A Model for Scaffolded Technology-Enhanced Oral Communicative Tasks

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Abstract The chapter describes a model for the design and implementation of oral communicative tasks. This task-based language teaching model connects asynchronous and synchronous online language instruction to foster language learning (with a focus on oral communication) through incremental task progressions. The model grew out of professional development innovations and years of pre-pandemic online and remote teaching practices at a large U.S. university. What sets our model apart is the purposeful scaffolding of a series of thematically and linguistically related interactive tasks, enabling students to develop the skills and confidence necessary to engage productively in the core interpersonal task. Specifically, the core interpersonal synchronous task is bookended by two related asynchronous presentational tasks. The model is centered on ensuring optimal use of synchronous time for spontaneous communication between students as they complete a task cycle that accommodates technology-enhanced task-based language teaching (TBLT). A sample lesson on the topic of online furniture shopping and decision making is provided to demonstrate how the model and its task sequence may be implemented. Suggestions for optimizing the model for different instructional contexts and varying pedagogical approaches round out the chapter.

Keywords Oral communicative tasks · Task-based language teaching (TBLT) · Model · Scaffolding · Online teaching

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1 Introduction

In March of 2020, when the pandemic closed down face-to-face classes on university campuses around the world, many U.S. university programs, departments, and instructors scrambled to prepare for the sudden switch to fully online instruction. They turned to their universities and to their instructional technologists for help, who for the most part responded admirably with technology support and pedagogical guidance for Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020).

English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in post-secondary settings struggled perhaps even more than other departments, having had less experience with and a shorter history of online instruction. These programs have historically focused on offering a fully immersive, residential experience to foreign students who wished to study at an US university but didn't yet meet the minimum language proficiency requirement. As such, prior to the pandemic, relatively few university Intensive English Programs (IEPs) had established online programs, due in part to visa requirements which stipulate that international students take in-person courses. Further, teaching and learning languages online requires a nuanced set of skills and tools and a different pedagogical approach (Compton, 2009; Goertler, 2019; Sun, 2011; Van Gorp et al., 2019).

Online education has had a steady enrollment increase across the U.S. since 2002 (Seaman et al., 2018) in many disciplines and, contrary to most ESL programs, some world language programs had established a foothold in the online world since early 2010s. Online instruction for modern language programs (that is, foreign or world languages) began on many campuses as an additional flexible alternative to on-campus instruction, often consisting of just a few sections running parallel to their face-to-face (F2F) or hybrid/blended counterparts (Murphy-Judy & Johnshoy, 2017), with first-year language courses being the most frequent ones offered. Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) instructors (i.e., languages other than Spanish, German and French) had also, by necessity, explored online and blended-synchronous models (Girons & Swinehart, 2020) of language instruction in their efforts to attract sufficient student numbers from across multiple campuses. It was to collaborative initiatives like these, and to Language Centers (LCs) and/or Teaching and Learning Centers (Giupponi et al., 2021), that many university ESL programs turned for guidance even before the pandemic-induced shift and more intensely after.

Out of this guidance came a model for scaffolded technology-enhanced oral communicative tasks connecting asynchronous and synchronous online language instruction through incremental task progressions. This model is the focus of this chapter. After a brief section discussing its origins, we situate the model within the discussion surrounding task-based language teaching and technology mediated tasks. Then, we describe the model in detail and walk the reader through an example sequence of tasks meant to illustrate the features of the model for the design and implementation of oral tasks. We conclude with some considerations for applying the model in various contexts.

2 Model Origins

Answering the urgent need for guidance in principled and intentional online language instruction, Michigan State University's English Language Center (ELC) and Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA) launched the Online Language Teaching (OLT) Initiative (https://olt.cal.msu.edu) in an effort to move language instructors (both ESL and foreign/world languages) beyond stop-gap emergency teaching mode measures. The long-term hope was to reduce faculty skepticism towards the effectiveness of online instruction and to embrace the affordances of flexible online pedagogical approaches.

Importantly, the OLT Initiative aims to tie instructional design expertise to strong language teaching pedagogy while still meeting the day-to-day needs of practitioners. Multiple studies have argued that comparable learning outcomes can be achieved in online language courses (Blake et al., 2008; Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017; Goertler & Gacs, 2018; Grgurović et al., 2013; Isenberg, 2010), but not without significant changes to pedagogy and course design. The way online instructors scaffold learning, offer instructions, model expectations and the language itself, and provide feedback are all necessarily different, requiring new approaches for designing lessons and facilitating language tasks. Decades of research have shown that effective online learning does not just happen; it is the result of intentional instructional design decisions and iterative planning and development (Branch & Dousay, 2015).

Surveys and personal interactions with OLT Initiative participants offered the authors new insights into the needs of university language instructors. Specifically, many language instructors were finding success facilitating presentational speaking exercises using interactive video/audio "discussions" (e.g., Flip, Voicethread) that added interactivity and community building. However, these tasks—with their delayed, asynchronous approach—were often limited to the read or rehearsed language of *presentational* speech. *Interpersonal* activities, requiring real-time processing and negotiation of meaning, were much more difficult to design, especially for those instructors lacking a clear pedagogical model for scaffolding communicative language learning online.

The clarity and urgency of this need to facilitate spontaneous interactions prompted the OLT Initiative to develop an additional advanced course, *Oral Communicative Tasks in Online Language Teaching* (https://olt.cal.msu.edu/oct). This course was designed to help instructors identify best practices for how to execute both synchronous and asynchronous oral communicative presentational and interpersonal language tasks, and to develop scaffolded, incremental task progressions and assessments. The model for the design and implementation of oral tasks presented in this chapter addresses this specific need of the instructors and forms the backbone upon which this course was built. Although this model could be used for all kinds of language tasks (presentational, interpretive, and interpersonal), the focus of this chapter is on oral interpersonal tasks.

3 Task-Based Language Teaching

As tasks are central to the model, we turned to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a prominent approach to language teaching and learning that has also gained some traction in the world of online language learning (González-Lloret, 2016; Guo & Möllering, 2017; Thomas & Reinders, 2012; Ziegler, 2016). TBLT has been around since the 1980s and has become somewhat of an umbrella term. Not unlike communicative language teaching (East, 2021; Thornbury, 2016), different versions of task-based teaching—sometimes referred to as *strong* and *weak* versions of TBLT—have emerged, with the weakest form also labeled *task-supported* language teaching (TSLT; East, 2021; Ellis, 2017). Strong interpretations of TBLT (Long, 2015) call for a fully task-driven curriculum based on needs analysis and tasks that feature no predetermined language focus. However, most of the university IEP and modern language instructors we encountered were working within the framework of sequenced courses that featured preset curriculum with specific associated language outcomes. Therefore, these language instructors often prefer task-supported curricula, which allow for specific vocabulary and grammar to be first introduced and then practiced under more authentic task conditions. Indeed, González-Lloret and Ortega (2014) note that in most F2F classes, instructors might introduce tasks sporadically, but they do not consistently design complete courses around tasks. In that sense and for these instructors, task-supported language teaching is typically focus-on-forms teaching, where tasks are used to practice predetermined grammatical structures (Long & Robinson, 1998); these grammatical structures may first be introduced explicitly following a traditional Presentation-Production-Practice (PPP) paradigm.

Nevertheless, our interactions with instructors led us to conclude that many instructors want the authenticity and the real-world outcome-focused approach of task-centered online learning, but need the flexibility of a model that fits into their curricular paradigm and allows for tasks designed to elicit the use of particular lexical items or grammar structures. While some focus on these items and structures may be pre-selected, instructors are looking to replace decontextualized isolated language practice (i.e., the typical exercises in the Production phase of PPP) with task preparation and performance where students need to rely on whatever language they have at their disposal (González-Lloret, 2020), or their own linguistic resources, as Ellis (2003) puts it, aligning themselves with a stronger task-based approach. Students' actual language use further informs the follow-up language analysis and feedback.

4 Defining Technology-Mediated Tasks

The definition of *task* adopted in this chapter follows those of González-Lloret and Ortega (2014) and González-Lloret (2020). Technology-mediated tasks:

1. *focus primarily on meaning*. Learners are engaged with the task and its overall content and outcome and not preoccupied with using certain linguistic forms or structure.
2. *are goal oriented*. There is a goal and communicative purpose to the task itself that requires negotiation and an open outcome that can be reported back, and not just the display of rehearsed language.
3. *are learner centered*. The task addresses learners' needs and wants, based on some form of needs analysis; the task engages learners' linguistic and nonlinguistic resources in addition to their digital skills, creating a flexible and diverse task process that fosters language learning opportunities for all learners.
4. *are as authentic and representative of the real world as possible*. The task draws on real-world processes of language use, that is, allowing learners to connect form, meaning and function.
5. *are opportunities for reflective learning.* Through its experiential and open nature, the task affords learners opportunities for reflective learning.
6. *promote true collaboration and learner interaction*. The task should facilitate collaborative work and peer interaction using technology effectively and efficiently.

As the definition of *task* is central to TBLT and to a good understanding of what a technology-mediated task is, it is important to clearly distinguish a *task* from a *non-task* or classroom *activity*. The definition of *technology-mediated* tasks seems simple and clear enough; however, putting theory into practice always leads to reinterpretations. Furthermore, as TBLT became popular, instructors and textbooks alike increasingly began adopting the term "task" to rebrand their old classroom activities. To avoid the conflation of terms, we would like to differentiate language *activities* from *tasks* with an example that we used in the Oral Communicative Tasks course and that our students found clarifying.

What differentiates the task example from the activity example in Table 1 is a clear real-life purpose (meeting criteria 2, 3 and 4; deciding on the right gift and finding it online versus an ill-defined reason for talking about family members) and a sustained focus on meaning (criterion 1; without an explicit, pre-planned focus on grammatical structures or vocabulary, focusing on form only if a student requests

Table 1 Activity versus task

Activity	Task
Students describe their family members' and/or friends' interests. The goal is to practice certain structures (*she likes/dislikes*; *her hobby is...*) and vocabulary (family relations, hobbies), but the activity does not go beyond that. Students might conduct interviews and present on their own or others' families.	Students share birthdays that are coming up in their family/circle of friends within the next few weeks or months. They describe these people and their interests/hobbies to their partner and ask for advice about what gifts to buy them. Next, students discuss where to buy the suggested gifts online, visiting relevant shopping sites and selecting items. Afterwards, the students present their choices to the class and reflect with the teacher on the decision-making process.

it). Through collaborating with classmates, students receive more varied suggestions for presents (criterion 6; welcoming advice in a real two-way flow of information task versus a "sterile" description of family members in what is actually a one-way flow of information activity). Finally, the students get the opportunity to reflect on their decision-making process together with their peers and the teacher and may receive feedback from the teacher on both process and outcome (criterion 5).

5 Existing Technology-Mediated TBLT Models

Building on the work of González-Lloret and Ortega (2014), Baralt and Morcillo Gómez (2017) were among the first to create a methodological framework to train teachers to facilitate TBLT online. They adapted Willis' (1998, 2012) framework of pre-task, task cycle (task, planning, report), and post-task language focus (analysis and practice) for online synchronous video-based interaction. To apply the Willis' framework online, Baralt and Morcillo Gómez (2017) moved the report stage of the task cycle as well as the analysis stage of the language focus to a video-based online meeting; the other phases (pre-task, task and planning in the task cycle, and practice in the language focus phase) were done individually by the learner at home. By providing pedagogical guidance for teachers to lead technology-mediated tasks online and illustrating how socialization and community building can be achieved following Willis' TBLT methodology framework, Baralt and Morcillo Gómez (2017) made an important contribution to technology-mediated TBLT and showed how tasks can be applied to synchronous classroom interaction.

However, the Baralt and Morcillo Gómez (2017) TBLT model and their examples feature primarily *presentational* tasks and smaller groups of two to four students. As pointed out earlier, the pandemic and OLT course evaluations identified the need for more *interpersonal* communication tasks and a more comprehensive, adaptable model meeting the diverse needs of language instructors and their students, especially as class sizes for online language classes were expected to remain close to their F2F counterparts or even increase in many cases. While online language classes before the pandemic were usually capped lower than F2F or hybrid sections to account for technology limitations, manageable classroom community, and more individual meaningful feedback, there have also been cases of larger online language classes for budgetary reasons (Russell & Curtis, 2013). In our experience and through feedback from our course participants, we would argue that the following model is best suited to online sections of 12 to 16 students.

6 Model for Scaffolded Technology-Enhanced Oral Communicative Tasks

Here, we introduce our model for scaffolded technology-enhanced oral communicative tasks. After laying out the model briefly in table format, we describe the model by offering an annotated sample lesson. A discussion of model flexibility and additional considerations follows.

At the center of our model for scaffolded technology-enhanced oral communicative tasks lies an interpersonal task, the cornerstone of an online module or unit. This objective-driven core task demands spontaneous, negotiated interaction from students and is mediated via synchronous telecommunication. This core task centers around an extended small group communicative exchange during which students complete a given task together in breakout rooms. Beforehand, the instructor facilitates a warmup and modeling session, and afterwards students have a chance to engage in a live debrief and reflection.

One key feature of this instructional design model is its carefully sequenced interplay between the synchronous and asynchronous modalities and the different ACTFL modes of communication (See Table 2). Specifically, the core interpersonal synchronous task in our model is bookended by two related asynchronous presentational tasks. The preceding task is both thematically and linguistically linked to the core task, while its asynchronous and presentational nature allows students ample time to plan, rehearse, and—importantly—to receive feedback from the instructor (and/or peers). Likewise, the subsequent asynchronous reporting task allows further relevant language use and opportunity for reflection, peer and self-evaluation, and instructor feedback.

What sets our model apart is the purposeful scaffolding of a series of related interactive tasks, enabling students to develop the skills and confidence necessary to engage productively in the core interpersonal task. During the preliminary task, students can be exposed to language models, interact with each other asynchronously, and receive instructor (and/or peer) feedback. Our model extends the post-task reporting phase, as well, to include a follow-up asynchronous reporting task

Table 2 Model for scaffolded technology-enhanced oral communicative tasks

Preliminary task	Core task	Follow-up task
Asynchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous
1. **Instructions and modeling** (e.g., asynchronous video discussion tool, prompt, and example post) 2. **Preliminary presentational task and peer responses** (e.g., asynchronous video discussion tool)	1. **Task instructions and modeling** (e.g., meeting platform, main room) 2. **Task completion** (e.g., meeting platform, breakout rooms) 3. **Debrief and follow-up task instructions and modeling**(e.g., meeting platform, main room)	1. **Follow-up presentational task and peer response** (e.g., asynchronous video discussion tool, prompt, and example post) 2. **[Optional] interactive delayed feedback video**

that similarly features sample models, interactivity, and opportunities for feedback. In a sense, our model provides structure for extending the application of the task *cycle* to a larger instructional design unit, creating a seamless task *series* that can be readily facilitated in an online teaching modality. The task progression we outline in our model comprises more than a single instructional contact hour and should be considered as a possible sequence typical in a hybrid/blended or bichronous class (Martin et al., 2020). The preliminary or follow-up tasks would be independently completed by students before and after the synchronous engagement as a whole class. The sequence could last from 3 days to a whole week, as we also realize that some programs have limited time to infuse their curriculum with such an expanded series of task sequences. It would be possible to focus on the core task alone with slightly modified setup and follow up, especially if the contact hour is longer than the typical 50 minutes of language classes.

7 Online TBLT Example Lesson Following the Model

7.1 Curricular Context

Following the description of our model for the design and implementation of oral tasks, we now offer a detailed sample lesson as an illustration for how the model could be implemented. To situate our sample lesson in a realistic context, we begin with a set of curricular goals, in our case patterned after ACTFL's (2021) Proficiency Benchmarks and Performance Indicators, as these can be applied to both second and foreign language learning contexts.

Lessons do not exist in a vacuum but are delivered in a sequence within the context of larger curricular units. Our example lesson is no exception. While this task series centers on oral communicative tasks and does not explicitly dictate what types of initial language learning might need to precede it, the nature of the oral tasks assumes that students come to the task with some background knowledge and language. The cornerstone synchronous task of this lesson, which involves groups of students searching through shopping websites in the target language and negotiating the selection of home decor or furniture items to suit personal tastes, assumes that students have an understanding of how online shopping and meeting platform collaboration works, and some ability to recognize and use language for furniture, to express likes and dislikes, and to offer simple praise and advice. Intentionally designed online courses that are not completely task-based may have some materials pre-developed by instructors (using tools such as vocabulary learning apps, interactive lesson authoring software, and video-based formative quizzes) for asynchronous preparatory work to be completed by students independently.

7.2 Course-Level and Module-Level Objectives (CLOs and MLOs)

The following are the course- and module-level objectives (in form of Can-Do-Statements from ACTFL's Proficiency Benchmarks and Performance Indicators) (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], 2017) targeted in the example lesson that we describe in detail below.

Course-Level Objectives (CLOs): Novice-High Can-Do Statements

- (CLO 1: Presentational) I can express my preferences on familiar and everyday topics of interest, using simple sentences most of the time.
- (CLO 2: Interpersonal) I can express, ask about, and react to preferences, feelings, or opinions on familiar topics, using simple sentences most of the time and asking questions to keep the conversation on topic.

Module-Level Objectives (MLOs): Novice-High Can-Do Statements

- MLO 1: I can identify and describe simple details about my environment and discuss my possessions. (CLO 1)
- MLO 2: I can describe and explain personal preferences related to furniture and household items and my reasons for my preferences. (CLO 1)
- MLO 3: I can ask and answer questions about furniture and household item preferences and my reasons. (CLO 2)
- MLO 4: I can ask for and offer advice regarding making decisions and purchases. (CLO 2) (Table 3)

7.3 Preliminary Asynchronous Task: Presentation of a Favorite Location and Items

In the day(s) before the synchronous session, via an asynchronous video discussion tool, students use their devices to record a 1- to 2-minute "tour" of one room of their house, apartment, dorm room, favorite study spot, or other location. (Describing a room while annotating a digital photo of the room—circling pieces of furniture, drawing arrows, and/or adding text annotation—would be a viable alternative.) As they record, students should describe the furniture and decorations they have, identifying which items are their favorite and least favorite items and why, and what may be missing from their rooms. Students might already browse a target language website (from a curated list provided by the instructor) for possible room upgrades or changes and share some items they've added to their virtual shopping carts. By doing so, students not only set the scene for the core task thematically, but also at least partially prepare themselves for the linguistic and discourse demands of the core task (e.g., describing their room, identifying favorite items, suggesting new items) by engaging with linguistic and external resources like the target language website, dictionaries and so on. Students then reply to three or more classmates with

Table 3 Example lesson applied to the model

Preliminary task	Core task	Follow-up task
Asynchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Instructions and modeling T posts prompt in LMS. T offers sample posts and example replies within asynchronous video discussion tool. **Preliminary presentational task and peer responses** Ss record a tour of their room (highlighting favorite & desired/needed items). Ss reply to others' posts with video comments and compliments.	**Task instructions and modeling** T facilitates student-centered vocabulary warm-up. T introduces the task (instructions, outcomes, modeling). Ss ask clarification questions. **Task completion** T opens breakout rooms. Ss review preliminary task results and desired/needed items. Ss negotiate search results via screensharing, selecting possible items based on their budgets, tastes, and preferences. Ss capture screenshots of top two favorite purchase options, pasting them into the Google slide deck. T monitors group progress via the slide deck, using it to inform breakout room visits. **Debrief and follow-up task instructions and modeling** Ss reflect and/or report on task outcome and challenges encountered. T highlights linguistic patterns (and/or errors). T introduces and models the follow-up task.	**Follow-up presentational task and peer responses** Ss report their top two choices selected from peers' suggestions within asynchronous video discussion tool. Ss explain how well these choices would meet their criteria of suitability and affordability. Ss invite peers to help them decide which item to purchase. Ss reply to others' posts with advice. **See additional follow-up ideas in 7.8**

video comments and compliments of 30 seconds to 1 minute, offering suggestions with URLs to specific suggested items. By doing so, they activate the language (e.g., offering suggestions) they will need to engage in a dialogue with other students in the synchronous core task to come. Asynchronous output-based tasks like this afford students planning time and self-reflection opportunities, provide them with various peer input, and generally activate and scaffold the language use necessary to be successful in the synchronous speaking task to come.

7.4 Accompanying Task Support and Live Session Document

Via the course LMS, the instructor shares with the students an interactive session document, in this case perhaps a Google slide deck. This interactive document allows relevant session content—agenda, task descriptions, resources/links, embedded video examples, etc.—to be available to students before the synchronous session (for task preparation), during the session (for reference, as needed), and after the session lesson (for review). For example, the instructor may embed a video of their own example of two people completing the core task for students to view asynchronously, prior to the session. But with the video already linked or embedded into the slide deck, it would be available for review within the session itself, as needed, via screen sharing. Further, links to target language shopping websites could be collected in this document as well, affording instructors a convenient way to curate and share these links while allowing students the opportunity to investigate them prior to the lesson. Depending on the instructor's pedagogical preferences, relevant vocabulary or grammar structures may be added to this document, allowing students the opportunity to engage with them prior to class and/or revisit them as a resource during the session itself. Links to the preliminary asynchronous video discussion task (and/or other preliminary tasks) might also be included for the sake of continuity within this task series.

7.5 Core Task Synchronous Session: Online Shopping and Advice Giving (50 min)

1. **Welcome** and Warm-up (Main Room, ~10 min.)
   The main focus of the initial part of the session is for the instructor to facilitate a student-centered warm-up activity that invites students to gather/recall relevant lexical phrases used in the preliminary task. Students might share these verbally and/or add them to a slide within the session document, to a virtual whiteboard, or to the chat. The instructor might mention highlights from the asynchronous videos or recognize common threads from among responses before easing into the main task.
2. Task Instructions and Modeling (Main Room, ~5 min)
   Building upon the preliminary asynchronous task, the core synchronous task (to be completed in groups of three in breakout rooms) asks students to visit online stores (in the target language) and select items for the redecorating of their various rooms. To facilitate this, the instructor shares relevant links to online stores (e.g., the IKEA webpage in the target language), explains the task prompt (to ask for and receive suggestions for items to purchase for redecorating), identifies the required outcome (screenshots of their top two choices in their online shopping carts or URLs of their top two selected items), and models how students might collaborate to complete the task by acting out the roles or by playing

a sample video. (e.g., *Which lamp should I get? I think you should get an LED lamp because… Is there a cheaper model? What about this one? Ooh yeah! And that one matches the colors in your room! Etc.*).

During the modeling or sample video, the instructor might ask students to note down useful phrases they hear, or following the model, the instructor might elicit suggestions for additional or alternative phrases from students, collecting expressions in the chat or on a virtual whiteboard and transferring them to the session document. Depending on their pedagogical approach, some instructors might refrain from any explicit focus on form; others may choose to review or highlight particular structures and useful lexical phrases through input enhancement and make that information available during breakout rooms by including it in the shared session document. Students are invited to comment and ask clarification questions before moving to breakout rooms. By modeling the task process and helping students notice some of the discourse demands of the task (e.g., questions, suggestions, comparisons, etc.), the instructor builds on the language the students already activated in the pre-task and scaffolds the students' upcoming task performance.

3. **Task Completion** (Breakout Rooms, ~20 min)

In their groups of three, students first review (or repeat) highlights of the short video "tour" (or show an image to save time) of the room of their house, apartment, or other location that they're thinking of redecorating (because they may be partnered with students other than those they interacted with in the preliminary asynchronous video assignment). They may also report some comments or item suggestions they had already received. The similarity between the preliminary asynchronous task and the first part of this synchronous task is intentional; it can help students gain confidence and develop fluency, as well as impact the complexity and accuracy of their language use in a positive way. It also allows students to incorporate feedback and suggestions received from their peers or their instructor. This step could be omitted due to time constraints when planning the session, as instructors can best estimate the time their students may take with the core task.

Then, taking turns screen sharing (limited to 3–5 minutes each), students visit relevant shopping pages in the target language (e.g., the IKEA webpages for bedroom furniture, living room decor, or home office accessories). Students could already have a few pre-loaded tabs or a list of URLs for specific products or product categories from the preliminary task, especially if websites need to be displayed in the target language and may not by default. During this interaction phase, students are engaged with the task at hand: helping each other select the best item(s) for their rooms based on their budgets, tastes, and preferences. For many students this may be the most challenging phase of the task as it requires active listening, extended turns, and following up on their partners' ideas. This last step is especially important to emphasize, as students should not be passive listeners awaiting their turn to screen share but be active participants. Not only should they follow up with questions and reactions, but they might also take notes, react via emoticons, or type suggestions in the chat. Again, the outcome

they must achieve is the gathering of screenshots or URLs for their top ***two*** choices of the pieces of furniture or decor items that might be most suitable and affordable (i.e., the task completion criterion). Students should keep a record of what items they're considering, by gathering items and prices, cutting and pasting URLs, or—most authentically—adding items to their digital "shopping carts" and screen capturing them. They need to agree on which group member(s) would be gathering that info while another shares their screen. Separate session document slides might be prepared for each group ahead of time, into which students could copy and paste their shopping cart screenshots to offer evidence that they have completed the real-world outcome of the task before leaving the breakout room.

As desired, students might also be asked to record these breakout room interactions and submit video links to their instructor. Guided self- and peer evaluations and instructor feedback on these recorded sessions can be invaluable and may provide students greater motivation to remain on task and in the target language. Throughout the task completion stage, the instructor might visit various breakout rooms, listening in, perhaps with microphone and camera turned off for minimal interruption, or occasionally offering encouragement through nonverbal reactions or formative feedback and error correction via chat or audio/video, as deemed necessary. The instructor can inform their breakout room visits by monitoring student progress in the shared interactive session document.

4. Debrief and Follow-up Task Instructions and Modeling (Main Room, ~10 min)

After students return from breakout rooms, the instructor reviews the previous task, perhaps inviting students to report back on highlights from their group discussion and identify challenges (linguistic, personal, technological) they may have encountered when completing the task. This may be difficult to do in the target language for Novice High speakers, so the instructor could help by sharing a quick poll with simple L2 statements to react to. The instructor might also identify patterns of errors or particularly helpful strategies they observed in the breakout rooms. If the instructor plans to create a follow-up video to address a relevant language focus or observed error patterns—one of the optional follow-up strategies in our model (see 7.8 below)—the instructor would want to introduce that here and remind students where and when to look for that video.

The instructor must reserve enough time to introduce the follow-up task or, alternatively, direct students to view a pre-recorded video with the follow-up task instructions, the latter option freeing up more synchronous class time for student questions or reporting. Keeping with a focus on oral communication, for this follow-up task, each student must once again use the same asynchronous video discussion tool used earlier, this time to record a video identifying (a) the general item or piece of furniture they were looking for and (b) the top two choices that they selected from all the suggestions received during pre-task and core task, and (c) explaining how well these choices met their criteria of suitability and affordability. Then, the instructor should model this reporting task, post a video modeling it, and/or embed it in the session document. Students are invited to comment

and ask questions, or may be asked to fill out a brief reflective exit questionnaire before leaving the Zoom session, and are reminded of Office Hours availability.

7.6 Post-session Instructions

Updated resources should be posted to the interactive session document available to students, including in it any relevant content from the saved chat log from the synchronous session. Links to the follow-up asynchronous video discussion task, along with LMS link to the recording of the synchronous (main room) session (as desired), should be included within this document. Depending on the instructor's pedagogical preferences, links to relevant content or language that emerged during the session may be added, affording students the opportunity to revisit them in a timely fashion. Given that these documents are editable by all, instructors might want to encourage further student contributions.

7.7 Post-session Asynchronous Follow-Up Task: Helping with and Making the Final Purchase Decision

Using the asynchronous video discussion tool's image sharing or screen recording features, students share the shopping cart images of their top two choices and offer their classmates the pros and cons of each item, according to the criteria of suitability and affordability. Each student's report should end with a request for advice from their classmates regarding which of the two pieces of furniture they should purchase. This follow-up task might be due the day following the synchronous session. Students would then be given an additional day to reply to three or more classmates' posts, offering their purchase advice and rationale by means of the asynchronous video tool's comment feature. This asynchronous task extends the task scope and increases students' language production without requiring additional class time, and the request for advice and subsequent recommendations provide the meaningful purpose for an authentic, real-world task.

7.8 Additional Follow-Up Ideas to the Core Synchronous Task

- The instructor leads a meaning-focused review of the task upon the core task completion in the main room by reviewing some of the results (website screen shots) together with students, eliciting comments and clarification questions from all. Such a step helps in identifying trends in students' decisions, or in highlighting particularly unique or interesting selections. This also allows the

instructor another opportunity to focus on relevant structures and strong language use in a meaningful context, offering students additional input opportunities and repeated exposures to targeted language or speech acts.

- The instructor prepares and shares a delayed feedback video that has a language focus (Willis, 1998, 2012). The video might generalize the most frequently occurring language errors generated by students during the synchronous session, offering more concise, more accurate, or more commonly used wordings. The video might also feature visual input enhancement to make more salient excerpts of student utterances that modeled particularly effective use of appropriate language structures. When feasible, interactive video with strategically timed review questions or embedded exercises should be used to increase student engagement.
- Students repeat a similar task with a different partner after practicing additional words, phrases, or patterns highlighted in the follow-up feedback video in order to add complexity, build fluency, and gain confidence.
- The instructor offers asynchronous practice activities that lead students to practice—in speech or in writing—the new words, phrases, or patterns highlighted in the above delayed feedback video.

8 Additional Considerations

8.1 Language Focus

The flexibility of our model facilitates multiple approaches to focusing on language, allowing various placements of and roles for language focus, as illustrated above in the diverse way teachers and students can use the session document. Whereas most instructors would agree that focus on form is important, how the instructor chooses to focus on form (Doughty & Long, 2003) is a matter of pedagogical preference. A strong version of TBLT (Long, 2015) avoids a predetermined language focus, only addressing language structures and vocabulary as they arise and are needed for task completion. However, as Long (2015) points out, how focus on form is realized in the classroom is best left to the teacher. Teachers have multiple pedagogical procedures at their disposal. There is not a universal pedagogical approach that fits each instructional context.

In the context of synchronous online instruction, with larger classes divided into simultaneously meeting breakout rooms, immediate "just in time" language focus isn't always feasible or practical. Further, for a fully online course that balances asynchronous and synchronous instruction, there are likely ample asynchronous class materials or textbook content that may already prompt students to engage with certain language forms prior to videoconferencing. In order to accommodate this, the model allows for multiple approaches to language focus.

As above, when we noted in 7.1 that preliminary input-based independent learning activities would reflect the instructor's pedagogical preferences, here we suggest that multiple language focus approaches might be applied to our model:

- Advocates of strong TBLT might suggest that the instructor monitor breakout room activity, addressing language, noting student interactions in order to highlight effective language use, common errors, or alternatives that would allow students to more effectively complete the task. A more careful but more time-intensive option would be for breakout room tasks to be recorded and then reviewed by the instructor; this would lead to more informed teacher-created delayed-feedback instruction video. But this practice might be too time consuming in some instructional contexts, especially with large class sizes.
- A more traditional pedagogical approach might feature the instructor exposing students to multiple authentic or textbook prepared readings or dialogs that feature relevant language structures, pre-teaching the textbook chapter's language focus content, or anticipating their students' lexical and grammatical needs and preemptively offering instruction via flipped-learning instructional videos and materials.
- Others may take elements of both approaches: pre-teaching targeted elements but also using analysis of student interaction during the synchronous session task to guide and inform additional post-task language focus videos or activities.

In short, instructors should be free to move between task-*based* and task-*supported* language teaching (Ellis, 2019), and our model accommodates this movement.

8.2 Assessment

Just as the model itself allows for flexibility in the implementation of this task sequence, there are likewise various options for assessing student performance. First and foremost, we believe that students completing this task sequence would benefit most from ongoing formative feedback by the instructor and/or peers. Some instructor feedback could be offered asynchronously by means of comments (video or text-based) on the preliminary and/or follow-up task video recordings. For the synchronous core task, the instructor might choose to briefly visit each breakout room during the live session, participating meaningfully in the conversation, offering suggestions via chat, or simply observing in order to give delayed feedback.

Another option is to consider the synchronous part of the main task performance (especially if it can be recorded) as a component of regular class participation and use whatever rubric one regularly uses to evaluate class participation. In similar fashion, the preliminary and follow-up presentational tasks may be assessed as part of one's homework or asynchronous work grade. Another viable option would be to chart progress through the entire task sequence via a single task-dependent or task-specific rubric, focusing on task completion, language use and interaction, as seen in Table 4.

If recording the core task in breakout rooms is not desirable or feasible, the instructor might distribute self- or peer assessment forms or surveys to be completed immediately after the main class session or upon completion of the task sequence. Conversely, if the core task is recorded, some instructors may prefer to conduct a more language-focused assessment of the core task, using rubrics developed or adapted for assessing interpersonal communication with criteria that may include comprehensibility, language control, vocabulary use, etc. Likewise, rubrics developed or adapted for assessing presentational communication could be used to facilitate language-focused assessment of the asynchronous preliminary and/or follow-up tasks.

8.3 Hybrid Course Adaptation

For instructors whose classroom format changes semester to semester, the Model for Scaffolded Technology-Enhanced Oral Communicative Tasks offers an easy adaptation to other modalities. With almost no alterations, it can be applied to hybrid teaching, with face-to-face sessions substituting for the Synchronous portion of the Task Cycle. Students prepare for the face-to-face class by means of asynchronous interpretive and presentational language activities and tasks. During the face-to-face class, they participate in the oral interpersonal task with group members gathering around a shared laptop or tablet in the classroom (in a bring-your-own-device setting) or around a desktop computer in a computer lab. Following the synchronous session, they complete additional follow-up activities, again in an asynchronous modality.

8.4 Time

Time flexibility is also an important consideration for our model. Typical language classes may meet for 45–60 minutes for each credit hour, and the way these hours could be conceptualized for online or remote delivery may vary considerably in the ratio between asynchronous and synchronous elements. Synchronous time, in fact, becomes just one building block, and one has to carefully plan and estimate the overall time that various instructional activities (tutorials, vocabulary apps, interactive quizzes, asynchronous communication platforms, etc.) would take in order to keep within the allotted credit hour requirements (e.g., 2 hours outside of class for each credit hour = 12 hours of engagement for a four-credit class). Some courses may also feature sessions that meet for a longer duration, so the above model can be adapted for a 60- to 90-minute meeting by extending the preparation and breakout room/debriefing periods.

Table 4 Task-dependent rubric for complete sequence assessment

	Criteria	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Does not yet meet expectations
Preliminary asynchronous task: Presentation of a favorite location and items	**Task completion Language use Interaction**	Video "tour," posted by the due date, is creative, engaging, and of expected length Comprehensible, not read from a script; attempts to connect sentences and use new vocabulary More than the required number of meaningful comments left for others, as specified in task instructions	Video "tour," posted by the due date, is of expected length Comprehensible, not read from a script; features simple sentences and some memorized phrases Required number of meaningful comments left for others, as specified in task instructions	Video "tour" is not posted by due date and/or not of expected length May be difficult to understand or read from a script Comments left for others are fewer in number and/or less relevant or meaningful
Core task: Synchronous session: Online shopping and advice giving	**Task completion Language use Interaction**	Virtual cart screenshots and URLs of top two affordable and suitable furniture/decor items pasted into the session doc by the end of the task Comprehensible and pragmatically appropriate TL production Actively asks and answers questions, offers suggestions, reacts to others' ideas, and helps maintain on-task group interaction	URLs of top two affordable and suitable furniture/decor items pasted into the session doc by the end of the task Adequate comprehensible TL production; some less appropriate TL production Asks and answers questions, offers suggestions, and remains on task	Screenshots/URLs of two furniture/decor items are incomplete or not present in the session doc by the end of the task Language is difficult to understand; insufficient TL production Participates passively or minimally; may engage in off-task interactions

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

	Criteria	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Does not yet meet expectations
Post-session asynchronous follow-up task: Helping with and making the final purchase decision	**Task completion** **Language use** **Interaction**	Video addressing suitability and affordability of top two choices, posted by the due date, is of expected length, creative, and engaging Comprehensible, not read from a script; attempts to connect sentences and use new vocabulary More than the required number of meaningful comments left for others, as specified in task instructions	Video of two choices, posted by the due date, is of expected length; may not fully address criteria of affordability and suitability Comprehensible, not read from a script; features simple sentences and some memorized phrases Required number of meaningful comments left for others, as specified in task instructions	Video not posted by due date or not of expected length; may not fully explain criteria of affordability or suitability May be difficult to understand or read from a script Comments left for others are fewer in number and/or less relevant or meaningful

Our model highlights and builds towards the cornerstone synchronous task as well as builds upon it and could be offered in several weekly configurations, including the following:

- Mon, Tues asynchronous; Wed synchronous; Thurs, Fri asynchronous
- Mon, Wed, Fri asynchronous; Tues, Thurs synchronous

8.5 Tools and Platforms

To meet the needs of the greatest number of language instructors, our example lesson above reflects the technology affordances and limitations of the most commonly used online synchronous teaching platform for our core task: Zoom. Other video conferencing platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, enable the creation of permanent spaces, or channels, that allow students to stay connected with their group members even after the synchronous task concludes. These channels can also be pedagogically exploited by the instructor for the sharing of resources and asynchronous task content, offering solutions for better connecting synchronous and asynchronous tasks and maintaining momentum throughout a task series.

Other platforms, known as proximity-based virtual platforms (e.g., SpatialChat, Gather), offer other affordances within the virtual synchronous meeting space. With proximity-based virtual platforms, users can navigate the instructor-created virtual space freely and have conversations in groups, with audio volume (and/or video

feeds) decreasing the farther one user is from another, allowing for multiple groups within a single space. This feature allows students to form and change groups, or even freely mingle, thereby making better use of class time and increasing the breadth of task types that can be facilitated. Further, the proximity feature enables instructors to navigate more easily between and among small groups in order to monitor participation, offer feedback, and note patterns in students' language errors or examples of effective language use.

In short, language instructors should explore the unique affordances of all available online meeting platforms in order to determine what platform is best suited to their particular approach and needs. Of course, most instructors will be tied to what platform their institution centrally approves, contracts with, or supports, and would need to keep student data privacy and accessibility guidelines for these tools in mind. It should also be noted that video conferencing platforms regularly add new features, and even slight changes to functionality can lead to significant affordances in pedagogical practice. Examples include self-selection for breakout rooms (Zoom 5.3.0), sharing instructor screen directly into active breakout rooms (Zoom 5.7.0), and integrated apps directly launching in the meeting platform (Teams first, Zoom 5.7.3).

9 Conclusion

This chapter describes a task-based model for the design and implementation of oral tasks that is designed to help language instructors scaffold instruction by capitalizing on the strengths of both synchronous and asynchronous modes. Synchronous sessions continue to be an essential part of language teaching and learning, and using a model such as ours can help practitioners continue to center their instruction around synchronous interactions without relying solely on what is afforded by the synchronous mode. By properly sequencing synchronous and asynchronous modes, language instructors can effectively and seamlessly increase students' time on task, use synchronous class time more efficiently, sustain interest by adding variety and continuity, and scaffold students' language use and development.

While many instructors are seeking ways to increase and improve the interpersonal tasks in their courses, few are at liberty to make sweeping curricular changes. Thus, the authors suggest a gradual introduction of this model, as certainly not every synchronous session needs to be structured the way this model suggests. Further, the breakout room tasks featured in this model require a certain level of willingness to sustain communication in the target language, digital literacy, and agency from the students—traits and skills that may first need to be cultivated. Instructors might add one or two integrated task series per semester, scaffolding development by starting with simpler tasks and then increasing complexity, staying mindful of how students respond. With careful piloting, instructor reflection, and feedback from students, practitioners can realistically integrate these task series and perfect them over several semesters.

While the design of the model is informed by empirical research, thorough integration of the model has not yet been implemented or empirically tested. At this point, the impetus for and content of the model comes from the authors' experiences as instructors and curriculum developers, as well as from feedback from both novice and experienced practitioners reflecting on their experiences as online language instructors. The model has been applied to individual task series but has not yet informed course design. The selection of tasks has been based on instructors' professional experience, curriculum fit, and perception of students' needs, rather than a carefully designed needs analysis, and a principled sequencing and grading of core tasks.[1] Therefore, what a course based on this task-based model would look like is still an open question. We invite practitioners and researchers to investigate the role of this and similar task-based models in online language pedagogy. In the end, it is how teachers implement these models and what students do with tasks that fuels language learning. As the model allows for a lot of flexibility and may be adapted to teacher preferences, comparing how different 'focus on form' approaches are adopted by instructors and received by students in different contexts might be the focus of further research. More generally, comparing task-supported versions of the model to task-based versions might provide insights in what works best for whom and may contribute both to the development of TBLT as a researched pedagogy (Samuda et al., 2018) and to the development and use of technology-mediated tasks in language teaching.

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[1] As neither Robinson's nor Skehan's theory of task complexity and sequencing (i.e., Skehan's Limited Attention Capacity Hypothesis (Skehan, 2015, 2018) and Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson, 2011) and SSARC (Simple, Stable, Automatization, Restructuring) model (Robinson, 2015)—the two most comprehensive cognitive theories about how to sequence pedagogic tasks—have been empirically validated to the extent that they can be used for principled syllabus design, the onus on sequencing and grading tasks is still on the instructor (see Long, 2015; Ellis, 2017).

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