenovelas porque son muy mal* [I don't like soaps because they are very bad]

After all students have had a chance to write responses at each station, the teacher gives them the opportunity to read what has been written and decide who might suit them as friends.

---

**Table 42.** Evaluation against task criteria

Criterion	Fulfilled	Comment
focus on meaning	yes	Students answering questions according to their TV programme preferences.
some kind of gap	yes	They will have to read about others' preferences that are not known in advance.
rely own resources	yes	Language is activated but not taught and they do not have language resources to refer to as they write.
outcome	[yes]	To discover who their friends are based on viewing preferences, however, there is little evidence of discussion of this.

### Comments

This was coded as a focused task. It fulfilled three criteria and a fourth, partially or weakly, only (see Table 42). The outcome was planned as an opportunity for students to discover who was like them in terms of their TV watching preferences, but there was limited evidence of classroom discussion of this in the data.

This was the only task, of the seven output-based tasks in our data set, which involved written production as a main focus.

### Other phases of the lesson

In the last 20 minutes of the lesson, students played a game where in pairs they made up sentences comparing TV shows. They were allowed a turn in the game if they said something in Spanish.

### The task-as-process

Immediately before the task, the teacher reviewed some of the formulaic expressions students might need. From the sheets of written output that we saved from each station, we ascertained that students wrote a total of 85 statements, an average of 3.5 per student. Of these, (see examples below), 32 gave a reason for a preference, involving in each case a complex sentence with a subordinate clause (see sentence b).

- a. *Me encantan las comedias* (Comedies are fascinating)
- b. \**No me gustan programas de deportes porque son aburrido* (I don't like sports programmes because they are boring)

There were an additional 20 written expressions of agreement or nonagreement, which involved formulaic utterances, such as, *estoy de acuerdo* (I agree).

As students wrote their opinions, the teacher moved around and interacted with individuals. Over a 13-minute period there were at least two examples of the teacher encouraging students to give pushed output and at least 10 LREs, at a rate of one every 1.25 minutes. Some of these extended over several turns and included examples of the teacher, Toby, scaffolding learner production. See Example (19).

**Example 19.** Teacher scaffolding student production in Task 10

Turn	Interlocutor		Translation	Researcher comments
1	Teacher	<i>Bien. Comedias. ¿Qué opinas?</i>	Good. Comedies. What do you think?	Teacher asks student his opinion about comedy as a genre.
2	Student	<i>Me gusta</i>	I like	
3	Teacher	<i>Ahh. ¿Si? ¿Te gusta?</i>	Ahh. Yes? You like?	The teacher clarifies what the student has said with rising intonation which is encouraging him to give more information.
4	Student	<i>Ahh, porque es ah es</i>	Ahh because it is ah it is	The student starts to give a reason but is struggling with the wrong verb “is” instead of “are.”
5	Teacher	<i>Son because they are son</i>	They are because they are	The teacher recasts and gives metalinguistic explanation.
6	Student	<i>*Porque son divertido</i>	*Because they are entertaining	Student <b>uptakes</b> “son” correctly and gives a reason but the adjective he uses is incorrect.
7	Teacher	<i>Muy bien. Divertidas.</i>	Very good entertaining	Teacher acknowledges and gives <b>explicit correction</b> .

### Student feedback

Students’ reported learning for this lesson that can be directly related to this task is documented in Table 43. Two students said that they did not learn any new language but that they revised language they already knew.

**Table 43.** Student report of learning during Task 10

How to express an opinion	How to make a comparison	How to express a reason	What other people like	How to make new friends
13	13	2	3	2

Students reported enjoying/not enjoying the following aspects of this lesson (see Table 44).

**Table 44.** Student affective responses to Task 10

Students reported enjoying	No. of “likes”
Finding out what other people liked watching	2
Writing opinions rather than saying them	3
Students reported not enjoying	No. of “didn’t likes”
Being put into groups (without friends)	3

Overall, students rated this lesson at 4.6, as between enjoyable and highly enjoyable.

What we would conclude from Toby’s lessons containing Tasks 9 and 10

These were Year 10 students with limited proficiency, as they were in only their second year of language learning. In both these tasks, it is, arguably, the opportunity to rehearse and recycle language that was most significant for learning. In Task 9, these opportunities were for use of spoken, and, in Task 10, written language. In both cases, students had opportunities to express preferences or opinions and give reasons for these in Spanish. At the same time, because students had opportunities to both listen to (Task 9) and read language output (Task 10), they were exposed to considerable amounts of language input. We documented instances of LREs and examples of where students were pushed and scaffolded in their attempts to produce language output. The role the teacher played in moving around the class and interacting with students, at the same time as he monitored task performance, was crucial.

Task 10 involved written Spanish and three students reported appreciating the opportunity to write rather than speak. They rated this lesson highly in terms of enjoyment.

In each of these lessons, the tasks, clearly identified as such by the teacher, took a proportion of the lesson time only, 50% for the second and 37% for the first lesson. The lessons were very structured and the other lesson phases provided opportunities either for revision of language (involving online games, which students enjoyed) or for the use of language that tended to be decontextualised and where learners were operating more as learners than as language users.

In summary, in Toby’s lessons the language use was highly preselected and predetermined. Yet, the repetitive nature of this language created affordances for language learning. The constant recycling of language in the context of a task gave students opportunities to engage meaningfully with language, both as input and output.

## Conclusion

In drawing conclusions from our analysis of the 10 tasks described in some detail in the preceding sections, we start by emphasising that the choices that teachers made in the way they used tasks in their classroom practice were strongly influenced by the contexts in which they worked. Some students were in their first full year of study of the language, where exposure to the language in timetabled classes was no more than several hours per week. We call these students beginners, and note that our definition of beginner may differ from that sometimes used in the literature. For example, the Year 10 students in these classes would not have all been “able to understand and use basic everyday expressions while making conversation on topics related to their personal life,” a definition of “intermediate beginner” adopted by Vandommele et al. (2018, p. 169). The level of language proficiency of the students may explain therefore why most of the teachers used focused tasks requiring the use of preselected language. The use of unfocussed tasks presupposes a language repertoire which these beginner learners had not had the time to develop. Teachers therefore, designed and taught tasks to encourage the comprehension or elicit the production of particular language forms which the students had been previously taught.

We would claim, however, that while the teachers may have designed tasks with the intention that students use preselected language structures, this did not always mean that there was no opportunity for use of unpredicted language. Margaret, for example, designed tasks that required use of the French “imperfect” (Tasks 3 & 4), yet, the data we collected demonstrate that they also allowed for some creativity and unpredictability, thus opening up possibilities for incidental (i.e., the learning of forms not explicitly targeted by the task), as well as intentional, learning (Long et al., 2019). This use of language led to the kind of interactions known to promote language learning: negotiation of meaning, recasts, explicit metalinguistic information, pushing of output and scaffolding. All these interactions took place in a context where learners were using the language as a tool to communicate and thus potentially constructing form-meaning-function relationships that would facilitate acquisition. Another example was Tania (Tasks 1 & 2) who was teaching less proficient students at a lower year level. Her first lesson was planned for preselected language use, while her second lesson, with its focus on having a conversation, was less predictable. Both of Tania’s lessons led to opportunities for language learning as students received elaborated and extended input and explicit metalinguistic information. Both Tania and Margaret joined groups of students as they interacted in the target language, asking them about their real-life experiences, scaffolding their language use, answering queries and providing encouragement.

Another important point to make about these focused tasks is that, even where the use of language was highly predetermined and there was little opportunity for

unpredicted or creative language use, we found evidence of another way in which acquisition was promoted. This was in the opportunities that students had to be exposed to the same language forms repeatedly, both as language input and as language output. We observed tasks that afforded learners the opportunity to encounter the same form-meaning relationships over, and over again, catering to the fact that language learning is a gradual process and that learners need the chance to recycle language if they are to acquire it. Examples were the tasks from Emily's (Tasks 6 & 7) and Toby's (Tasks 9 & 10) classrooms. In both these lesson sequences, students reported that the lesson had afforded them opportunities to revise language they already knew.

Shona, as we have seen, used the notion of task in yet another way. She designed a (target) task at the level of the unit. This task was cognitively demanding, requiring students to solve a Murder Mystery. However, it had students working at completing grammar exercises where meaning was decontextualised, characteristic of a focus on formS approach. Yet the students observed worked assiduously to complete these exercises in order to have the language that they needed to decode key clues (e.g., descriptions of the murder suspects). When they used the language in this way to solve clues, they had the opportunity to engage with contextualised meaning, no longer completing exercises, but rather tasks (Widdowson, 1998). As students alternated between working at situational grammar exercises and tasks, they were moving back and forwards between being language learners and language users. For Shona, the task appears to have had two main functions. Firstly, it was a crucial motivator. At the same time, it provided the communicative outcome, the target task, towards which the students were to work, using language as a tool, as they solved the Murder Mystery. Shona's approach to task could be seen as an example of how the kind of mutually exclusive dimensions that tend to be discussed in much of the literature, for example, meaning or form, accuracy or fluency, are insufficient to account for the pedagogic spaces that lessons such as these afford (Van den Branden, 2009).

One teacher stands out for a different approach that we could claim is more typical of that often represented in TBLT literature. This was Linda, the teacher who had amassed a considerable amount of knowledge about TBLT prior to trying it out in her classroom during TPD. Linda combined TBLT with content-integrated language learning (CLIL). This was, however, in the context of the language classroom, rather than, as is typically the case, through the learning of another subject (Ortega, 2015). The interview data we collected did not provide information for why Linda chose this approach or to what extent it was her consistent approach to language teaching. In Linda's classroom, it is perhaps not surprising then that we did not find evidence of a focused task, nor of preselected domains of language use. Yet, at the same time, we are unable to present evidence that the students in her lesson were afforded more opportunities for language learning than those in the other classrooms we document.

Ellis et al. (2020, p. 1) claim that the essential feature of TBLT is that learners acquire “language incidentally as they engage with language as a meaning-making tool” and that it contrasts with structural approaches where language is “an object to be systematically taught and intentionally learned.” In the lessons observed in this study, the opportunities for language learning were both incidental and intentional. There was evidence of systematic planning on the part of teachers. There was also evidence on the part of learners that they were very aware of their progress as language learners, and that being able to document their progress in terms of the learning that the teachers had planned and intended for them was important (e.g., learning of French imperfect, learning of katakana). Our conclusion, therefore, is that what we observed does not fit neatly with a definition of task and TBLT that discounts the intentional. We see this as a challenge to the way that some (e.g., Ellis et al., 2020) have, therefore, defined the implementation of TBLT (Bygate, 2020).

The crucial contribution that TBLT *did* make to language learning in these lessons was that it replaced a focus on language in isolation with a focus on using language for communicative purposes and thus created opportunities for the formation of form-meaning-function relationships. This also allowed for an emphasis on allowing space for social interaction in the classroom. This is important because it would seem that the opportunity to work with peers is a crucial motivating factor for adolescent learners (Philp et al., 2014). The data in this study showed that learners consistently reported that they liked interacting together and working in groups.

The questionnaire data, where we ascertain what students learnt from the lessons and how they felt about them, demonstrate the diversity of outcomes that can arise from a task. As Breen (1987) describes, a task may have both message or communicative potential and code or metacommunicative potential. This was very evident in this study. In the same lesson, while working on the same task, students reported both communicative outcomes (e.g., finding out facts about their classmates) and code or language outcomes, where they described learning an aspect of language.

We also emphasise the importance of the role that the teachers played as they implemented tasks in their classrooms. The teacher was a crucial interactional partner and conversational supporter, feeding the needs of different students in a variety of ways. We also suggest that it is quite possible that it was the use of a task that required the teacher to adopt this role, and motivated the ways in which they enabled learning opportunities for their students.

We argue, in conclusion, that the data from the lessons described in this chapter demonstrates that the tasks the teachers used created a “rich pedagogical space” (Van den Branden, 2009, p. 264). In this pedagogical space there were many opportunities for language learning. In the next chapter we turn to examine the 10 tasks we describe in this chapter in greater detail. In particular, we explore the types of tasks that these teachers used and the extent to which their practice reflected principles documented, in literature, as consistent with the implementation of TBLT.

