Examination of task-based language learning methods on high school students' oral proficiency in French as a foreign language

Emily Erickson-Betz

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ABSTRACT

EXAMINATION OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING METHODS ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ORAL PROFICIENCY IN FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Emily Erickson-Betz, EdD
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Northern Illinois University, 2018
Dr. Eui-kyung Shin, Director

This mixed methods study examines the difference in high school foreign language learners’ acquisition of French oral proficiency skills by types of task. This study also examines the roles of the student learners and the teacher in developing oral proficiency skills during two different types of tasks in the high school foreign language classroom, namely the power of the social interactions between learner groups and between learners and teacher in developing oral proficiency. Over the course of an eight-week unit of study, three participating French 2 classes and one participating French teacher completed a prescribed series of speaking tasks. Class one completed only information gap tasks. Class two completed only dictogloss tasks. Class three alternated each task types every other week. Learner pre- and post-test scores were collected from the World Languages Department’s speaking test for the unit. ANOVA was conducted using the quantitative data collected. While no significant differences were present between classes, qualitative findings indicate that the learners and the teacher have created powerful constructs of learning and that students were able to progress conversational skills across a unit of study. Teacher interviews, classroom observations, and video transcripts display the scaffolding of learning inside the classroom and lend insight to the roles of the learners and the teacher in the development of high school foreign language learner oral proficiency skills. The
findings of the study suggest that the tasks, implemented through social interactions in the classroom, and constructed by the teacher’s purposeful design, support foreign language learner oral proficiency development. The manner in which the participating teacher in this study implemented the taught curriculum demonstrates the influence of scaffolding, support systems, and the ability of learners to take ownership over their learning.
EXAMINATION OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING METHODS ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ORAL PROFICIENCY IN FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BY

EMILY ERICKSON-BETZ
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Doctoral Director:
Dr. Eui-kyung Shin
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the extensive support of family, friends, colleagues, and my dissertation chair, Dr. Eui-Kyung Shin.

I would like to specifically acknowledge my family. I am grateful to my husband, Adam, for his steady and uncomplaining willingness to support my goal to complete this study. Over the last several years, he has been available to our children when I have been immersed in the writing process. Adam has never questioned my desire to accomplish the goals this paper represents and has steadily made every possible effort to support my hectic schedule as I have worked to complete my research and writing. Without him, this final product would not have been possible.

To my parents, Pat and Gary, thank you for all of the hours spent with the kids, for driving them to and from their events, for helping to care for them from their first days of life as I returned time and time again to campus and to this project. For spending early and late hours in my home or yours to make sure the children were surrounded by love and support at all times, thank you. Without your support and your living example of hard work, I could not have accomplished this project.

To my children, Brianna and Bradley, I hope that I have set an example for you of what it means to be a parent: both a loving nurturer of children and a professional with much to contribute to society. You have never known a time that I have not been in the midst of graduate coursework or the dissertation writing process. I hope that I have demonstrated to you the value
of setting and achieving goals, working hard, and coping with life in a positive manner. Someday you will go to university and find meaning in making a difference through your vocation. The world would not be the same without you here. As you grow up, may you recognize the significance of lifelong learning and take your place among those who enrich the lives of others through their work.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning is an intricate process. Speaking a foreign language requires successful application of complex linguistic processes such as listening comprehension, accurate and clear pronunciation, and production of speech using grammatical structure that also conveys clear meaning (de Jong, Steinel, Florijn, Schoonen, & Hulstijn, 2012; Lier, 1989; Marian, Blumenfeld, & Kaushanskaya, 2007). The instantaneous comprehension and simultaneous oral production required for speaking creates a higher potential for linguistic errors than do the slower processes of reading and writing tasks (Marian et al., 2007). Teaching speaking inside of the foreign language classroom presents difficulties because conversation is multifaceted and, at times, ambiguous (Grigorenko, Sternberg, & Ehrman, 2000).

Decades ago, task-based strategies for teaching high school foreign language speaking began to develop as a means to present language learners with tangible opportunities to apply foreign language vocabulary and structure to speaking practice using problem-solving scenarios with peers (Nunan, 1992). Foreign language speaking tasks, which are teacher-designed activities that require learners to use the foreign language to complete a task or solve a problem, have a wide variety of uses and ranges of complexity (Nunan, 1992). These tasks can range from highly scripted activities requiring repetitive use of specific structural formats to open-ended, loosely scripted activities that guide learners without prescribing a specific format.
Foreign language teachers cannot develop oral proficiency alone. Foreign language learner engagement in the language acquisition process is vital to developing oral proficiency skills. According to Oxford (2006), learners who are engaged in foreign language tasks in the foreign language classroom experience development in foreign language communication. In order for the high school foreign language teacher to propel learner development of oral proficiency, the classroom tasks must be well-designed, be aligned to curricular goals, and be possible to complete without frustration (Nunan, 1992; Oxford, 2006).

This chapter provides a brief overview of the theoretical framework that supported this study. Types of speaking tasks that were used in this study are also briefly described. Finally, the purpose of the study is outlined, along with the research questions and a short overview of the data collection and data analysis procedures that were used in this study.

**French as a Foreign Language**

French was the language of focus for this study. The American Association of Teachers of French (AATF, 2015) is an organization that advocates for French education in the United States. It produces a website, along with some print publications aimed at educating Americans about French as a valuable choice for foreign language learning. According to the AATF, for foreign language learners who speak English, French is a relatively easy language to learn because it is deeply, historically intertwined with English (AATF, 2015). Many modern English words and grammatical structures used today are derived from French that mingled into the English language during the middle ages after William the Conqueror successfully invaded England, bringing the French language with him and making it the language of the land for a significant period of time.
Today, French is widely spoken around the world. It is not only spoken in France, but also in Canada. It is the official language of many of the countries spread across the continent of Africa. It is also spoken in certain parts of Asia and in the South Pacific. The widespread use of French as an official language can be attributed to France’s global exploration and colonization of historic nations (AATF, 2015). Because French is so widely spoken worldwide, it is also the official language of the International Olympic Committee and is also used officially for international postal services. French is estimated to become one of the most heavily used languages for business by the year 2050 as the Francophone countries of Africa continue to develop economically and enter into global trade and business (AATF, 2015). French is a widely applicable language for those who desire to learn how to speak it.

Assessment of Oral Proficiency

Tools for measuring oral proficiency in any language, including French, are expensive to implement because they often require extensive training to score properly and are time consuming to use efficiently in a classroom setting that may have 30 or more students (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1986; Anderson, 2012; Lier, 1989; Salaberry, 2000). The Oral Proficiency Interview is an example of a tool that can be effective to use but takes extensive training to maneuver through effectively and is time consuming each time the interview is used. Some other tools that have been used to measure oral production of language include the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery and the Modern Language Aptitude Battery, both of which measure a speaker’s aptitude to learn how to speak a language rather than a speaker’s actual proficiency level. There are other tests specifically used by the Foreign Service Institute or the military for placement of diplomats or other foreign-nation career placements that require
advanced proficiency levels. These are not designed for foreign language learners at the beginning stages of their learning process, and, therefore, were not addressed by this study.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) advocates for foreign language instruction across the United States. The ACTFL has made assessment more accessible in the foreign language classroom in recent years by creating “I Can” statements, which address skills aligned to standards, and by developing foreign language learning standards that support the Common Core State Standards. The ACTFL also provides teachers with checklists and guidance in developing rubrics that focus on the components of oral proficiency (accurate pronunciation, structure that produces clear ideas, use of vocabulary in context, fluency of responses). The teachers and department chair of the high school where this study took place designed their district foreign language interpersonal speaking rubric to align to these components of oral proficiency and the guidelines of the ACTFL. By using and adjusting rubrics aligned to the “I Can” statements from the ACTFL, classroom teachers can provide novice learners with effective and immediate feedback about their oral proficiency progress.

**Theoretical Framework**

Second Language Acquisition Theory (SLA) guided the researcher’s lens for understanding the development of oral proficiency for this study. A brief explanation of SLA is given in the following paragraphs. More detailed information about SLA concept is provided in Chapter 2.

Vygotsky’s theories have played a role in the development of current educational practices across the United States, including in the high school foreign language classroom (Kozulin, 2003; Merrill, 1991). Foreign language learners who are exposed to the foreign
language at a time when it cannot be considered their first, or native language, construct knowledge of the foreign language over time. This is known as second language acquisition. In the high school foreign language classroom, learners who are in the beginning stages of acquisition and considered to be novice or intermediate learners may use their native language to control and orient roles in classroom tasks as well as to complete classroom tasks. They may even impose native language structure or vocabulary onto foreign language communication, a language learning phenomenon known as interlanguaging (Brooks & Donato, 1994; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Novice foreign language learners may not yet have acquired the vocabulary or acquisition level to think within the foreign language (Brooks & Donato, 1994). Often, while a classroom speaking task may be executed using the foreign language of the classroom, the learner may use the native language to keep the task moving, to focus attention on the task, and to clarify task procedures (Swain & Lapkin, 2000) such as order of the speakers in the group, or division of steps in the task process. This is referred to as metatalk and is part of the communicative process of language acquisition (Brooks & Donato, 1994).

**Second Language Acquisition Theory (SLA)**

SLA facilitates an understanding of how foreign language learners improve language skills over time by using the language and gradually acquiring vocabulary and structural knowledge (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). While languages are not created based upon one another, it is common for foreign language learners to build oral proficiency upon the foundations of the native language (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). SLA is a Constructivist view of foreign language learning that is borne of Vygotsky’s theory of scaffolding. SLA suggests that as each learner
acquires new language, he or she synchronizes the new linguistic vocabulary and structures with existing schema (existing conceptual understanding) of language (Brooks & Donato, 1994; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009). To acquire a foreign language and use it, foreign language learners must think about their learning using their existing, native language (Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a foreign language teaching methodology that emphasizes meaning and communication for the purpose of interpersonal interactions using the foreign language (Ellis, 2006; Oxford, 2006). Foreign language teachers who foster a communicative classroom to scaffold development of foreign language learner oral proficiency need to understand what the term communicative means and how learners who are communicating in the foreign language are relying on interlanguaging to acquire skills.

CLT is the bridge between SLA and TBLT. CLT does not mandate full foreign language immersion. It encourages foreign language use from the first day of language study. However, it gives recognition to SLA by allowing learners to understand by means of using their native language, sparingly, but when necessary (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT is also the precursor to task-based models of foreign language instruction.

The word communicative is situated at the core of the development of oral proficiency. Communication requires cooperation between the speaker and the listener (Savignon, 1997), such as in foreign language classroom speaking tasks. Modern globalization and harmonious intercultural relations (Mulenda, 2013) in the age of digital media and fast-paced, sensational news stories, require the types of communicative negotiations that have been championed by foreign language development researchers for decades (such as Aliakbari & Jamalvandi (2010),
Nunan (1992), Savignon (1991), and Swain (2000)). CLT swings the foreign language learning pendulum back in the direction of shifting language instruction from an isolated focus on grammatical function to a focus on oral proficiency and competence in intercultural communication (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Mulenda, 2013).

**Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**

TBLT is encompassed under the umbrella of CLT as a strategy foreign language teachers may use to direct foreign language learner speaking practice. It is a teaching strategy for purposeful implementation of tasks in the classroom and was first used in the medical field to train doctors and nurses (Ellis, 2006; Nunan, 1992). Tasks are classroom activities that are modeled after real-world scenarios and are contrived to provide foreign language learners with opportunities to apply the foreign language vocabulary and structure in order to complete the task. Foreign language tasks, by definition, must include four components: a focus on meaning, learner-driven transmission of meaning, information, or opinion, learners who demonstrate reliance on their own linguistic skills alongside scaffolded resources, an outcome or task purpose that is something other than decontextualized language usage (Collins & White, 2015). Tasks range in complexity and can purposefully be made more or less complex by the foreign language teacher (Nunan, 1992).

Drawing out metacognitive, critical thinking skills of learners requires some ingenuity on the part of teachers. Designing instruction that promotes this type of thinking while encouraging foreign language spoken production is complex. It is easy to create semi-scripted, decontextualized, oral communication activities that require question-response speaking patterns for beginning language learners (Nunan, 1992). However, such activities do not require learners
to practice communication outside of scripted, formulaic utterances that require only the change of one word. When implementing higher complexity tasks in the classroom, foreign language teachers need to recognize the difference between off-task, native language communication and procedural native language communication to effectively use speaking tasks and to facilitate supportive scaffolding for learners to develop oral proficiency skills (Brooks & Donato, 1994; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Nunan, 1992). Vygotsky’s concepts of scaffolding and construction of knowledge are the basis for the instructional theories that support TBLT.

In recent years, researchers have brought forth the concept of TBLT as a means of facilitating foreign language oral proficiency in the foreign language classroom. In the era of accountability, inclusive of new scrutiny and various mandates on teacher evaluations, TBLT has new implications for enhancing teaching strategies that facilitate foreign language learner oral proficiency development (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010).

Types of Tasks

This study focused on two types of tasks that can be used in the foreign language classroom to control complexity: 1) information gap tasks and 2) dictogloss tasks. At surface level, these two task types may not appear to differ from traditional, memorized audiolingual dialogues. In reality, they are very different from repetitive, memorized utterances spoken out of authentic context. This study modified the low-complexity formats to scaffold the tasks to a higher complexity level appropriate for novice and intermediate high school foreign language learners. These tasks are explained in the following pages beginning with simplistic, low-complexity formats, and culminating with explanations of potentially high-complexity formats for each task.
**Information gap.**

A novice-level, information gap task asks the speakers to produce repetitive, patterned questions and answers in the foreign language. For example, learners might use limited vocabulary and structure for ordering beverages at a café. One partner would have the information needed by the other partner. In order to obtain the information, partners would take turns asking what the people would like to drink. An example might be provided to guide foreign language learners. The task described is of low complexity because, while it is speaking practice, it does not require much variation in vocabulary or structure in order to complete the task (Nunan, 1992). Figure 1.1 demonstrates what this type of simplistic, scripted information gap task might look like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner 1</th>
<th>Boissons</th>
<th>Partner 2</th>
<th>Boissons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alain</td>
<td>un coca</td>
<td>Alain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estelle</td>
<td></td>
<td>Estelle</td>
<td>un café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henri</td>
<td></td>
<td>Henri</td>
<td>une citron pressée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilberte</td>
<td>un chocolat</td>
<td>Gilberte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeleine</td>
<td>un thé</td>
<td>Madeleine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Exemple:*  
**Partner 1:** *Qu’est qu’Alain voudrait?*  
What would Alain like?  
**Partner 2:** *Il voudrait un coca.*  
He would like a Coke.

Figure 1.1: Low complexity information gap task “Au Café”

This study used the structural concept of information gap tasks but increased complexity of the tasks by ensuring that learners determined which information to seek and how to
communicate the information to their peers. If a foreign language teacher wanted to create a higher complexity information gap task, using the same vocabulary and structural items, he or she could distribute a café menu to groups of four learners, assigning each one a role for the task. One learner might act as the waiter or waitress. Another might be assigned to place the order. Learners would have to ask one another what each person desires to drink. The learner assigned to be the waiter or waitress would have to use the foreign language to engage the learner assigned to place the order in a culturally and contextually appropriate conversation. Learners would still need to fill in gaps of information. The information given in each information gap task would be similar. However, in the high complexity information gap task, learners would have less scripting and more choices in how they opt to express their conversation, essentially creating and filling information gaps independently while working toward task completion goals.

Figure 1.2 shows what the task conversation might look like between foreign language learners in a high complexity information gap task. Translations are provided after each French sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Member 1:</th>
<th>Alain, qu’est-ce que tu voudrais?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Alain, what would you like?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Member 2:</td>
<td>Je voudrais un coca.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(I would like a Coke.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Member 1:</td>
<td>Un coca. D’accord. Estelle, qu’est-ce que tu voudrais?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A Coke. Okay. Estelle, what would you like?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Member 3:</td>
<td>Moi? Je préfère un café.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Me? I prefer a coffee.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Member 4:</td>
<td>Bonjour. Qu’est-ce que vous voudriez?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiter</td>
<td>(Hello. What would you like?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Member 1:</td>
<td>Il voudrait un coca et elle voudrait un café. Moi, je prends une limonade, s’il vous plaît.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(He would like a Coke and she would like a coffee. Me, I’ll have a lemon-lime soda, please.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Member 4:</td>
<td>Alors, un coca, un café, et une limonade. Bon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(So, a Coke, a coffee, and a lemon-lime soda. Good.)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 1.2: High complexity information gap task “Au Café”
Leaving the café task open ended by feeding learners the information through the format of an authentic menu, rather than giving learners a list on a worksheet, allows teachers to control task complexity. Extensions could be added to the task by including food on the menu and asking each person to order a food item as well as a beverage. Further extensions could be added to incorporate numbers by using the prices on a menu. Foreign language learners may engage in small talk about a chosen topic. Appropriate greetings and leave takings may be used between the waiter or waitress and the clients. Foreign language learners would be using the same vocabulary as the low-complexity task, but they would have more options in selecting structure to determine how they want to express their café order. The teacher sets the parameters and layers of complexity as a guideline, but the task itself is learner-centered and shaped by the learners’ free choices within the task structure.

**Dictogloss.**

The second type of speaking task used for this study was the dictogloss. This section will describe low-complexity dictogloss tasks, then higher-complexity tasks, similar to those used in this study. In a basic, low-complexity dictogloss task, foreign language learners listen to a reading or a dialogue, note specific vocabulary words or grammatical structures that are being used with the unit of study, then work with a partner or group to reconstruct the reading or dialogue. Dictogloss tasks set up a structure for foreign language learners to compare and contrast language as they recreate a reading or dialogue together with their peers (Fahim & Ghanbar, 2014; Kim, 2008; Skehan, 2001). Dictogloss can be done in writing or in speaking. For the purpose of this study, foreign language learners would use speaking to reconstruct dialogues, or to retell a story, using dictogloss tasks.
Teachers around the world, and across content areas, use and modify dictogloss for multiple purposes such as working with comprehension, grammar, or vocabulary usage. The following paragraphs note some dictogloss examples that demonstrate some of the modifications that can be made to increase complexity to tailor dictogloss to the needs of a particular classroom, grade level, or set of learners. Dagher (2009) posted a video that outlined the steps of a traditional dictogloss task being used in an elementary class. In the video demonstration, the teacher read a story to the learners two times and allowed them to take notes during the second reading. After the second reading of the story, the teacher wrote important words on the board to direct learner attention to the vocabulary. Then, the teacher divided the learners into groups. Learners reconstructed the story that the teacher just read to them and were required to use the vocabulary words written by the teacher on the board. They could be seen and heard in the video monitoring each other’s language as they worked together to reconstruct the story. The teacher was using a traditional dictogloss structure to draw learner focus onto vocabulary terms.

To increase complexity, modifications can be made to dictogloss to direct learner attention to specific linguistic functions. Rather than vocabulary, a teacher could focus on story structure and sequencing events. James York (2010) posted a video of primary grade Japanese learners using photographs and conversing with one another to rebuild a story together. In York’s video, learners had already completed the phase of the dictogloss during which a story had been read to them. The teacher, serving as facilitator as the learners collaborated, was seen and heard prompting the learners but they were doing the work and using one another as resources. The task was open-ended. The events of the story and the level of comprehension needed to retell it, increased the complexity level.
Further adaptations can be made to dictogloss to adapt it to learners’ instructional needs. Spencer (2012) demonstrated using dictogloss as a means to draw learner attention to the subtleties of verb tense changes in the foreign language classroom. In his video, Spencer did not directly teach vocabulary clues or verb structure to the learners. Rather, he read them a complex sentence, and allowed the learners to reconstruct it as they thought through the placement of vocabulary and the structure of verbs. Learners had the opportunity to share their sentences aloud and then work as a class to piece together the correct structures collaboratively. The teacher drew attention to the importance of placement of vocabulary clues and verb structure while also giving learners an opportunity to use the language without direct grammar instruction. Figure 1.3 demonstrates the outline of Spencer’s (2012) dictogloss procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step One: Dictation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher reads: &quot;Although I've already been to the United States twice, I haven't visited Hollywood yet despite the fact that I'm mad about films.&quot; Students listen as the sentence is read. Students rewrite the sentence as they remember it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Two: Sentence Recheck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher rereads the sentence. Students listen. Students double check their work and make revisions and improvements to their reconstructed sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Three: Whole Class Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher facilitates whole-group reconstruction of the sentence. Students collaborate to dictate to a classmate at the board, reconstructing the sentence using vocabulary and verb structures that each student was able to capture, and arriving at accurate reconstruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.3: Dictogloss procedure (Spencer, 2012).
The task is meaning-focused. Learners had to comprehend significant portions of the sentence in order to recreate it or come close to representing its meaning using alternative phrasing. Dictogloss works in the high school foreign language classroom because it can be controlled for complexity. Dictogloss allows learners to use all areas of language to produce speech of their own. Yet there is a structure embedded in the task that provides a supportive background to learners so that they have a focus in the midst of the complexity of the task (Nunan, 1992). That is why it was used in this study. It can be scaffolded and does not require reproduction of memorized words and phrases. The task is able to be completed but there are embedded requirements for that completion that the teacher can control. For example, the purpose of the task could be to reconstruct a story in the correct order. Or, the purpose of the task could be to reconstruct a sentence using the correct verb tenses and vocabulary cues. The teacher can manipulate the task to support learner oral proficiency development in any language area where the teacher knows practice is needed.

**Teacher Role**

This study explored development of oral proficiency in the high school foreign language classroom when tasks were used to create speaking opportunities for high school foreign language learners. This study included examination of the participating teacher’s role in supporting learner development of oral proficiency. Foreign language teachers are critical in the process of creating opportunities for high school foreign language learners to merge vocabulary and structure in a foreign language curriculum. With purposeful planning, foreign language teachers are able to use tasks to push foreign language learners along the continuum of foreign language proficiency over time (Murphy, 2003).
Three major aspects of a teacher’s role support foreign language learner oral proficiency development. The first is the role teachers play in task design. By purposefully controlling task complexity, foreign language teachers can create task models that elicit foreign language learner vocabulary development, grammatical structures, and appropriate socio-cultural interactions to expose foreign language learners to social learning and problem-solving opportunities that support oral proficiency development within the walls of the classroom (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Kirkgöz, 2011).

Secondly, teachers play a role in motivating task completion. Teachers manage a wide variety of learner linguistic and cultural backgrounds and expectations (Ryan & Makarova, 2001). Teachers may not sit back and listen to classroom tasks. Rather, teachers may take on an active coaching role, working with learners side-by-side to coach learners in the process of using the foreign language accurately, even when learners may have a tendency to rely heavily on their native language to cope with challenging content (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Kao, Carkin, & Hsu, 2011).

Finally, teachers who collaborate directly with foreign language learners during tasks provide not only support for task completion, but also a deep level of linguistic support. When teachers take a role of partial responsibility for task completion in partnership with foreign language learners, teachers’ higher proficiency levels facilitate learner exposure to questions of clarification and modeling of accuracy of vocabulary use and grammatical structure (Kao et al., 2011). Meticulous task design, along with side-by-side coaching to motivate task completion, and, when possible, full teacher and learner collaboration in tasks, has much influence over foreign language learner progress across stages of proficiency (Bruton, 2005; Collins & White, 2015; Felder & Henriques, 1995; Kao et al., 2011; Nunan, 1992; Rose & Harbon, 2013).
Problem Statement

After four years of high school foreign language instruction, learners may be capable of speaking only within the framework of what was specifically taught to them. Open-ended, authentic conversation skills and practical application of communication in an authentic setting with other speakers is often found lacking (Grigorenko et al., 2000; Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016). Though many learners learn to read and write in the foreign language, actual on-demand conversational skills are often more ambiguous (Grigorenko et al., 2000). Conversational skills, which require immediate processing and rapid response to maintain the communicative exchange (de Jong et al., 2012; Grigorenko et al., 2000; Lier, 1989; Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016), are complex and difficult to develop and measure in the high school foreign language classroom, which has opened doors to exploration of task features and task effectiveness in the foreign language classroom (Collins & White, 2015).

The possibility that learners may not be able to transfer conversational skills learned inside the foreign language classroom to authentic, real-life conversation is a problem because communication is rapidly becoming more global as business and political connections develop worldwide (Collins & White, 2015; Mulenda, 2013; Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016). It is imperative for teachers to have structured, tangible strategies to foster oral proficiency development for foreign language learners, including foreign language learners in the United States who traditionally may not have had previous foreign language exposure. To gather a detailed understanding of the complexity of foreign language oral proficiency development, the researcher considered the roles played by both the high school foreign language learners and the high school foreign language teacher in oral proficiency development in the classroom setting.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine how a French teacher and high school foreign language learners used two task-based learning methods: information gap and dictogloss tasks, to facilitate oral proficiency development.

Research Questions

Three research questions were addressed by this study.

1. Were there differences in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used: information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of these two types?

2. How did high school foreign language learners develop oral proficiency in French when different types of tasks were used?

3. What role did the French teacher play in high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development during dictogloss and information gap tasks?

Significance of Study

The application of tasks to the high school foreign language classroom for the purpose of facilitating oral proficiency development is not new. Foreign language tasks have been a source of curiosity for several decades (Bruton, 2005; Collins & White, 2015; Grigorenko et al., 2000; Kao et al., 2011; Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016; Nunan, 1992). There is variance in the research, which considers a range of task-based topics, including quantification of learner uses of structures such as the analysis of accurate use of past tense and possessive indicators done by
Collins & White (2015), or the comparisons of tasks for the purpose of exploring effectiveness of teaching strategies such as those done by Aliakbari & Jamalvandi (2010), or Fahim & Ghanbar (2014). This study was necessary as a critical look at the pedagogy underlying foreign language learning in the American high school setting.

Research indicates that foreign language learning in the sphere of business education or in the setting of multi-lingual countries provides learners with opportunities to apply their learning in authentic contexts outside of the classroom (Mulenda, 2013; Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016) that may be unavailable to some linguistically isolated communities in the United States. In recent years, as globalization of economic and political interdependence has grown around the world, those who claim to know a foreign language are judged on their ability to speak that language (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Mulenda, 2013).

This study fills a gap in the previous research in the field of TBLT and foreign language teaching by exploring the merging of three matters of language acquisition at once: teacher role, task role, and high-school-aged novice speakers. It addresses both the role of the teacher in the novice stages of the language acquisition process and the role of types of tasks used at the novice stages of the language acquisition process. This study’s focus on the novice level, high-school-aged learner located in an English-language dominant location also sets it apart from the body of literature in the same field.

Previous research studies conducted in the field of TBLT and language acquisition can be funneled into three intersecting categories: studies comparing percent of usage of native and foreign language during tasks (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Long & Crookes, 1993; Prado-Olmos, 1993; Salimi, 2015; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), studies conducted abroad with intermediate or advanced adult learners (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Fahim & Ghanbar, 2014; Kirkgöz,
2011), and studies focused on comparisons and effectiveness of task types (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Collins & White, 2015; Fahim & Ghanbar, 2014; Kirkgöz, 2011; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015; Salimi, 2015). Each of these studies was addressed in the literature review located in Chapter 2 and each of these previous studies paved the foundation for this study.

Studies examining the percent of usage of native and foreign language across foreign language classroom tasks (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Long & Crookes, 1993; Prado-Olmos, 1993; Salimi, 2015; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) have identified the differences between task-implementation speech, which leads learners to task completion and task-control speech, which facilitates learner organization of the task steps and may happen in the learner’s native language. Studies conducted abroad with intermediate and advanced adult learners (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Fahim & Ghanbar, 2014; Kirkgöz, 2011) have lent practitioners a deeper understanding of the elements of task complexity (open-ended or loose structure, learner background knowledge in the task topic) and the importance of the teacher in creating task structures that loop in a cycle of pre- and post-task lessons. Studies focused on comparison of task types (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Collins & White, 2015; Fahim & Ghanbar, 2014; Kirkgöz, 2011; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015; Salimi, 2015) have advanced conception of the elements of task design (structure, complexity, support systems in place for completion) and the role of the teacher in controlling complexity of tasks in cases where learners could be considered intermediate or advanced in the language acquisition process.

This study took the role of the teacher and the task in the language acquisition process into consideration in light of the novice learner’s needs for support. No other previous study has pulled these elements together to explore the implementation of TBLT at the novice, high school foreign language classroom level. Because of the emergence of themes in this study,
recommendations can be made in the next section to address support for the novice-level of the language acquisition process.

This study explicitly compares two types of tasks and merges together the tangible components of speaking (listening comprehension, accurate pronunciation, vocabulary in context, accurate structure) and the abstract ambiguity associated with the feeling of negotiating tasks in the language classroom. Framed by research from the areas of SLA, CLT, and TBLT, alongside a view into a typical foreign language classroom, this study may provide high school foreign language teachers with a model of task-based instructional practices and task scaffolding practices that may be incorporated into daily teaching techniques.

**Definitions**

Several terms were used in this study to discuss the field of foreign language learning in the high school setting. These terms are defined as follows:

**Dictogloss:** This is a classroom task that is designed to elicit a specific focus on literary structures or linguistic functions. During a dictogloss task, learners listen to a prompt: a reading, a dictation, a video, or a story, for example. Afterwards, learners work collaboratively in groups to reconstruct the prompt verbally (Fahim & Ghanbar, 2014; Oxford, 2006; Skehan, 2001).

**Information Gap:** This is a classroom task contrived to create an environment that mimics real-life linguistic situations. The task requires learners to seek missing information from one another using strategies or structures that are related to classroom learning outcomes (Oxford, 2006; Skehan, 2001).

**Oral Proficiency:** The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) describes oral proficiency as the defined level of what a foreign language learner can and cannot
do using the foreign language spontaneously and in the context of authentic, oral, communicative situations. Language proficiency, in general, applies to all areas of language that the foreign language learner encounters during the language acquisition process, or the process of learning the language over time. The ACTFL (2012) proficiency guidelines are divided according to these four areas of language: 1) reading, 2) writing, 3) listening, and 4) speaking. This study focused on the development of foreign language learner oral proficiency, or speaking skills.

**Foreign Language:** The foreign language is the language of focus that was being taught in the high school foreign language classroom featured in this study. Since English was the strongest common language for all participants in this study, and since French was the language taught inside the classroom, this study referred to the classroom language (French) as the foreign language, even if some participants spoke a third or fourth language that may be considered foreign to others (de Jong et al., 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

**Foreign Language Learners:** In this study, foreign language learners were high school learners who were studying a language other than English for the purpose of becoming speakers of the foreign language. These learners were considered foreign language learners. Since English was the common language for all participants in this study, and since French was the language taught inside the classroom, this study referred to the learner participants as foreign language learners, even if they already spoke a third or fourth language considered foreign to others (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Kim, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

**Tasks:** This study refers frequently to TBLT, which was explained in the theoretical framework earlier in this chapter. TBLT uses tasks, which are activities aligned to the learning outcomes of the foreign language classroom, to facilitate language acquisition (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Murphy, 2003; Nunan, 1992). Tasks must meet four criteria to be considered a task. Tasks
are meaning focused. Tasks require a communicator to convey meaning, information, or an opinion. Tasks ask learners to rely on their skills and scaffolded resources to complete the task. Tasks have a specified outcome, other than language usage itself. (Collins & White, 2015). In this study, focus centered on speaking tasks in the high school foreign language classroom.

**Methodology**

This was a mixed methods study (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Mertens, 2015). Using task interventions in three second-year French classes taught by the same teacher, this study investigated whether there was a difference in development of learner oral proficiency by type of task, how foreign language learners learned during each type of task, and the role played by the teacher during each type of task. Learner pre- and post-test scores were used to examine the first research question. Teacher interviews and observation of classroom tasks were used to examine the second and third research questions.

The instrument used to measure oral proficiency in this study measures six constructs of oral proficiency that are aligned to the oral proficiency guidelines of the ACTFL (2012) and Keys to Planning for Learning (Clementi & Terrill, 2013). The constructs measured by the rubric are language control, vocabulary, task completion, active participation and continuing conversation, communication strategies and circumlocution, and fluency. The expert foreign language teachers in the department of the school where the study took place have collaborated with one another and with one of the author’s of Keys to Planning for Learning (2013), Laura Terrill, in order to ensure validity of the rubric.

The rubric used to assess oral proficiency for this study measures learners on a scale of 50 possible points spread across six areas of oral proficiency. The teacher who participated in
this study provided some historical data for learners who participated in this study as she followed them during the study as French 2 students and then continued to track them as French 3 students. Many students remained in the foreign language program at the participating school, continuing into French 3. The World Languages Department of the participating school is large and stable in its offerings of courses in various languages and levels. Students who remain in courses offered by the department have the potential to earn honors grade point averages. Students also have travel opportunities and can qualify for the honor society sponsored by the department. More information about the consistency of the data measured by the rubric is available in Chapter 3.

Participating learners in this study were spread across three different French 2 classes. Each class completed a different task intervention sequence. The first class, with 28 participants, completed only information gap tasks. The second class, with 27 participants, completed only dictogloss tasks. The third class, with 31 participants, completed alternating tasks, beginning with information gap in the first week, dictogloss in the second week, and back to information gap in the third week. This continued throughout the study.

Prior to beginning the unit of study, the participating teacher administered a speaking pre-test, measuring student speaking skills on the rubric described earlier in this section. The teacher gave a speaking post-test at the end of the unit, after all tasks had been completed. Data analysis on the pre- and post-tests was conducted using ANOVA. More about the quantitative data analysis can be found in Chapter 3. While no significant differences were found between student participants in classes completing different task interventions, qualitative data demonstrated several themes that emerged from teacher interviews, classroom observations, and video transcripts. More about these findings can be found in Chapter 4.
Delimitations

Two delimitations were used to make the study manageable. The first delimitation was that the researcher used a convenience sampling technique to recruit the participating high school to take part in the study. The researcher recognized that the use of convenience sampling was unconducive to generalizing the results of the study beyond the setting that granted access to the researcher. Secondly, the researcher opted to use one high school foreign language program. Examination of the research questions focused on three classes taught by one teacher.

Limitations

Two limitations must be noted for this study. The first is the duration of the study. The study was conducted in the fall, during the first segment of the school year. It included eight different tasks in each sequence, information gap and dictogloss, for each participating class. The duration of the study is a limitation because significant oral proficiency growth typically takes many years to develop.

The second limitation of this study is that the high school where the study took place had a specific population of foreign language learners. Many of the participants already spoke both Spanish and English. Some spoke English and a language other than Spanish. This population of foreign language learners was not representative of the entire national or regional population of foreign language learners in the high school setting or otherwise.
Organization of Study

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide the reader with an overview of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature about SLA, CLT, and TBLT. In Chapter 3, methods are explained in depth. Chapter 4 includes the study’s findings. In Chapter 5, the researcher provides a conclusion to the study that includes a discussion of the findings, the significance of the study, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learners enroll in foreign language courses in high school for the purpose of becoming speakers of the language. After four years of high school foreign language, however, many learners may struggle to demonstrate oral proficiency in authentic situations not explicitly taught in school (Collins & White, 2015; Grigorenko et al., 2000; Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016). Speaking is so complex (de Jong et al., 2012; Lier, 1989: Marian et al., 2007) that, though many learners learn how to read, write, and speak in the foreign language, proficient, spontaneous conversational skills are often slower to develop, especially when learners are exposed to the foreign language only for a limited length of time each day. This is a problematic flaw in foreign language teaching and learning, which has led to decades of research into how to teach speaking.

The foreign language classroom teacher’s job is to teach learners how to speak a foreign language, a task much more easily said than done. Teaching foreign language speaking is an involved and sophisticated process, requiring foreign language teachers to possess a repertoire of strategies that expose foreign language learners to opportunities for effective practice (de Jong et al., 2012; Grigorenko et al., 2000).

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to this study. This chapter is structured around the theoretical framework that supports this study, which was briefly outlined
in Chapter 1. The theoretical framework relates Vygotsky’s constructivism to Second language Acquisition Theory (SLA). Within the theoretical framework, further connections were drawn between SLA and the teaching methods of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as they are used in the foreign language classroom. Ultimately, the literature review narrowed focus on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), a foreign language teaching strategy that is built upon CLT, SLA, and constructivism.

SLA, CLT, and TBLT have been used in the field of foreign language teaching for decades. However, recent studies have taken a closer look at the types of tasks that originate in the areas of SLA and CLT for the purpose of determining which tasks are beneficial to learners for increasing foreign language proficiency for learners around the world. In the TBLT section of this chapter, four commonly used task types will be described in detail. The chapter will end with a discussion of the foreign language teacher’s role in task implementation in the foreign language classroom.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is built on the concept of Vygotsky’s constructivism. Vygotsky’s educational theory of social constructivism has influenced learning in the contemporary American school system, inclusive of SLA, CLT, and TBLT in the foreign language classroom (Kozulin, 2003; Merrill, 1991). The development of problem-based learning, which originated as a training and teaching methodology in the medical field (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008), uses real-world scenarios and inquiry-based approaches with Vygotsky’s
concept of scaffolding, which suggests that learners build knowledge by framing it within existing conceptual understanding.

Beginning with SLA, the scaffolding, or building of knowledge over time, is purposeful in the foreign language classroom. It brings into focus Vygotsky’s work and causes us to consider how it is that learners acquire knowledge (Ball, 2000). As foreign language learners continue to be exposed to social experiences in the foreign language over time, they use their existing linguistic understanding as a framework for acquiring and using new language with others who also speak the foreign language. Through social interactions with other speakers, experiences contribute to knowledge and usage of the foreign language and knowledge contributes to higher levels of competence in communication (Wertsch, 1985; Wink & Putney, 2002).

CLT, as a general foreign language teaching methodology, demands competent and clear communication as learners acquire more language. Ball (2000) states that “knowledge is temporary, developmental, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated” (p. 230). CLT exists in the realm of the communicative, social aspects of learning. It turns the wide focus of SLA into a goal of using what is acquired from the beginning point of instruction. CLT is Vygostkyan in nature because learners have the opportunity to build on the foundations of existing knowledge through social experiences with others: both those who have knowledge at a common level and those who are more knowledgeable and able to adapt their communication skills to meet the needs of the learner (Wertsch, 1985). TBLT promotes increasingly complex foreign language communication as learners acquire language over time. As a teaching methodology, TBLT provides purposesful, tangible guidance for teachers to design
communicative opportunities that are social in nature and appropriately complex according to the learner’s stage of language acquisition.

**Second Language Acquisition Theory (SLA)**

SLA suggests that language learners acquire non-native language by gradual exposure to social-linguistic experiences. The language learner incorporates knowledge of the language over time by constructing knowledge of the language through shared social experiences with other communicators (Wertsch, 1985). As the learner builds knowledge and acquires the language, the learner’s level of proficiency increases (Brooks & Donato, 1994; de Jong et al., 2012; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Dörnyei, 2002; Pica, Kang, & Sauro, 2006). There is an interaction between a speaker’s increased knowledge and level of proficiency in the language and a speaker’s ability to use the language. The two, knowledge of the language and experiences of social usage of the language, move a learner across a continuum of depth of knowledge over time (Wertsch, 1985), increasing proficiency levels.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages first published guidelines in 1986 for levels of language proficiency. The most recent available *ACTFL Oral Proficiency Guidelines* were published in 2012 (ACTFL, 2015). According to ACTFL.org, the proficiency levels portray a continuum of second language learning “that describe what an individual can and cannot do with language at each level, regardless of where, when, or how the language was acquired.” The continuum represents an ever-increasing depth of knowledge of the vocabulary and structure of a foreign language over time. The purpose of the proficiency guidelines is to provide a framework for development of foreign language learning standards and assessments.
The oral proficiency guidelines divide each area of language into five specific levels of proficiency: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Distinguished. Each of the five levels of proficiency describes a range of abilities. The first three levels of proficiency are further divided into sublevels labeled low, medium, and high (ACTFL, 2012). When reading the descriptors of each level and sublevel of proficiency, the depth of knowledge and the capacity for usage of a foreign language can be noticed increasing over the course of the proficiency continuum. Table 2.1 shows the progression from Novice Low to Distinguished along the proficiency continuum according to the most recent (2012) proficiency guidelines from ACTFL.

Table 2.1: Progression of ACTFL Proficiency Levels for Speaking (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Sublevel</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Cannot communicate; pronunciation unintelligible; expresses basic needs, and information about personal identity using memorized phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>Use of memorized, repeated words and phrases; frequent pauses; use of strategies such as silence, repetition, and use of native language words; pronunciation unintelligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Navigates simplistic tasks and social situations; limited vocabulary; repetition; converses on topics of personal preferences, needs, and daily activities; hesitant speech; prevalent errors of syntax; pronunciation influenced by native language; sometimes unintelligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Creates with language spontaneously in simplistic social situations; poses questions to others; converses about topics of personal preferences, family, basic information; speaks in short sentences; incorporates words and phrases heard from other speakers; understood despite heavy native language influence on pronunciation and rhythm of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>Asks for, gives information; manages basic verb tenses; lacks accuracy in grammar and syntax; manages conversation on interests, and personal preferences; manages situations such as traveling, finding lodging, shopping, and physical needs; ease with handling a variety of speaking situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Handles social situations confidently and easily; discusses work, hobbies, and capabilities; speaks in paragraphs; uses multiple verb tenses; makes transitions between sentences to express sequence; narrates and tells stories; makes subtle errors of context and syntax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Discusses informal and formal topics such as current events or topics of public interest; navigates unexpected change in the course of conversation; notices errors and self-corrects; contributes to discourse, affecting the direction of the conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>Participates actively in informal and formal discourse on multiple topics with ease and confidence; navigates unfamiliar situations; uses rephrasing and circumlocution; variety of vocabulary; understood by native speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Explains and narrates in detail and structure; accurately uses many verb tenses; paraphrases, uses circumlocution, and illustrates; uses foreign language intonation; constructs arguments and hypotheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participates actively in discourse; speaks fluently in a variety of settings on various topics, both informal and formal; speaks at length with ease and accuracy; no unnatural pauses; occasional, unpatterned errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguished</td>
<td></td>
<td>Articulate in the language; navigates all social contexts, informal, and formal topics with confidence and ease; discusses issues and topics using organized and extended speech; makes reference to historical, cultural, and global events to advocate for a certain point of view; occasional errors; accent influenced by the native language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SLA and use of native and foreign language.

Opposing viewpoints exist between researchers as well as foreign language teachers about how much of the native language to use to support learning and under what circumstances the native language should be used to teach the foreign language (de la Campa & Nassaji, 2009). Language acquisition demands multiple modes of communication strategies. It is not merely a cross-linguistic, translation exercise. Language is required for thinking, communicating, and constructing meaning (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009). Even in the absence of spoken language, gestures and pictures exist as forms of non-verbal communication (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Gregersen, Olivares-Cuhat, & Storm, 2009) and such representations of language can be utilized for effective communication in social interactions (Wertsch, 1985).

Vygotsky suggests that, since language is an instrument that facilitates the development of thinking, spoken interaction with others has an effect on the development of language. These two things: language and thinking, profoundly build upon one another in what Wink & Putney (2002) refer to as a “reciprocal process” (p. 23) and affect the construction of knowledge through shared social interactions. Exposure to new linguistic experiences in social interactions builds a capacity for using language in new ways, which then leads to modification in thought processes, in turn, paving a path to apply language in new ways, continuing the cycle of knowledge construction (Wertsch, 1985; Wink & Putney, 2002). Foreign language learners may not have the vocabulary in the foreign language at the novice stage of learning to orient to the steps of a task, to reflect on their learning, or to establish social collaborative partnerships with peers. This is why foreign language learners might need to use their native language as a metacognitive tool to acquire a foreign language.
While languages are not created based upon one another, it is common for the foreign language learner to build foreign language learning on the foundations of the native language, by relying on interlinguaging strategies to create meaningful communication in the foreign language (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). In a study conducted by Swain and Lapkin (2000) with a small sample of native language English speaking, French immersion learners in Canada, they examined two academically similar groups of learners to determine if two different types of tasks, completed separately by each group, would prompt differences in the use of English instead of the foreign language, French. While the authors did not find any statistically significant differences in total percentages of native language used for each task, they were able to establish patterns of native language usage for specific purposes. Foreign language learners used their native language (English) to progress the task forward, to orient to steps within the task, to converse about disagreements over task procedures, and for interpersonal communication that was not task-related.

There are, potentially, several ways to help learners control the use of the native language as a task-orientation tool rather than a translation tool (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). A well-designed communicative task can draw out native language discourse that is metacognitive in nature, allowing foreign language learners an opportunity to think about how they are thinking about the foreign language (Brooks & Donato, 1994). Sometimes referred to as metacognitive chat, or metatalk, the use of native language as a means to build knowledge of the foreign language through task orientation, creation of social connections with other foreign language learners, and the opportunity to reflect on learning, is a resource that all foreign language learners possess and
can use to their advantage in the learning process. The concept of a metacognitive chat is significant enough to demand detailed inclusion in this section of the literature review.

**SLA and constructivism.**

Taking the Vygotskian approach to foreign language learning, Brooks and Donato (1994) relate learner use of metacognitive chat to the use of specific tools in certain types of labor. They elaborate that in a Vygotskian approach to foreign language learning, linguistic signs and symbols are necessary to coordinate and collaborate with others, to organize within a group, and to plan the steps to task completion. Knowing the difference between metacognitive chat and off-task discussion can garner the most effective practice during interpersonal speaking tasks.

Later research supports Brooks and Donato’s (1994) theories of metacognitive chat. Learners who are beginning learners, novices, and who are practicing generalized foreign language communication will think in their native language and use that thinking to control the task (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Early to intermediate foreign language learners are unlikely to have the depth of vocabulary, or to have internalized complex structural knowledge within the foreign language, that would be required to organize task procedures to move toward task completion. In these situations in the foreign language classroom, it is not uncommon to hear learners using their native language to plan the steps to complete a task, nor is it uncommon to hear learners using interlanguaging strategies to create meaning in the foreign language to complete a task. Caution is recommended in order to avoid misunderstanding the concept of metacognitive chat as encouragement for the use of native language during classroom tasks.
There is a marked difference between the use of native language for foreign language task control and the use of native language for off-task communication. Metacognitive chat should lead to group scaffolding of ideas and synthesis of the parts of language that create communication.

Capitalizing on Vygotsky’s claim that social interactions cultivate higher order thinking skills and improved mental functions, de la Colina and Mayo (2009) conducted a study to explore how various collaborative classroom tasks elicit a foreign language learner’s native and foreign language within task-related dialogue in the foreign language classroom. The study looked at percentages of total use of native and foreign language during multiple tasks and compared those percentages to the types of instances that elicited foreign language learner utterances in each language. The researchers found that metacognition (thinking about the task, orienting to the steps for completing the task, and reflecting on the task), takes place in novice foreign language learner’s native language.

In an earlier study, Prado-Olmos (1993) combined bilingual learners with monolingual, English-speaking learners to determine whether the social collaboration between learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds would enhance learner reading comprehension. In this case, the multilingual, collaborative cooperation led to meaningful learner-generated questions and activated higher order thinking skills as learners supported one another in understanding literature. The findings of Prado-Olmos’s study call for collaboration and cooperative learning, including assessments, to be embedded in the curriculum. In both studies, learners used Vygotskyan scaffolding in a collaborative environment, facilitating questioning and the construction of knowledge in a supportive, multilingual setting. Vygotskyan influences on
foreign language learning theories are evident within the language learner’s ability to generalize forms and functions of language to problem solving tasks (Brooks & Donato, 1994; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Prado-Olmos, 1993). The novice learner is using his or her native language as a building block for learning the foreign language.

The opportunities for Vygotskian instructional design in the foreign language classroom are multifaceted. When foreign language learners struggle to process a new grammatical structure or vocabulary word in the foreign language, they might rely on native language structure as a framework for understanding (Kozulin, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). They may also turn to a mentor who can meet them at their conversational level, allowing them to experience a meaningful conversation that will enable their construction of knowledge through social interaction (Wertsch, 1985; Wink & Putney, 2002). There are inherent assumptions to modern instructional design practices that relate to theory of social constructivism in current foreign language teaching practices (Merrill, 1991; Wertsch, 1985).

If teachers want learners to think critically about their own learning and to be self-motivated to complete tasks, it is important to recognize the power of metacognition and critical thinking for problem-solving in the foreign language classroom. If learners are speaking to plan actions, they are engaging in metacognition (Brooks & Donato, 1994) to cope with the task and to identify concrete procedures to combat the sometimes ambiguous foreign language. This metacognitive chat is a higher order thinking skill and is ideal in problem-solving and task completion. However, when learners are engaging in communication with their peers and their teacher, and using the foreign language, they are scaffolding and constructing knowledge through communication.
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Creating tasks that require foreign language learner metacognition requires purposeful planning from the foreign language teacher. Often, textbooks include semi-scripted, decontextualized, communicative activities that demand basic question-response speaking patterns (Nunan, 1992; Van Patten, 1998). Overt scripting of speaking practice negates the spontaneity present in authentic conversation, and removes the opportunity to experience the foreign language through social interactions that support scaffolding and construction of knowledge. It is imperative that foreign language teachers who seek to create a communicative classroom understand what the term communicative means and how foreign language learners use native language metacognition, alongside interlanguaging strategies, to produce utterances that convey meaning.

Over the past two decades, the concept of CLT has become both a goal to strive for in the foreign language classroom and a point of contention between textbook writers and classroom teachers over what, exactly, defines CLT (Van Patten, 1998). There is a wide variety of forms of communication including casual writing such as posting on social media, and business writing such as letters and electronic mail. There are casual conversations among friends and formal conversations between colleagues and acquaintances. Considering the variety of situations that require some form of written or spoken communication, it is not surprising that CLT takes the form of diverse classroom learning tasks and encompasses multiple teaching strategies.
Defining Communicative

Trends in foreign language instruction traditionally display a dichotomy between teaching the foreign language from the perspective of grammatical structure and teaching the foreign language with a focus on conveying meaning, even if the speaker’s utterances are wrought with errors (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Oxford, 2006; Snow, Met, & Genessee, 1989). As efforts to teach foreign language for the purpose of developing speakers have increased, textbook companies have designed pre-written, communicative tasks to help develop oral proficiency for foreign language learners. The word communicative used in the field of foreign language teaching is versatile, and can be used to label multiple foreign language classroom tasks. A study conducted to analyze the word communicative as used by textbook publishers to label exercises, revealed that the word encompassed reading, writing, and speaking activities (Van Patten, 1998). The author of that textbook study, Van Patten, determined through his work that textbook companies apply the word communicative liberally to any task that requires the foreign language learner to convey meaning.

Van Patten (1998) suggests that teachers recognize all forms of communication by providing learners with ongoing instruction in relevant practice of reading, writing, and speaking, which are all communicative functions necessary for acquiring a foreign language. Van Patten’s findings provide a valuable glimpse into the foreign language classroom textbook resources widely available to foreign language teachers, highlighting the importance of this dissertation study. It is important and necessary for the foreign language learner be exposed to opportunities for authentic practice. All foreign language instruction that is relevant and worthwhile should require the foreign language learner to convey meaning. Foreign language
learners become accustomed to speaking by being exposed to tasks that are designed to stimulate collaborative problem-solving that requires foreign language learners to speak the foreign language in order to complete a task.

**Historic Relevance of Communicative Language Teaching**

In recent years, as globalization of economic and political interdependence has grown around the world, those who claim to know a foreign language are expected to demonstrate fluent speech in that language (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Mulenda, 2013). Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) conducted a study to determine if role play as a task-based form of communicative language teaching would have any effect on language learners’ ability to speak the foreign language (in this case, English). They claim through their findings that foreign language learners who participated in role play tasks showed greater improvement in their ability to speak the foreign language. The study has implications for researching the concept of role play as a task-based approach to CLT. However, some sections of the article are lacking in detail, namely the discussion portion. The greatest contribution of this study is the authors’ argument that using task-based approaches to CLT provides rich communicative language opportunities for foreign language learners.

Modeling real-life, problem-solving linguistic situations in the foreign language classroom through the use of tasks is a powerful tool for communication and critical thinking. People use language to interact with one another in both formal and casual settings. Language serves multiple functions. There are situational rules for casual and formal, written and spoken communication that require adaptation strategies across any language (Berns, 1984; Savignon,
When the goal of foreign language learning is to become a speaker of the language (Nunan, 1992), communication requires knowledge of function (Salimi, 2015) and ability of both the speaker and the listener, the reader and the writer, to decode the symbolic meaning of language (Savignon, 1997). Communication requires cooperation between a speaker and a listener (Savignon, 1997). Modern globalization and harmonious intercultural relations in the age of digital media and fast-paced, sensationalized news stories, require the type of communicative negotiation that Savignon champions. Decades after Savignon’s initial theoretical outline of CLT and communicative competence, her theories remain significant and relevant in the age of global communication, upholding the continued relevance of CLT. There is a need to continue to research effective strategies for teaching communication, and, in particular, speaking. In the field of foreign language teaching, CLT is the support system for TBLT models of foreign language instruction. CLT stands in direct opposition to many of the historically popular foreign language learning movements outlined in Table 2.2.
Table 2.2: Historic Foreign language Teaching Methods (Richards & Rodgers, 1989)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Instructional Goal</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Grammatical Rules</th>
<th>Curricular Philosophy</th>
<th>Theorists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar-Translation</td>
<td>1840s-1940s</td>
<td>Read literature of the foreign language</td>
<td>Based on the literature of the foreign language</td>
<td>Taught inductively</td>
<td>Focus on translation accuracy; uses learner native language to teach the foreign language</td>
<td>Karl Plötz, H. S. Ollendorf, Johann Meidinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct (Natural)</td>
<td>1920s-1930s</td>
<td>Navigate daily life using foreign language</td>
<td>Focused on items encountered in daily life</td>
<td>Taught inductively through scripted, sequenced, question-answer series</td>
<td>Focus on speaking and listening but also demands grammatical accuracy; uses foreign language as mode of instruction</td>
<td>Gouin, L. Saveur, F. Franke, Berlitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audiolingual</td>
<td>1950s-1960s</td>
<td>Good behavioral habits of grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>Learners hear, imitate, and repeat before reading and writing words</td>
<td>Taught inductively using analogy drills</td>
<td>Focus on context and culture; uses foreign language as mode of instruction</td>
<td>B. F. Skinner, William Moulton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT</td>
<td>Late 1960s through early 2000s with many elements remaining in use today</td>
<td>Development of relationships with other “speakers”</td>
<td>No specific order is required for learning sets of vocabulary</td>
<td>Structure drills used only as needed and the use of translation is limited and discouraged</td>
<td>Focus on communication; learners use the foreign language from the beginning; learner native language for explanations is acceptable as needed</td>
<td>Chomsky, Hymes, Halliday, Savignon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Understanding CLT is helpful in visualizing the use of TBLT as a communicative teaching strategy in the foreign language classroom (Dörnyei, 2002; Kim, 2008; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As explained in a previous section of this chapter, generally, a use of the term, communicative, means that foreign language learners are required to convey meaning using the
foreign language (Van Patten, 1998). Writing about TBLT in the 1990s, Long and Crookes (1992) categorized types of foreign language class structures by course purpose, taking into consideration whether courses were grammatical form and function focused or whether courses were meaning focused. At the time that Long and Crookes were writing, TBLT, as a means of placing emphasis on communication, was rising in popularity as a learner-centered approach to language learning (Long & Crookes, 1992).

Yet, there were widespread issues of implementation. Tasks lacked differentiation, task difficulty levels were difficult to anticipate and to monitor, and grading tasks was cumbersome because of the multi-step procedural processes of the tasks and the inability of learners to control their language accurately to accomplish the tasks without errors that affected conveyance of meaning (Long & Crookes, 1992). Essentially, the shift in foreign language teaching methodologies was extremely different from the historic lineage of foreign language teaching displayed previously in this chapter in Table 1.

More recently, Salimi (2015) conducted a study in which task complexity was analyzed based on foreign language learners’ task accuracy. By controlling the amount of form-focused instruction delivered to learners who then completed foreign language classroom tasks that were measured for accuracy of linguistic form, Salimi found that task complexity increased if a focus on form was a required component of the spoken production of foreign language learners during a classroom task. Of course, it is difficult for a novice learner to focus on all aspects of spoken language: form, function, context, vocabulary choice, pronunciation, to name a few (Skehan, 2001). The foreign language teacher must strike a balance among all of the aspects of spoken
language that are most important for supporting oral proficiency development for the learners in the classroom at the time of the task.

It is essential to note that TBLT has been embedded in foreign language teaching for decades, but recently emerged as a more controlled, refreshed, research-based approach to CLT. In particular, with growing numbers of foreign language learners opting to learn English in global regions such as Asia and the Middle East (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Kirkgöz, 2011), there is a growing body of research being conducted using varying task types around the world. It is less common to find studies on task types in the high school foreign language classroom in the United States. The next section will give further historic background information about TBLT.

In TBLT, task-based strategies are effective learning tools when they are purposefully sequenced to include pre-task and post-task activities that also align to learning outcomes (Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Long & Crookes, 1992). Teaching from a task-based perspective is most influential on learning when both assignments and assessments are embedded into the curriculum through the use of tasks (Abraham & Vann, 1996). A task that is seamlessly embedded in the foreign language teacher’s instructional design can be a powerful tool to meet instructional goals and increase foreign language learner oral proficiency.

When TBLT initially came into focus as a strategy for teaching foreign language, it was clear that tasks had value as learning activities with a goal (Long & Crookes, 1992; Nunan, 1992; Oxford, 2006), but the innate complexities of using tasks in foreign language teaching also became apparent (Bruton, 2005; Campbell, 1988; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Oxford, 2006). TBLT can be widely adapted across the curriculum (Long & Crookes,
1992; Nunan, 1992; Salimi, 2015) and can be beneficial to developing oral proficiency in the foreign language classroom (Abraham & Vann, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Ritchie, 2003). Task-based instructional approaches seek to model real-life situations as closely as possible. Assignments and assessments that are task-based enable foreign language teachers to gain a wider scope of understanding of learner improvement in the foreign language and the performance of the learner when applying the foreign language structure and vocabulary to convey meaning and problem solve (Long & Crookes, 1992; Nunan, 1992; Oxford, 2006).

Historic studies conducted in the field of TBLT have taught a common lesson: in an ideal task-based foreign language class structure, the entire unit of study is built around the task (Kirkgöz, 2011; Long & Crookes, 1993; Nunan, 1992). Kirgöz (2011) provides further advice for teachers in creating and controlling effective tasks, advising that the teacher maintain equilibrium between accuracy of the foreign language and movement toward higher-task complexity in the foreign language classroom as the curriculum progresses. Kirkgöz’s study is an example of the types of studies that have been conducted in the field of TBLT during the last several years: Middle Eastern or Asian foreign language learners of English. In Kirkgöz’s study, participants were Turkish learners of English as a foreign language. The findings of the study suggest that there are implications for using technology in the modern foreign language classroom to assist foreign language teachers in maintaining a balance between ever-increasing task difficulty levels and the CLT values of conveying meaning without losing accuracy of grammatical form.
TBLT and Constructivism

Kirkgöz’s (2011) study that centered on increasing task complexity without sacrificing accuracy is important because it focuses on the delicate balance between pushing foreign language learners to increase proficiency and providing instruction and feedback on the structural components of speaking that are necessary to clearly convey meaning. Foreign language learners may be exposed to challenges that scaffold learning, or construct knowledge, through social interactions (Wertsch, 1985; Wink & Putney, 2002) that push them along the continuum of proficiency as new applications of language usage are borne of exposure to structured tasks completed with peers and teacher in the classroom. Challenges embedded in tasks may include a focus on linguistic form and production of spoken language with strict adherence to accuracy as one possibility for scaffolding learning to increase learner proficiency levels (Salimi, 2015). If speakers are able to find common ground and common levels of conversational capabilities, they will be able to construct meaning and build upon one another’s contributions to the conversation (Wertsch, 1985). Foreign language teachers responsible for designing instruction that creates speakers utilize learners’ prior content knowledge by building on that knowledge to guide learners into new foreign language learning territory (Belland, Glazewski & Richardson, 2008). This is a constructivist approach to instructing foreign language in the classroom.

Types of Tasks

In order for a foreign language task to be a task, it must meet four criteria: an emphasis on meaning, the conveyance of meaning, information, or opinion, reliance on learner skills and
scaffolded resources, and a clear outcome aside from language practice. Four types of tasks are described in this section. Each task is described initially in a low-complexity format, followed by explanations and examples for increasing the complexity level of the task. The first two task types, information gap tasks and dictogloss tasks, were used for this study because their complexity level (Nunan, 1992) can be adapted to learner needs. Both information gap tasks and dictogloss tasks can provide a challenge to novice and intermediate foreign language learners without creating frustration (Pica et al., 2006). The last two task types discussed in this section, dramatic role play tasks and decision-making tasks, were not used for this study. Both dramatic role play and decision-making tasks require the learner to have a strong command of vocabulary and linguistic structure, or they begin to behave similarly to information gap and dictogloss tasks. Tasks that are inappropriately matched to foreign language learner proficiency levels may have a negative effect on learner motivation to complete the task (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015). The abstraction and ambiguity of foreign language learning (Grigorenko et al., 2000; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015) in the midst of complex tasks means it is vital to match complexity to language learners’ proficiency levels. The researcher for this study opted to use information gap and dictogloss tasks rather than role play and decision-making tasks.

**Information gap.**

Low-complexity information gap tasks are often included in scripted curricula generated by textbook companies that wish to present published materials as communicative (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Van Patten, 1998). Low-complexity information gap tasks are easily accessible to foreign language teachers because they are relatively easy to explain, easy to set up, and easy for
learners to complete, facilitating the semblance of CLT. Information gap tasks are indeed embedded within the teaching methodology of CLT. However, information gap tasks that are too tightly scripted or too narrowly focused on one minute aspect of the foreign language may not be as communicative as they appear.

Information gap tasks can be created to prompt speaking practice focus on vocabulary, grammar, or both, depending on the unit of study being completed in the foreign language classroom. The goal of the tasks is to use the foreign language in a structured environment to share information that is needed by other members of the group based on a given scenario. Information gap tasks can be manipulated to be more scripted or less scripted as needed. Low-complexity information gap tasks take the form of two charts that list the names of a group of people and display a foreign language vocabulary term next to each name within the two charts. Each foreign language learner partner has one of the two charts with some information missing. Partners use the foreign language to ask one another for the missing information (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long & Crookes, 1992; Nunan, 1992; Ritchie, 2003; Skehan, 2001). The information gap tasks used for this study were high-complexity tasks. Figure 2.1 displays a low-complexity, scripted information gap task that asks partners to discuss information related to renting an apartment.
In the above low-complexity task, each partner takes a turn asking about the names that are missing information on the list. This example is of low level task complexity because it is highly scripted. There is no opportunity for deviation from the script. Alternatively, it is possible to increase task complexity by using the same apartment rental theme and providing foreign language learners with a pre-task activity that can build learner background knowledge on the vocabulary and structure required to complete a higher complexity task.

This study used high-complexity tasks during which learners collaboratively created and filled their own information gaps. To increase complexity in the apartment task, the foreign language learners could use authentic apartment listings from one of the foreign language countries. One foreign language learner could have the apartment listings and the other foreign language learner could have a checklist of desired apartment qualities and amenities. To work through the task a second time, partners could switch materials or even switch partners. The foreign language teacher could also ask each foreign language learner to create their own gap in
information by preparing a list of the items they would like to have in an apartment and how much rent money they would be willing to spend each month. Once this has been done, the foreign language teacher could distribute authentic apartment listings to each group, asking groups to determine which apartment listing is best fit for the checklist of qualities and amenities each learner has created. Figure 2.2 shows an example of authentic apartment listings for Paris, France (www.explorimmo.com, n.d.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>620 Euros</td>
<td>Paris 12ème Métro Reuilly Diderot - Rue de Reuilly - Dans un immeuble Pierre de Taille et Brique au 6ème étage ascenseur un studio en parfait état de 19 m² avec vue dégagée composé de: Une pièce principale en parquet avec une porte fenêtre donnant sur un balcon - Une petite cuisine séparée équipée - Une salle d'eau avec WC et un branchement de machine à laver - Digicode. Honoraires de location conformes au décret en vigueur. (<a href="http://www.explorimmo.com">www.explorimmo.com</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>885 Euros</td>
<td>Paris 11ème Métro Ledru Rollin - Rue Trousseau - Dans un immeuble ancien au quatrième étage ascenseur un appartement de Deux Pièces 33,43m² en bon état comprenant: Une entrée avec un placard - Un séjour en parquet - Une petite cuisine partiellement équipée (plaques, frigidaire) avec une petite fenêtre - Une chambre avec une grande penderie - Une salle d'eau avec WC et branchement de machine à laver le linge - Double vitrage - Chauffage et eau chaude individuels au gaz - Exposition Sud/Sud/Ouest - Digicode - Interphone - Cave - Gardien. Appartement proche toutes commodités, commerces et transports. Honoraires de location conformes au décret en vigueur. (<a href="http://www.explorimmo.com">www.explorimmo.com</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>815 Euros</td>
<td>Paris 8ème Métro Saint-Augustin - Rue Portalis - Dans un immeuble ancien au cinquième étage sans ascenseur un Studio en bon état de 28,41 m² comprenant: Une entrée - Une pièce principale avec un coin cuisine américaine aménagée et équipée (plaques, frigidaire, congélateur) - Grand placard de rangement - Une salle d'eau - WC séparé - Parquet au sol - Chauffage électrique par climatisation réversible et eau chaude individuel électrique - Digicode - Gardien. Honoraires de location conformes au décret en vigueur. (<a href="http://www.explorimmo.com">www.explorimmo.com</a>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,814 Euros</td>
<td>A louer appartement vide 3 pièces, de 61,76m², quartier Ternes, à proximité immédiate du métro Argentine. Situé au 4ème étage sans ascenseur d'un immeuble ancien, il donne entièrement sur cours. Une entrée couloir dessert le séjour de 16m². Contiguë au salon, une grande chambre de 15m², également accessible depuis l'autre chambre. Une seconde chambre d'environ 15m² est accessible depuis le couloir. Cuisine indépendante avec placards, plaques électriques et hotte. Salle de douche avec WC. Cheminées, parquet ancien, agréable hauteur sous plafond (2,67m), dressing et cave. Chauffage individuel au gaz. Gardien, digicode, interphone, porte blindée.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information in Figure 2.2 would be given to each foreign language learner group after each individual had already determined his or her desired apartment attributes and price range. A conversation would take place between the foreign language learners to determine which apartment is best for the list of needs generated. Figure 2.3 shows what the task conversation might look like between foreign language learners in a high complexity information gap task. In this type of task, roles of agent and client are assigned as a matter of task structure and orderly turn-taking only. Translations are provided after each French sentence.

| Agent: | Bonjour! Comment allez-vous? | (Hello! How are you?) |
| Client: | Bonjour! Je vais bien. Et vous? | (Hello! I’m doing fine. And you?) |
| Agent: | Moi aussi, je vais bien. Alors, vous cherchez un appartement à Paris? | (Me too, I’m doing fine. So, you’re looking for an apartment in Paris?) |
| Client: | Oui, je cherche un appartement meublé, tout petit parce que c’est juste moi. Je voudrais trouver un appartement dans un quartier résidentiel. | (Yes. I’m looking for a furnished apartment, small because it’s just me. I would like to find an apartment in a residential neighborhood.) |
| Agent: | Bon. Et combien de pièces est-ce que vous cherchez? | (Good. And how many rooms are you looking for?) |
| Client: | Je préfère avoir au moins deux pièces. | (I prefer to have at least two rooms.) |
| Agent: | D’accord. Vous voudriez avoir un ascenseur dans l’immeuble? | (Okay. Would you like to have an elevator in the building?) |
| Client: | Oui, je préfère avoir un ascenseur. En plus, je voudrais une machine à laver. | (Yes, I prefer to have an elevator. And also, I would like a washing machine.) |
| Agent: | Et combien d’Euros? | (How many Euros?) |
| Client: | Pas plus de 700 Euros par mois. | (Not more than 700 Euros monthly.) |
| Agent: | Selon vos préférences, je vous recommande cet appartement qui est à louer au prix de 620 Euros payé par mois. | (According to your preferences, I recommend to you this apartment that is for rent at the price of 620 Euros per month.) |

Figure 2.3: Conversation example: High complexity information gap task “Appartement”
The example conversation that appears in Figure 2.3 is unscripted. However, it is structured to incorporate most of the vocabulary terms and cultural aspects of apartment living in Paris that might be covered in an instructional unit about apartments and houses. Foreign language learners would have choices in how they structure questions and they would have linguistic options in how they express their desires, wants, and needs. The task is a higher complexity than simply using a basic chart. It is far-removed from audiolingual memorization. At the same time, it is interesting and engaging to imagine that one could communicate in speaking to obtain an apartment in Paris. The task remains in interpersonal conversational format, using only first and second person questions and responses. This takes some of the complexity out of the task while still requiring foreign language learners to practice expressing their own opinions and preferences within the vocabulary and structural limitations of their language acquisition stage and the information learned within the unit of study.

The benefit of information gap tasks is that, for foreign language learners with a high task motivation and a willingness to speak, the tasks can be effective tools for developing oral proficiency by requiring learners to strategize as they work through the task, using what they know, what they are already learning, and collaborating with group members to complete the task using the foreign language (Doughty & Pica, 1986). Information gap tasks diagnose areas of strength and weakness in foreign language learner oral proficiency and provide opportunities for foreign language learners to self-assess during collaborative interactions with other speakers (Pica et al., 2006).

Information gap tasks also present some limitations. For foreign language learners who are at a lower phase of the language acquisition stages, task motivation can lapse if the task
complexity is too high. This is especially true if groups have one dominant speaker whose language acquisition stage is at a higher level than other group members. Stronger speakers may carry the foreign language conversation in these cases (Doughty & Pica, 1986). Teachers may teach the tasks and teach strategies to learners for task completion as well as monitor groups and make adjustments for each task cycle as needed (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Nunan, 1992). Teachers design and monitor information gap tasks in the foreign language classroom so learners are challenged but also have an opportunity to be successful in the desired communicative learning outcome for the unit of study (Doughty & Pica, 1986).

A lack of careful planning and a mis-match between the desired task outcome and the task process are TBLT pitfalls, which researchers have warned about during the past decades. Nunan (1992) stresses repeatedly the importance of creating meaningful and clear task processes. A study conducted by Collins and White (2015) looked at varying task types and their effect on foreign language learners’ ability to incorporate past forms of verbs with accuracy. One of the task types used in the study was information gap. The findings of the study showed that some of the tasks were structured too loosely and that, for some of the tasks, instructions were unclear, causing participant confusion and inability to complete the tasks. The literature demonstrates that information gap tasks are effective when designed with the learner in mind (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long & Crookes, 1992; Nunan, 1992). While TBLT can be a highly effective tool for building learner skills, the task design cycle must include purposeful scaffolding of learner knowledge on the topic of the task (Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016). Some novice foreign language learners might need a word bank or even a semi-scripted sentence or question starter (Collins & White, 2015). Collins and White reflected that changing the models of some of the
information gap tasks might have led to higher rates of successful task completion. While Collins and White’s study disappoints in its ability to deliver definitive findings due to a lack of task completion on the part of participants, the lessons learned are valuable for foreign language instructors who may use TBLT and information gap tasks. Their findings highlight the importance of the role of the teacher in planning and designing tasks.

Thoughtful and perfected design of the tasks alone is not enough to bolster foreign language learner oral proficiency. Foreign language teacher monitoring of, and even participation in, the information gap tasks with foreign language learner groups is the best way to support learners in the acquisition process during information gap tasks (Collins & White, 2015; Doughty & Pica, 1986). Task motivation and effectiveness of the task for language acquisition decrease when the teacher is not participating actively with task groups.

**Dictogloss.**

Low-complexity dictogloss tasks ask foreign language learners to take notes on a story that is being read and then to reconstruct that story using the foreign language, usually with the support of a partner or a small group. Dictogloss tasks require foreign language learners to use effective listening strategies, and to compare and contrast what they comprehend of a story with what a partner comprehends, eventually collaboratively retelling what took place (Kim, 2008; Skehan, 2001). The dictogloss also has multiple opportunities for modifications and can be adjusted to personalize the task to individual learner language acquisition levels and needs. Dictogloss can be modified to use news stories in foreign language media, to involve acting out a
skit to retell a story, to incorporate both writing and oral components, or to use pictures and illustrations as aides to help learners.

To create a low-complexity dictogloss task, the same apartment theme used in the information gap task examples could also be adapted to become a dictogloss task. Rather than foreign language learners reading the apartment listings, they could listen to each one. The foreign language teacher could read through the listings, even allowing learners to take notes. Afterwards the teacher could pair foreign language learners, provide each group with the four different apartment prices, and ask foreign language learners to recreate the listings, matching each one to the price.

This study used high-complexity dictogloss tasks. To modify the dictogloss task to create a higher complexity, the foreign language learners could verbally recreate the listings in conversation based on the notes that were taken during the readings of the apartment listings. The foreign language teacher could ask learners to choose an apartment from the dictogloss reading and give a tour to a client of that apartment, recreating as accurately as possible the listing that was read before the task. Table 2.3 displays several examples of dictogloss being used in multiple classrooms, content areas, and age levels.

Table 2.3: Dictogloss Examples for Specific Purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dictogloss Description</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss in a Japanese primary school classroom</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfPrGTNrRNc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfPrGTNrRNc</a> York (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss steps shown in a video from an American elementary English Language Arts class</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAGYBKkgxmI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAGYBKkgxmI</a> Dagher (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictogloss being used in an English as a foreign language classroom to direct learner focus to structure and vocabulary of the present perfect</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRQIDMCjS9c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lRQIDMCjS9c</a> Spencer (2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are multiple options for modifying dictogloss tasks to align to learning outcomes within the foreign language, whether they be structure and grammar, vocabulary, or sequence words, the noticing of tense changes, and more. In the first example, the teacher used dictogloss to draw learner attention to sequencing the events of a story. Learners used conversation and pictures to recreate a story collaboratively. The second example demonstrates a teacher using dictogloss to focus learners on vocabulary words. The teacher wrote the important words on the board and told learners that those words must be used as they recreated the story. The final example (Spencer, 2012) is common in high school foreign language classrooms in the United States. Spencer used dictogloss to draw student attention to complex verb tense structure.

Remember that a foreign language task must meet four criteria: it makes meaning, it communicates meaning, information, or an opinion, it relies on the skills and scaffolded supports of the learner, and it has an outcome other than the practice of language itself. The limitation of dictogloss is also one of its strengths. Dictogloss tends to be encapsulated by the vocabulary of the story that sets the stage for the task to follow, putting it at risk for losing sight of its outcome and sidetracking to a focus on a linguistic structure only. This is because when performing a dictogloss task, the foreign language teacher draws learner attention to a specific purpose of practice such as sequence of events, main ideas, grammatical structures, or vocabulary terms (Kim, 2008; Skehan, 2009). The purpose of directing learner attention to specific information is to facilitate task completion to target skills practice that aligns to the desired lesson and unit outcomes. The focus that dictogloss can create on foreign language structure or vocabulary is also a great strength of the exercise because it requires learners to put knowledge of content into
communicative practice in collaboration with other foreign language learners (Kim, 2008; Skehan, 2009).

A study by Fahim and Ghanbar (2014) examined the effects of two form-focused (grammatical focused) tasks to determine whether the tasks still had an effect on foreign language learners’ skill levels after an extended period of time had passed. The authors of the study used dictogloss as one of the tasks. The authors contrasted the experimental group with a control group that used translation and sentence ordering tasks. When Fahim and Ghanbar assessed foreign language learners from each group, they found that the group who completed the dictogloss tasks scored higher on the immediate posttest and lower on the extended posttest than the group that completed translation and sentence order tasks. Fahim and Ghanbar (2014) concluded that their results were inconclusive and that there were multiple variables that may have had an effect on task completion and, ultimately, the posttest results of the study. One variable Fahim and Ghanbar mentioned, similar to Collins and White (2015), was task instructions and clarity of task procedures, again highlighting the importance of the role of the teacher in designing tasks and creating scaffolding to support learners in maintaining task momentum and in completing tasks through meaningful language learner conversation.

**Dramatic role play.**

This section and the next one will provide further information about the communicative tasks of role play and decision making. In both task types, the open-ended conversation demands a high level of proficiency and a strong foreign language learner willingness to speak and take
risks. For the purpose of this study, role-play is considered to have a high-complexity based on its characteristic open-ended conversational possibilities (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010).

The purpose of role play as a language learning task is to support learners in developing their ability to practice instant-access, spontaneous speaking skills that communicate meaning in the target language (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010). To successfully negotiate at a market, order at a restaurant, or book a hotel room, the speaker strategizes methods to convey needs, wants, and more (Cohen, 2014). For role play tasks to be effective, clarity of communication and specificity of desired outcomes are key. The teacher matches the instructions to the desired outcome (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Nunan, 1992; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Table 2.4 displays some possible open-ended role play scenarios that might work in the foreign language classroom.

Table 2.4: Dramatic Role Play Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
<th>Possible Dramatic Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Give information about a location within a country that speaks the target language and generate clarification and information questions for the tour guide to answer.</td>
<td>Tourists and tour guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Plan a meal and, using a specified budget, negotiate with vendors in an open-air market to purchase necessary items.</td>
<td>Vendors and clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film and literature</td>
<td>Reenact a dramatic scene from a film or a work of literature in the words of the language learners</td>
<td>Characters from a specified film or work of literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) conducted a study to determine if role play would have any effect on foreign language learners’ ability to speak the target language. They generated much data but did not provide much detail in their discussion. The authors claimed that foreign
language learners who participated in the group that used role play activities were able to improve their speaking skills. The study had some weaknesses in its presentational write up but it also built a strong argument for TBLT to support foreign language learners who will become speakers and who will be able to communicate effectively.

The benefit to using role play is in the potential opportunity to be able to use various forms of language, possibly more casual speech, or words that are expressive and specific to the situation, that one might not be able to use in typical classroom settings (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Kao et al., 2011). In contrast, role-play can be so open ended that the task complexity level moves out of range of the novice learners. Role play tasks require a wide scope of vocabulary as well as a confidence level with structural components of oral communication such as grammar, syntax, and command of a wide vocabulary (Crookall & Oxford, 1990).

Decision making.

This section describes decision-making tasks. For the purpose of this study, decision-making tasks typically present a scenario that has multiple possible solutions. Meaning must be made through comprehension of the scenario and a group of learners must come to consensus on which solution is best (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008). The complexity of the process presented uncertainty of its viability for the study. The goal of decision-making is to decide upon an outcome or solution that will most closely align with problem’s goals and the desired instructional learning outcomes (Campbell, 1988). In a decision-making process, the group must communicate and question one another in order to come to a consensus that will solve a problem. The skills required to complete this task rely upon a strong and readily accessible target language
vocabulary and command of target language structures that help a speaker to make meaning clear (Campbell, 1988).

There are multiple examples of decision-making tasks used in the foreign language classroom. Some examples that appear in the literature ask groups to view artificial profiles of specific individuals seeking to meet a specific goal (adopting a child, seeking a job). The group is asked to use the target language to come to consensus by selecting a candidate who is the best match for the desired outcome of the task (Doughty & Pica, 1986). Table 2.5 displays some possible decision-making task scenarios.

Table 2.5: Decision-Making Task Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Discussion Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job search</td>
<td>Come to consensus on the best candidate for a position</td>
<td>job description, resumes, and interview videos or written responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Come to consensus on a home to purchase or rent</td>
<td>wish list, home location, price, layouts, furnishings, utilities, amenities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying a Car</td>
<td>Come to consensus on which car to purchase</td>
<td>transportation needs, car price, mileage, age, upkeep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the target language to come to consensus in a group requires participants to be able to modify language by asking one another for clarification and by the ability to re-explain an opinion using alternative vocabulary expression (Doughty & Pica, 1986). The task demands a proficiency level of intermediate or above across group members. Mismatched task complexity and proficiency levels can create frustration and lead to task abandonment (Nunan, 1992).

Complexity of decision-making tasks can be lowered, but tasks tend to remain open-ended. Seeing a need to further explore some of the motivational problems that may affect learner participation in tasks such as decision-making, MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) conducted a study that merged Second Language Acquisition theory with behavioral motivation theory to
examine the continuum of language learning as it relates to task motivation. Dörnyei (2002) outlines a concept of motivation that is constantly changing as individuals orient toward tasks as they learn. The struggle innate within complex communicative tasks affects the motivation of certain levels of learners to struggle and complete difficult tasks (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015).

The tasks that MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) asked their participants to complete were decision-making tasks of varied complexity. One required the speaker to give directions to a shopping mall while another asked the speaker to describe the role of parliament in the Canadian government. Tasks required speakers to consider which aspects of explanation to choose to most easily address the goals of the prompt as well as to consider vocabulary and structural abilities and limitations. The authors found that “vocabulary and grammatical demands” were heavily influential on participants’ motivation to complete each task (p. 123).

The implications of the study conducted by MacIntyre and Serroul (2015) is one of educated, professional teacher choice in implementing decision-making tasks in the foreign language classroom. If teachers are to support language acquisition for each learner, tasks need to meet the needs of the learner without creating a high level of frustration (Nunan, 1992). Tasks that are appropriately selected help maintain learner motivation in the midst of linguistic limitations (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015).

A study conducted outside of the field of SLA by Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2008) explored Vygotsky’s scaffolding within problem-based learning by presenting learners with minimal case-study information and facilitating learner-generated questions. This study is included in this review because of its demonstration of the problem-based teaching methodology and its framework that relies on the theories of Vygotsky. In the study, learners built, or
scaffolded, their conversation upon the questions and responses of one another. Although the study is focused on one small group of five people, Hmelo-Silver and Barrows found that collaborative problem solving is built on a culture of questioning. Not only was profound attention paid to scaffolding using the ideas of each group member to work toward a solution, but interpersonal communication played a role in the authors’ findings. Communicative and collaborative thinking was required of all members of the group in order to gradually create solutions.

The benefit of using decision-making tasks in the foreign language classroom is that the complexity level of the task lends itself to multiple linguistic opportunities (Campbell, 1988). Individual ideas become points of a multifaceted solution to a presented problem. Conversely, there are limitations to the task within the lower levels of language acquisition that might make implementing decision-making tasks difficult. According to Doughty and Pica (1986), decision-making tasks can be so complex that they are unable to support language acquisition inside the foreign language classroom. Complex tasks can be abstract, and the loose structure of such a task may negate participation of target language learners with lower acquisition levels or lower confidence levels (Campbell, 1988).

**Teacher Role**

When viewing foreign language learning through the lenses of SLA, CLT and TBLT, the teacher role is widespread within the classroom. Language learning, a slow process of acquisition over time, places a burden on the teacher to continuously generate tasks that will move learners forward while also building learner capacity to communicate independently.
Language learning outcomes are heavily influenced by the culture created in the classroom (Ryan & Makarova, 2001). Learners depend on confirmation of their progress in the foreign language classroom to maintain their desire to continue the acquisition process (Felder & Henriques, 1995). The role the teacher plays in the task matters greatly if the task is to be effective in improving learner speaking skills (Nunan 1992; Salimi, 2015). Not only do learner proficiency levels play a role, but learner background and cultural knowledge make a difference in foreign language learner success in task completion (Newsom-Ray & Rutter, 2016). It is the teacher’s role to engage the learners in conversational practice delivered at a level that is tailored to meet learners’ needs. In other words, the teacher plays a role in finding the language level at which both the learners and the teacher can communicate effectively. This way, both teacher and learners can collaboratively construct, or scaffold, a conversation together in the social situation the teacher has designed (Wertsch, 1985). From designing the task to seeing the task completed properly and effectively in the classroom, the teacher’s planning and implementation matter greatly.

**Task Design**

Foreign language teachers using TBLT access foreign language learners’ Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD) to increase learner self-sufficiency in speaking the foreign language (Belland et al., 2008; Nunan, 1992). Wink & Putney (2002) state that Vygotsky “conceptualized a zone of proximal development as a way of viewing what children are coming to know” (p. 86). Learning is contextualized through purposefully designed tasks that create social-linguistic interactions between learners at varying levels of the learning process and their
teacher (Wertsch, 1985; Wink & Putney, 2002). Teachers not only design level-appropriate tasks
for learners, they also teach learners how to complete the tasks by embedding tasks within
communicative experiences that utilize the foreign language (Belland et al., 2008; Kirkgöz,
The ZPD is part of Vygotsky’s concept of stages of learning based on what learners can do on
their own, what learners can do with support, and what learners cannot do on their own and
represents the gradual construction from a learner’s existing knowledge to a learner’s new
knowledge. The ZPD directly relates to the balance of task-complexity and progression of
acquisition of the foreign language in TBLT. Foreign language teachers play a major role in how
learners move through each zone of proximal development based on the support that is provided
in the classroom.

For example, the teacher’s careful design decisions may consider the benefits and
shortcomings of specific types of tasks in relationship to what the teacher knows learners are
able to complete independently and what learners are able to complete with teacher support. In
designing tasks, the teacher would need to maintain a balance between task purposes,
conveyance of meaning, and linguistic accuracy (Nunan, 1992; Salimi, 2015), based on what is
known about the learners’ abilities to manage various aspects of the foreign language. Learner
acquisition levels play a role in the speaker’s ability to balance meaning with grammatical
accuracy. According to Bruton (2005), a risk of TBLT is that accuracy of grammar could
potentially be lost, in turn threatening communicative success in the conveyance of meaning. All
of these complex details would need to be accounted for by the teacher when determining types
of tasks appropriate for classroom use. Foreign language teachers may weigh the risks and
benefits of all task-based assignments and assessments, structuring tasks to balance required grammatical form with conveyance of meaning (Bruton, 2005; Rose & Harbon, 2013).

**Motivating Task Completion**

The foreign language teacher navigates varied learner expectations and backgrounds of learners while also pushing learners along the continuum of language acquisition stages (Ryan & Makarova, 2001). Serving as a more experienced and knowledgeable mentor, the teacher adjusts his or her level of social interaction to meet the needs of the learner, making the task accessible and possible for the learner to complete (Wink & Putney, 2002). Foreign language learners may enter into the language classroom from a wide variety of cultural viewpoints about foreign languages along with stereotypes of populations and cultures that speak the foreign language around the world (Ryan & Makarova, 2001). This is another reason why task design is so important in the foreign language classroom. The teacher can more likely maintain foreign language learner motivation to continue the demanding language acquisition process if tasks are designed to be both challenging and accomplishable and if teacher support is embedded in the task completion process (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Kao et al., 2011; Nunan, 1992).

Teachers who participate in the task side by side with learners may monitor learner speaking but be aware of learner tendency to orient to a task. As teachers guide learners through the process of language acquisition, foreign language learners may use their dominant native language to frame new foreign language concepts within the familiar structures of their native language. This is done through the use of metacognitive chat during problem-solving tasks (Brooks & Donato, 1994). In such situations, metacognitive chat refers to thinking about a task
to discern the process of completion and to assign roles to one another in a group. In early research of TBLT and SLA, teacher participation in the task groups made tasks more effective in facilitating learner development of oral proficiency skills (Doughty & Pica, 1986). Task completion is possible using the foreign language even if it is interspersed with interlinguaging techniques for communication (Collins & White, 2015). Teacher participation in tasks with learners is an opportunity for mentorship and coaching in the language acquisition process.

**Teacher-Learner Task Collaboration**

One supportive strategy for facilitating successful task completion is for the foreign language teacher to participate in the task collaboratively with learners (Kao et al., 2011; Ryan & Makarova, 2001). When teachers participate directly in the foreign language task by adopting a part of the responsibility of task completion as a member of the group, it is possible for the teacher to take a more direct role in asking questions of clarification that support foreign language learners in selecting appropriate vocabulary or grammar (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Kao et al., 2011). Realistically, it is impossible for teachers to participate with every task group simultaneously.

To manage a teacher’s ability to fully collaborate with all foreign language learner groups during tasks, teachers may consider the acquisition levels of learners and design groups and tasks that will not hinder the motivation and momentum of foreign language learners. However, it is best if teachers can partner collaboratively with learners because it provides for direct demonstration of use of linguistic strategies (Kao et al., 2011; Ryan & Makarova, 2011). In recent decades, motivation to learn a foreign language has become a factor in language
acquisition that is said to influence whether or not foreign language learners opt to use specific linguistic strategies (Gardner, 2001). An effective foreign language teacher is assumed to possess a proficient command of the foreign language. In consideration of the role a teacher plays in the language acquisition process, teacher collaboration with learners to complete a task is a powerful opportunity for learners to interact with a speaker of the foreign language (Gardner, 2001; Ryan & Makarova, 2011).

The role of the teacher in developing collaboration with learners and among learners in the foreign language classroom cannot be ignored. Like many other TBLT designs, it is rooted in Vygotsky’s concepts. Once the teacher has designed a task for learners, groups of learners of varying levels are formulated to make use of learners’ active engagement in the task together. Learners of various levels will regulate their conversations to support one another in task completion. The cooperation allows each learner to contribute through spoken language, to process what others are communicating, and to construct meaning and knowledge from the social interaction (Wertsch, 1985; Wink & Putney, 2002). Such collaboration, or group scaffolding, through conversation holds powerful implications for foreign language learning. Classroom tasks that replicate reality facilitate development of problem-solving skills framed within the context of an individual career field (Nunan, 1992). Such instructional models assist learners in concretely applying otherwise abstract concepts. For example, grammar learned through prescribed written exercises may highlight the linguistic rules of the foreign language in an orderly sequence. However, no demand is placed on the foreign language learner to use the foreign language in authentic communication. There is a gap between the learner’s understanding of how the foreign language is supposed to work and the learner’s ability to
navigate through a conversation that demands putting orderly rules into communicative practice (Al Muhaimeed, 2013). At the crossroads of concrete and orderly grammatical structure and real-life, time-bound, oral communication, there are demands on a speaker to instantaneously construct a coherent spoken response (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Merrill, 1991; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). The social interactions of learners during task completion matters greatly if scaffolding is to be used effectively to increase foreign language learner oral proficiency.

**Conclusion**

No matter what task type is in use in the foreign language classroom, the common goal is to create foreign language speakers. Since immersion in the foreign language and culture is not an option for the average foreign language learner in the United States, TBLT is one strategy for providing a simulated foreign language speaking environment. The long line of TBLT studies and theories over the decades is indication that it has staying power as a foreign language instructional strategy. More importantly, in the age of data-driven instruction, recent TBLT studies have sought not just to compare task-based classrooms to non-task-based classrooms, but to instead determine what types of tasks are most beneficial to various learners for teaching specific components of foreign language oral proficiency. This is certainly a shift in TBLT research. However, the underlying assumptions of the value of communicative tasks in the methods of CLT and the gradual process of acquisition present in SLA remain at the heart of foreign language pedagogical philosophies. TBLT task types and their effectiveness for improving foreign language proficiency for foreign language learners must continue to be explored across languages, cultures, and school systems, including in the high school foreign
language classroom in the United States. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology of this study in detail. After that, the findings of the study will be shared in Chapter 4 and a discussion of the findings will follow in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study had three research questions, which examined task-based language and teaching strategies used to develop high school foreign language learner oral proficiency. The first question examined the differences between two types of tasks used in the classroom to build learner oral proficiency. The second question examined the role that the foreign language teacher played in the development of foreign language oral proficiency in the high school foreign language classroom. Examination of these topics necessitated meaningful investigation of both learner speaking test scores and the teacher’s support of learners during speaking tasks.

Research Questions

Three research questions are addressed by this study.

1. Were there differences in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used: information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of these two types?

2. How did high school foreign language learners develop oral proficiency in French when different types of tasks are used?

3. What role did the French teacher play in high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development during dictogloss and information gap tasks?
This study used a mixed methods research design to answer the research questions and to capture a deep understanding of how a foreign language teacher used specific foreign language speaking tasks to support high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development. Speaking development is innately complex and dependent on many factors. Because of such complexity, for the purpose of this research study, there was a benefit to viewing the development of oral proficiency in the high school foreign language classroom through “multiple lenses simultaneously” (Mertens, 2015, p. 304) using a mixed methods approach.

Creswell (2013) describes research methodology as a “continuum” (p. 2). Research is not either quantitative or qualitative. Instead, research studies fall on the methodological continuum depending on the nature of the questions asked. A study may lean more toward one end of the continuum. Mixed methods studies, such as this one, fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum because the research questions require a research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to stimulate thorough exploration of each question (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Mertens, 2015). Table 3.1 displays the alignment of research questions to the research method that was best suited to examine each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: Were there differences in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used: information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of these two types?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How did high school foreign language learners develop oral proficiency in French when different types of tasks are used?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: What role did the French teacher play in high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development during dictogloss and information gap tasks?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting and Participants

This section provides an overview of how the high school that participated in this study was selected. The demographics of the school that participated in this study are described.

School

The high school that was chosen as the setting for this study was located in a large, urban area, in the suburbs of Chicago. At the time of this study, it had an enrollment of just over 3,600 learners with a 60% low-income population (Illinois Report Card, 2015). The learner body was racially diverse. According to the Illinois Report Card, 37.1% of learners were Hispanic, 29.3% Black, 21.8% White, and 7.4% Asian. Only four percent of the learner population was considered English Language Learners whose proficiency in English was not sufficient to participate with success in the English-speaking classroom (Illinois Report Card, 2015).

The World Languages Department of the high school that was featured in this study was large, offering courses in Spanish, French, and German at the time of this study. Based on information publicly available through the Illinois Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, this World Languages Department was identified as a candidate for this study based on recent CLT-focused, ACTFL-aligned curriculum practices. At the time of this study, members of the World Languages Department had been presenting on the curriculum and instructional strategies used in the department at various regional foreign language conferences.

General demographic information about learners in World Language Department courses was obtained from the Department Chair. At the time of this study, the school reported an average class size of 19 learners (Illinois Report Card, 2015), but the World Languages
Department French class offerings tended to host larger class sizes of approximately 30 learners per class, and sometimes even more. At the time of this study, the department had recently restructured its existing model of foreign language teaching, opting to align to Advanced Placement themes across the foreign language curriculum. Prior to this study, the World Languages Department used some task-based approaches to teaching speaking for learner oral proficiency development in all foreign language classes.

**Teacher**

The three second year French classes included in this study were taught by the same French teacher, who was interviewed for this study. During the course of the study, the teacher taught four second-year French classes and two third year French classes. She was tenured in the school district and had been teaching for ten years. At the time of this study, the teacher had participated in recent revisions to the foreign language curriculum at this high school. During her tenure at the participating high school, she had had heavy influence in the collaboration of the department to adopt updated pre- and post-tests for oral proficiency.

The participating teacher in this study was a second-career teacher. After spending time working in a corporate setting, she felt a calling to the classroom and a desire to teach French, a language she had majored in during college and that she had begun studying in high school. Prior to the study, the teacher explained that she believed that French was globally important and that exposing learners to new cultures was a necessity. As one aspect of her French teaching position, she had chaperoned multiple learner educational tours to France. While it was impossible to bring every learner to France, the teacher’s work with the French curriculum had integrated real-life, authentic French into the classroom. Annually, the participating teacher played a heavy role
in the curriculum review and revision work for the French curriculum in her department. She had a history of providing learners with realistic speaking practice. She had been known to deliver a taught curriculum that exposed learners to opportunities to develop their conversational skills so that if they were placed in the middle of France, they would be able to hold a conversation and maneuver through daily life.

When visiting the participating teacher’s classroom in September, several weeks into the school year, the size of the classroom was noticeably large. The ceiling was high and the square-walled room was vast. The floors were so shiny that the lights from the ceiling were reflected in the tiles. There were 40 learner desks and chairs spread throughout the classroom in groupings of three or four at a time. Massive, sunny windows along an entire wall of the room, let in natural light and brightened the classroom. A bistro table and wrought-iron chairs sat in the sunshine streaming through the windows.

Opposite these windows, across the classroom, the teacher had storage space such as long, wide shelves, and some closet space. On the shelves, the teacher had displayed colorful books about France, French artists, French-speaking countries, French architecture, and more. She had juxtaposed the books alongside various belongings that seemed to have been collected from around the world: colorful tins, various figurines, and miniatures of famous monuments.

The teacher had hung reference materials and learner projects on walls around the classroom. Any learner with wandering eyes would have been gazing at vocabulary from the foreign language or items related to the cultures that speak French around the world. At the front of the classroom, the wall was covered with a wide whiteboard and outfitted with a projector.
The teacher’s desk was tucked in a corner where the wall of windows was behind her chair and the wall of whiteboard was to her right.

**Foreign language Learners**

Information in this section is based on information obtained from the participating teacher during the study in the first semester of the 2016-2017 school year. Participation in this study was offered to a total of 116 learners in four different French 2 classes on the second day of the school year by the participating teacher, who is well-known and has a positive rapport with the learners and a good reputation among staff members. The reason for recruiting participants for the study in four different classes was to try to garner higher participation levels. In one of the classes, only two forms were returned in total, which caused that class to be eliminated from potential participation in the study. After the initial beginning-of-the-year shuffling of schedules, 86 learners, across three classes, ended up participating in the study. Table 3.2 displays the total participants for each class and the task sequence each class completed.

**Table 3.2: Classes and Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1</th>
<th>Class 2</th>
<th>Class 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 28</td>
<td>N = 27</td>
<td>N = 31</td>
<td>N = 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Gap</td>
<td>Dictogloss</td>
<td>Alternating Information Gap and Dictogloss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participating teacher indicated that, in order to generate buy-in and to recruit a large amount of learner participants from her classes, she sold the idea of participation in the study by telling her learners that they had been selected as a school and a foreign language department to
take part in and contribute to research on Foreign Language teaching. The participating teacher told the researcher that, in her building and district, much professional development is done based on the wide variety of classrooms and instructor styles available within the school district itself. She explained that colleagues in her building make collegial visits to one another’s classrooms and take notes about teaching strategies to provide feedback to their colleagues. The learners were used to seeing other adults in the classroom, and, according to the participating teacher, sometimes, teachers videoed portions of their classes for the purpose of examining instructional practices in professional development meetings. The school’s student handbook had a section about allowing video in the classrooms for the purpose of usage at the school and district levels for professional development of staff. Because of this, the teacher mentioned that learners are accustomed to a culture where video is used professionally to improve teaching.

At the same time that the teacher was collecting learner forms for this study, she was also collecting student handbook pages signed by students and parents as receipt and acknowledgement of the handbook rules. The business of the beginning of the school year is routine and mundane, but necessary. The participating teacher is required to obtain all handbook signature sheets from her designated group of learners and return those to the main office at the beginning of the school year. The teacher may have been able to retrieve a large number of participant forms in three of her classes because of the business of the beginning of the school year. However, the teacher also mentioned that when she does a field trip, it is not uncommon for her to obtain full, one hundred percent return of permission slips and participation from learners.

Ultimately, this study included three French 2 classes taught by the same teacher at a large high school in the suburbs of Chicago. Using classes taught by the same teacher made the
data collection process manageable. During the study in the fall of 2016, a total of 86 foreign language learners in three French classes participated in the study. At the start of the school year, class one had an enrollment of 30 learners and a total of 28 foreign language learner participants, class two had an enrollment of 32 learners and a total of 27 foreign language learner participants, and class three had an enrollment of 33 learners and a total of 31 foreign language learner participants. A fourth class that had been offered participation in the study had 21 learners in it and only two returned their forms, causing this class period to be eliminated from participation. While some foreign language learners spoke Spanish at home, none of the participants were in need of English Language Learner services to be successful in the rest of their English-language coursework in multiple content areas during the school day.

Consent and Assent

Consent forms (Appendix A) were distributed to all learners enrolled in the teacher’s French 2 classes and to the teacher. Foreign language learners who returned the appropriate consent form (one form for those under 18 years of age and one form for those 18 years of age or older) were able to participate in the study. Assent was also explained to learners orally prior to the start of the study. For the purpose of record-keeping required by the school district, an assent form (Appendix B) was also signed by the participants under 18 years of age to ensure that they understood their participation in the study.
Three French II classes were randomly assigned by lottery to complete a sequence of eight specific types of speaking tasks for the duration of the study. Class one completed only information gap tasks during the study. Class two completed only dictogloss tasks during the study. Class three alternated between information gap and dictogloss tasks every other week. Despite the differences in task types assigned to each class, each week, the task topic was the same. Table 3.3 displays the topics and task sequences each class followed during the course of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Task Topic</th>
<th>Information Gap</th>
<th>Dictogloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Les Types de Personnages</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Domaine des Dieux (Astérix)</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tro Tro, Champion de Judo</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Édith Piaf</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Des Héros au Quotidien</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>L’émouvant Discours de Lassana Bathily</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Les Crocodiles</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Les Petits Héros du Monde</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learners completed classroom speaking tasks with partners selected by the teacher. Each partnership completed classroom speaking tasks simultaneously during the allotted portion of the class period.
Descriptions of each type of task are provided in this section. Examples of a similar task to those used with participating classes and an example conversation that might take place during a specific task type are outlined in following sections to support the reader in visualizing how each task should work in each classroom. Tasks were aligned to the World Languages Department’s theme for French II, Unit 1: “C’est quoi un héros?” (What is a hero?). The hero unit outline can be viewed in Appendix C.

Class 1: Information Gap

Class one, with 28 learner participants, completed one information gap task per week during the course of the study. Information gap tasks were directly related to themes for each week. Themes are listed in the hero unit outline. Learners completed each information gap task with a partner.

The purpose of the information gap tasks was to use targeted vocabulary or structure to obtain information. Learners completed information gap tasks in partnerships, groups of two, which sometimes naturally merged together with a second partnership, creating a group of four, as learners sought out other learners in close physical proximity for the purpose of mentorship, or support. During information gap tasks, learners were able to see certain information, providing them with linguistic supports for scaffolding in the areas of reading, speaking, and listening as they completed the speaking tasks. Each information gap task was aligned to the learning targets and the core vocabulary addressed in the Unit 1 outline. Each learner in a partnership had only part of the total amount of information needed to construct the whole. Learners needed to
communicate with one another using targeted vocabulary and structure for Unit 1 to collaboratively construct the product specified for the task.

Unit 1 was a unit focused on heroism. An example of a reading that might be used during week three of this unit is available in Appendix D. The reading was selected because it was a typical example of the vocabulary and structure that would be commonly used to discuss super heroes. It was also an authentic French text. The reading is about the four items a superhero must have. According to the reading, a superhero must have a costume, a power, a secret identity, and a mission. The example in Appendix D shows that the first person in the partnership completing the information gap activity for this reading would only see the first two items: a superhero must have a costume and a power. The same example in Appendix D shows that the second person in the partnership completing the information gap activity for this reading would only see the second two items: a superhero must have a secret identity and a mission. The partners would be required to generate questions and ask one another those questions in French to determine what the four items are for a superhero. An example conversation may take place that is similar to what is shown in Figure 3.1.
The conversation above aligns directly to the reading available in Appendix D. It also aligns directly to the vocabulary and structure shown in the unit outline. As foreign language learners work through the information gap activity, the reading and the unit outline, alongside the mentorship and collaboration with peers, create scaffolding that should make it possible for learners to be able to complete the task. There were also pre- and post-task activities to help learners learn how to pronounce the words they needed and to give them an opportunity to practice the necessary structure before speaking a conversation. The same reading is then used as the basis for the dictogloss.

**Class 2: Dictogloss**

Class two, comprised of 27 learner participants, completed one dictogloss task per week during the course of the study. Dictogloss tasks were directly related to themes for each week. Themes are listed in the hero unit outline. Learners completed each dictogloss task with partners,
sometimes merging with a second nearby partnership to collaborate in support of task completion.

The purpose of the dictogloss was to provide learners with a directed, but unscripted, task that combined listening and speaking skills to reconstruct a story or a concept. During dictogloss, learners heard a reading or viewed a video prompt. Using the vocabulary list provided for the unit, and a graphic organizer provided for the task, learners noted items they identified as important. The reading or video prompt was read or viewed at least twice. Learners worked together in partners to reconstruct the prompt in speech. Each dictogloss task was aligned to the learning targets and the core vocabulary addressed in the hero unit outline. Below is an example of a dictogloss task. Figure 3.2 displays an example conversation that might emerge from the dictogloss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner 1:</th>
<th>C’est quoi un super héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is a super hero?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner 2:</td>
<td>J’ai entendu qu’un super héros met un masque. C’est nécessaire d’avoir une identité secrète?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I heard that a super hero wears a mask. Is it necessary to have a secret identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner 1:</td>
<td>Oui. Comme Superman. Une identité secrète pour être une légende et d’avoir une mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes. Like Superman. A secret identity in order to be a legend and to have a mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner 2:</td>
<td>Un super héros met un costume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A super hero wears a costume.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner 1:</td>
<td>Et on reconnaît le costume. Il a aussi le pouvoir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And, we recognize the costume. He also has a power.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2: C’est quoi un super héros? Dictogloss example conversation
Class 3: Alternating Information Gap and Dictogloss

Class three, with 31 learner participants, alternated between information gap and dictogloss tasks each week during the course of the study. This third class completed an information gap task in weeks one, three, five, and seven. The class completed a dictogloss task in weeks two, four, six, and eight. The same protocol was followed for information gap tasks as the protocol used for class one. The same protocol was followed for dictogloss tasks as the protocol used for class two.

Data Gathering

Three types of data were collected for the purpose of examining the development of foreign language oral proficiency at the high school level.

Pre- and Post-Tests

To examine the research question that asks whether there are differences in oral proficiency development by type of task, the researcher used the oral proficiency pre- and post-test adopted by the World Languages Department of the high school where the study is to take place (Appendix E). Learner participants in each French class took the World Languages Department pre-test of oral proficiency prior to the start of unit 1. At the end of the unit, each participant in the French classes completed a post-test of oral proficiency. The pre- and post-test was a rubric that allowed the teacher to assess various aspects of oral proficiency aligned to the ACTFL (2012) Oral Proficiency Guidelines and Clementi & Terrill’s (2013) Keys to Planning for Learning. The aspects of oral proficiency assessed on the rubric are language control,
vocabulary, task completion, active participation and continuing conversation, communication strategies and circumlocution, and fluency. Using the pre- and post-test with classes that had completed prescribed types of tasks enabled examination of changes (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2010) in speaking scores. Using the pre- and post-test defined foreign language learner proficiency score changes, if there would be any present, over the course of Unit 1.

The participating teacher tracks the data to determine whether students are making growth in their oral proficiency development and to make sure the rubric is measuring consistently across classes. While students were redistributed among three French 3 classes the year following the study, the same students are included in the teacher’s tracking of scores on the rubric, if they continued into French 3. The participating teacher’s data demonstrates consistency in measures of oral proficiency on the rubric used for the test across units and course levels. Mean scores stayed steady over time, increasing only slightly as learner oral proficiency increased between French 2 and French 3. The rubric is not a measure of a learner’s official proficiency level, but rather, a measure of a learner’s speaking skills in the foreign language related to specific topics practiced in class during a unit. The data provided is limited, and this point deserves some discussion. While data was available in terms of overall, final learner scores on the rubric assessment of oral proficiency, data was not available as broken down by scores on each of the six constructs of oral proficiency measured by the rubric: language control, vocabulary, task completion, active participation and continuing conversation, communication strategies and circumlocution, and fluency.

When conducting pre- and post-tests, the teacher used a specific protocol designed to efficiently test learners and to ensure that learner speaking is entirely original and as spontaneous
as possible in the speaking test setting. On the day of the speaking test, learners were paired with a partner who had been assigned by the teacher. When it was time for the learners to complete their speaking test, the partnership was presented with a prompt written in English. Figure 3.3 displays a list of the prompts for the unit on heroes. Prompts were displayed in color on a full 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt: Look at the photo and discuss with a partner whether or not the person is a hero in your opinion. Photos shown to learners include the following people:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Barack Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Donald Trump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A group of police officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A group of firefighters spraying water on a large fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kanye West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Magneto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Joker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spiderman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Batman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edith Piaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Zinédine Zidane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Citizen Prime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Super-héros du Métro de Tokyo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3: List of prompts for hero unit

The purpose of the use of English in the prompt was to ensure that learners were not given any vocabulary or structural hints to enhance their speaking during the test. The rationale of the World Languages Department for using English-language prompts was to eliminate the possibility of inadvertently providing vocabulary and structure to learners during the test. In theory, learners who had completed the speaking practice in class should be able to respond to the prompt appropriately in French without the input of French vocabulary and structure in the prompt. Once the prompt was presented, learners were given two minutes of “on deck” time to
discuss the prompt with their partner and practice. Once the two minutes had elapsed, learners were given a two-minute time slot to complete their speaking test in the presence of the teacher. The teacher spoke to the learners and asked questions if prompting was needed during the test.

The pre- and post-tests administered for this study had been in use by the school district for three years at the time of this study. The test is worth 50 points. On average, based on information available from the World Languages Department at the participating high school, the average learner score on the pre-test is 30 points out of 50. The average learner score on the post-test is 42 points out of 50.

Observation of Instruction

To examine the second question that asks how learners develop oral proficiency, observations of the classes and video recordings were made at participating learner desks each time a French class executed a classroom speaking task. When observing the class, the researcher focused on the interaction between the teachers and learners during the speaking tasks. The researcher observed the support systems that the teacher provided for learners during the speaking task. Observation was also made of learners’ speaking interactions. Focus was on learners’ self-correction and learner-to-learner and learner-to-teacher collaboration during speaking tasks. The researcher looked for learner development of speaking skills. An observation protocol that guided the researcher in what to look for along with an excerpt from the researcher’s observation notes is available in Appendix F.

The French teacher recorded her interactions with participating learners by carrying a digital video recorder with her during each class. During the course of this study, three French II
classes each completed eight different tasks. Twenty-four total classroom speaking tasks were video recorded for the purpose of examining how the French teacher supported learners in developing oral proficiency during each task. Tasks spanned approximately 10-20 minutes each. Using video allowed the qualitative data from the classroom to be gathered and conserved for analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Recording video allowed the researcher to watch the interaction between teacher and learners closely and to transcribe, in detail, the activities that showed how the teacher provided support to learners during the speaking tasks (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

**Interviews with Teacher**

Teacher interviews were used to gather in-depth information (Mertens, 2010) to examine the second research question, which asked about the role of the teacher in supporting the development of oral proficiency. The participating teacher was in the position to directly support learner development of oral proficiency. Using interviews facilitated a deep understanding of how the teacher executed a supportive role (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Mertens, 2010) in the context of the classroom. The researcher conducted a series of three interviews with the French teacher. The pre-study interview (protocol in Appendix G) took place before the study began. One mid-study interview took place during the study (protocol in Appendix H). A final interview took place at the end of the study (protocol in Appendix I). Interviews were conducted at the convenience of the French teacher’s schedule and in person with the French teacher. Each interview was audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. Figure 3.4 displays the interview series for this study.
Figure 3.4: Interview series

Longer interviews were conducted at the beginning and the end of the study with the French teacher. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the teacher’s perspective on supporting learner development of foreign language oral proficiency. At week four during the study, a short interview was conducted with the French teacher to explore the teacher’s support of learner oral proficiency development during specific tasks. Table 3.4 displays the alignment of research questions to data collection procedures.
Table 3.4: Alignment of Research Questions and Data Collection Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Pre- and Post-Test</th>
<th>Observation of Instruction</th>
<th>Interviews with Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1 Were there differences in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used: information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of these two types?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2 How did high school foreign language learners develop oral proficiency in French when different types of tasks are used?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: What role did the French teacher play in high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development during dictogloss and information gap tasks?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

Collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis to answer the research questions thoroughly. The qualitative data contributed insight to analysis of the quantitative data as the two merged together to help the researcher explore oral proficiency development in a multifaceted manner (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2015).

Pre- and Post-Tests

A pre-test of oral proficiency was given to each participant in each of the three French classes prior to each class completing a series of one type of speaking task. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2015) was performed on the pre-tests to establish the base line for each French class’s oral proficiency level. At the end of the eight to nine week unit, after eight speaking task cycles had been completed by each second year French class, a
post-test of oral proficiency was given to each of the participants. ANOVA was performed on the post-test scores to test for statistically significant differences among the three groups who each completed different prescribed types of classroom speaking task sequences to develop oral proficiency (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2015).

**Observation of Instruction**

Each of the speaking tasks was video recorded and video recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts were analyzed using open coding to identify concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) that related to the teacher’s support of foreign language learner oral proficiency development. As a strategy for developing concepts into themes that resonate across multiple transcripts, the researcher used memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Table 3.5 shows the open coding themes that were later bundled into themes that became the findings for the qualitative research questions.
Table 3.5: Open Codes and Themes of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Open Codes</th>
<th>Bundled Codes and Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Final Themes of Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher participation as equal group member</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learner Use of Classroom Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher participation as teacher</td>
<td>Prompting</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learner Willingness to Speak and Take Risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
<td>Teacher participation as teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building background knowledge</td>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learner Motivation to Complete Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Packet</td>
<td>Building background knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-task activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-task activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s task design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s support of learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher encouragement of learners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher correction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Self-correction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivating Task Completion
- Encouragement
- Prompting
- Teacher participation as equal group member
- Teacher participation as teacher
- Graphic organizers
- Building background knowledge

Task Structure and Planning
- Graphic Organizers
- Vocabulary Packet
- Partner Support

Learner Task Completion
- Repetition
- Imitation
- Pre-task activity
- Post-task activity
- Graphic Organizers
- Vocabulary Packet
- Partner Support
- Teacher Participation as group member
- Prompting

Themes of Findings for RQ2:
- Foreign Language Learner Use of Classroom Materials
- Foreign Language Learner Willingness to Speak and Take Risks
- Foreign Language Learner Motivation to Complete Tasks

Themes of Findings for RQ3:
1. Strategic Task Design
   - Support Documents
   - Graphic Organizers
   - Pre- and Post-Task Activities
2. Teacher’s Monitoring and Prompt Feedback
   - Encouragement, Validation, and Prompting
   - Modeling and Rephrasing
3. Teacher Participation

The codes displayed in Table 3.5 were applied to the video transcripts as well as the teacher interviews conducted for the study. The themes of the findings for research questions two and three will be explained in Chapter 4.
Interviews with Teacher

A total of three interviews were conducted with the participating French teacher who taught the three French classes. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher used member checking to validate the interview transcripts (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Mertens, 2015). To accomplish member checking, the researcher showed transcriptions to the participating teacher in person, and, sometimes, when scheduling was difficult, called the participating teacher to ask for clarification and validation. Once validated, open coding was used to identify concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) that related to the teacher’s support of foreign language learner oral proficiency development. The codes displayed in Table 3.4 were also used to code the teacher interviews because the teacher was discussing the implementation of the tasks and the design and planning phase of the tasks. A comparative analysis among the concepts and themes that arose in the video recording transcripts and those concepts and themes that arose in the interviews was performed to determine whether the concepts occurred frequently enough to support robust thematic development within the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Conclusion

The mixed methods approach taken in this study was driven by the research questions outlined earlier in this chapter. To consider the complexity of foreign language oral proficiency development in the high school classroom, a multifaceted inquiry style was required of this study. Thus, the researcher had determined that to answer the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative data had to be collected and analyzed.
The mixed methods design supported a layered conceptualization of foreign language oral proficiency development as a response to the research questions that directed this study. In the next chapter, the findings discovered through analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data are explained to the reader. The findings of this study, much like the topic of foreign language oral proficiency development, are multidimensional and complex.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to examine how a French teacher and high school foreign language learners used two task-based learning methods: information gap and dictogloss tasks, to facilitate oral proficiency development.

Quantitative Difference in Foreign language Learners’ Oral Proficiency Development

The first research question asks: Are there differences in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used: information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of these two types? To examine this question, pre- and post-test scores on a classroom speaking assessment for a French 2 class were collected and analyzed. Most notable about the three classes completing sequences of specific task types in the study, is that their numbers are consistently similar from pre-test to post-test, regardless of the task sequence completed. Descriptive statistics do not demonstrate wide variation from one class to another.

Class 1, which consisted of 28 learner participants, completed a series of information gap tasks. With a mean pre-test score of 32.89 and a mean post-test score of 40.82, this class of foreign language learners raised their scores nearly 7.93 points on average. Class 2, with 27 learner participants, completed only dictogloss tasks during the course of the study. Class 2 demonstrated a mean pre-test score of 33.30 and a mean post-test score of 39.78, and raised their
scores 6.48 points on average. Class 3, comprised of 31 learner participants, posted a mean pre-test score of 33.06 and a mean post-test score of 40.13, and demonstrated an average increase of 7.07 points.

The highest increase in average scores from pre-test to post-test, posted by class 1 at 7.93 points, was only 1.45 points higher than the lowest average increase, posted by class 2, which had a total of 6.48 average increase in total points from the pre-test to the post-test. The range of scores was so miniscule, that it was of great interest to this research.

The numbers revealed that learner participants across all three classes participating in the study were equally matched in skills at the beginning of the speaking unit followed by this study. Class 2, which posted the lowest average point increase from pre-test to post-test (6.48 points), was also the class that began the unit of study with the highest average speaking pre-test score of the three classes at 33.30 points. Class 1, which posted the highest average point increase from pre-test to post-test (7.93 points), was the class that posted the lowest average pre-test score at 32.89 points. There was only a .41 difference in the range of mean speaking pre-test scores between all three classes.

The range of post-test scores was also low, showing only 1.04 points difference between class 1, with an average speaking post-test score of 40.82 and class 2, with an average speaking post-test score of 39.78. Averaged together, the point increases from speaking pre-test to speaking post-test across all three classes participating in the study was 7.16 points. In other words, there was no difference in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used (information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of the two).
for this study. Table 4.1 displays the descriptive statistics for the classes participating in the study.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Three Classes Performing Three Different Task Sequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Pre-Test Score</th>
<th>Pre-Test SD</th>
<th>Mean Post-Test Score</th>
<th>Post-Test SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1: Information Gap</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32.89</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>40.82</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2: Dictogloss</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33.30</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>39.78</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3: Alternating Information Gap and Dictogloss Every Other Task</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33.06</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>40.13</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also conducted on the pre- and post-test scores. Based on the ANOVA for the pre-test where F (1, 2) = 18.51, p < .05 and F = .6962, no significant differences existed between the foreign language learners in the three classes selected to participate at the start of the study. All three classes completed eight speaking tasks each prior to taking the post-test. ANOVA was calculated for the post-test scores where F (8, 8) = 3.44, p < .05 and F = .9904. No significant differences were found between post-test scores among three classes that completed three different task interventions, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: ANOVA Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSB</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>SSW</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>134.18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6962</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test</td>
<td>15.61</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>654.26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.9904</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An initial surface-level examination of Table 4.2 demonstrates that there is no significant difference in oral proficiency development between three classes that followed three different task intervention models. If this were the sole outcome of the study, it would appear that there is nothing more to say. However, deeper consideration of the lack of variation among the three classes participating in the study suggests that the lack of significant differences is noteworthy in itself. The lack of variation suggests that, at least in the participating classroom used in this study, the teacher must be doing something purposeful in the design and implementation of the tasks, no matter which task is being used, in order for three separate classes of foreign language learners to end up with such similar scores.

**Foreign language Learner Oral Proficiency Development**

The second research question asks, “How do high school foreign language learners develop oral proficiency in French when different types of tasks are used?” Foreign language learners engaged in a specific type of participation in response to each task type. Learners were able to complete information gap tasks in small groups with some learner reliance on the teacher as a support. During dictogloss tasks, learners participated in reconstruction of the presented reading, audio, or video sequence, with some reliance on the teacher as a support. In the dictogloss tasks, the learners relied heavily on larger-group or whole-group collaboration more frequently than in information gap tasks, piecing information together across groups to scaffold knowledge and construct dialogues and discussions in French. Three themes demonstrating the learners’ roles in developing oral proficiency emerged across video transcriptions, observation notes, and teacher interviews. These three themes are outlined in Table 4.3.
Table 4.3: Findings for Research Question #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learner Use of Classroom Supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learner Willingness to Speak and Take Risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Foreign Language Learner Motivation to Complete Tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, using various scaffolded support systems put in place by the teacher, regardless of the task used, the majority of foreign language learners in each task were able to complete the task. Foreign language learners utilized peers, time for reflection, and classroom materials as support systems to uphold them in challenging moments. Learners accessed these strategically structured supports no matter which task a class was completing. Learners took advantage of opportunities to use support structures: moments of silent reflection, repeated exposure to prompts, and opportunities to collaborate with nearby partners. Learners knew how to use the support systems of the classroom.

The second foreign language learner theme that emerged from the study was foreign language learner willingness to speak and take risks in foreign language communication, likely a direct outcome of the supportive safety nets that facilitated a feeling of security to take risks throughout every task type used in the study. The scaffolded support system and opportunity to build knowledge collaboratively made it possible for learners to make attempts at communication, even if they were not completely accurate in their pronunciation or structure. Learners demonstrated a willingness to speak and take risks.

Finally, foreign language learners were motivated to complete each task because each task, no matter which task type was in use, was accomplishable, even though each task was
challenging. Because the learners had access to and made use of layers of classroom supports across every task type in the study, and used the supports habitually no matter which task was being enacted, the task sequences created a successful recipe for linguistic practice opportunities that moved foreign language learners along the continuum of oral proficiency skills each time they had a French conversation. This held true regardless of the type of task used in each participating class. Learners demonstrated motivation for task completion by working collaboratively with one another and using their resources to find ways to communicate.

Theme 1: Foreign language Learner Use of Classroom Supports

Learners participating in this study needed to make use of the support structures present in the learning environment in order to produce effective communication to complete tasks. Examples of some of the classroom materials and support systems built into classroom tasks included partners and groups of fellow willing-to-speak learners, reference documents, and the pre- and post-task activities that set up background knowledge and allow for reflection time in the learning process. When the teacher was asked about learner use of reflective moments of silence and partner discussions during task preparation, the teacher stated, “I’m trying to give more time for reflection. If they say it to a partner, it’s that processing time that is effective” (personal communication, September 17, 2016). Novice foreign language speakers, such as those who participated in this study, orient toward task completion in the dominant, native language, which makes processing time key to transitioning to the foreign language during class.

Notwithstanding the type of task used, foreign language learners repeatedly employed built-in moments of reflective silence along with moments to speak with a nearby partner and
compare understanding. Between each of these phases of class, learners also frequently requested, and were always granted, repetition of the reading, video, or audio being used to generate the task. Because each task was designed to have a prompt that generated conversation, the foreign language learners opted to be exposed to the prompts multiple times, as needed.

During the course of the study, the minimum exposure to a prompt was twice, during the final task. This eighth task used a children’s song about heros and was visually and rhythmically appealing. Aside from the fact that it was the last task used in the study and learners were becoming adept at task completion, its rhythmic output of the foreign language made it relatable and accessible to the novice learners in the classroom. The maximum exposure to a prompt occurred during the sixth task, which had a prompt of a speech being given to French government officials and reporters by a French immigrant who had saved the lives of French citizens caught in the midst of a terrorist attack that took place at a supermarket. The teacher played the prompt four times over the course of the task, adding repetition mid-task when learners asked to hear it again to support their conversations. The accented French of the speaker, along with the label on the podium in the speech, “Ministre de l’Intérieure,” contributed to foreign language learners’ needs for repetition and exposure.

Learners used multiple support systems simultaneously during the sixth task, which required so much exposure and repetition. Because the task was complex, the foreign language learners paid closer attention not only to a packet of vocabulary but also to a pre- and post-task activities that had served as both a warmup at the beginning of class and a mechanism to build foreign language learner background knowledge that could later be used to propel learners toward task completion. The following are examples of conversations from both an information
Information Gap:
Learner A: Quel la profession est? (What the profession is?)
Teacher: [Looking at the paper.] Look at the board. [There is a similar structure on the
screen from the bellringer. Pauses.] So, you’d have to change it around a little bit, right?
Qu’est-ce que c’est la profession? Qu’est-ce que c’est la profession de Lassana? Oui?
Alors, qu’est-ce que tu penses, mademoiselle? (What is the profession? What is the
profession of Lassana? Yes? So, what do you think mademoiselle?)
Learner B: À ton avis [question stem from vocabulary packet]… (In your opinion…)
Teacher: À mon avis (In my opinion), because à ton avis (in your opinion) is your
opinion, right?
Learner B: À mon avis, il (In my opinion, he)– I don’t know how to say it – le podium
(the podium)?
Teacher: Oui. Oui. Le podium. J’ai vu la signe [visual on the video during the task
prompt]. L’affiche? Oui? (Yes. Yes. The podium. I saw the sign. The sign affixed? Yes?)
(Recording, Task 6, October 26, 2016)

Dictogloss
Teacher: Let’s take a look at your activité du cloche (bellringer). Où est-ce qu’il est né?
(Where was he born?) And he referenced this several times actually. Où est-ce qu’il est
né? Où? Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire, où? (What does this mean, where?)
Learners: Where.
Teacher: Dans quel pays? (In what country?)
Learners: Mali.
(Recording, Task 6, October 26, 2016)

Foreign language learners had completed a warmup activity, a pre-task bellringer at the start of
class, which, in the case of the sixth task, served to provide some background information to
foreign language learners that they may not have otherwise had exposure to. For the foreign
language learner, that warmup information could be used to prompt them toward comprehension
of the speech being given by a man in the video prompt. Using question starters from their
packets and review vocabulary from the warmup at the beginning of class, learners were able to
conduct conversations about where the man was from, whether he was a politician, and why he
may be considered a hero. These conversations would not have been possible without support structures in place. Thus, the foreign language learners were able to scaffold their knowledge and use of spoken French to move them forward, allowing them to think, and to navigate through the conversation to complete the task one stage at a time.

Support systems such as documents, repetition, partner and group collaboration, and moments for reflective silence demonstrate one of three patterns visible across tasks in learner interactions to support oral proficiency development. In the following section, the second pattern visible in learner interactions during tasks will be highlighted. Because learners had access to the varied levels of support built into the task, learners demonstrated willingness to speak and take risks in their communication with one another during all types of tasks.

**Theme 2: Foreign language Learner Willingness to Speak and Take Risks**

Willingness to speak and take risks is a driving force in causing foreign language learners to progress in their ability to communicate clearly in speech with other speakers of any target language. Throughout the course of this study, no matter the type of task being used in a classroom, interactions between groups of learners, and learners and the teacher, demonstrated that some learners were more willing to take the risk of speaking, and potentially, making some mistakes in language production, than others.

At times, the novice-level learners’ anglicized accent on pronunciation of French words was difficult to transcribe. When asked about foreign language learners’ willingness to speak during an interview, the teacher stated, “I still feel like it’s all about building that culture for failure, that it’s okay to make mistakes in the culture of error.” (personal communication,
The following exchanges between foreign language learners is an excellent example of learners who are willing to speak, willing to risk errors, yet still arrive at coherent communication of their messages together. The first excerpt is taken from an information gap task and the second exchange is taken from a dictogloss task:

**Information Gap**

Learner K: Okay, selon toi, uh, est-ce que tu [code switches to Spanish] comprendes par le vidéo? (Okay, according to you, um, what do you understand from the video?)
Learner L: Je comprends que le… le sont intelligents et ils sont intelligents. Et toi? (I understand that the…they are intelligent and they are intelligent. You?)
Learner M: Je comprends que les francophones sont, um, puissant parce que les (I understand that the French-speakers are, um, powerful because they)…[code switches to English] like, it helps their futur (future).
Teacher: Aide au futur, oui. Savoir le français aide au futur. (Helps in the future, yes. To know French helps in the future.)
Learner L: Um, est-ce qu’ils sont héros francophones? (Are they French-speaking heros?)
Learner K: Oui, parce que les francophones aide le (Yes. Because the French-speakers help…) [code switches to English] education.
Teacher: Aide l’éducation? (Help education?)
Learner K: Aide l’éducation. (Help education.) (Recording, Task 5, October 13, 2016)

**Dictogloss**

Learner D: Tro Tro est gentil, et petite. (Tro Tro is nice, and small.)
Learner E: Tro Tro es* drôle. Il es petit et* créatif. (Tro Tro is funny. He is small and creative.)
Learner F: Tro Tro es*…parce qu’il est champion de Judo. (Tro Tro is…because he is a Judo champion.)
Learner G: Tro Tro est amusant, drôle, malin, et intelligent. Il est aussi determiné, rapide, et beau. Tro Tro parler Karate. (Tro Tro is amusing, funny, clever, and intelligent. He is also determined, fast, and handsome.)
Learner H: Tro Tro est innocent et intéressant. Il est amusant et malin. Il pense il est très, très, très fort. Il est rapide. (Tro Tro is innocent and interesting. He is amusing and clever. He thinks he is very, very, very strong. He is fast.)

*Denotes incorrect verb form transcribed based on learner mispronunciation during task.
(Recording, Task 3, September 21, 2016)

These conversations, both demonstrations of willingness to speak spread across the foreign language learner interactions observed for this study, are wrought with grammatical and
syntactical errors, incomplete sentences and mispronunciations. Despite this, learners arrive at a shared meaning.

Furthermore, no matter learners’ struggles to arrive at meaningful communication, learners are not hindered from making an effort to converse with one another on the topic they are discussing. Here is another example, this one demonstrating excellent use of vocabulary with much difficulty in maintaining syntactical structure:

Learner BC: Je pense qu’il caractère de Tro Tro est actif et créatif. Le psychologie est déterminé et son physique est petit. (I think that he personality of Tro Tro is active and creative. The way of thinking is determined and his physique is short.)
Learner BD: Tro Tro est drôle. Il est intelligent. Il est astucieux. (Tro Tro is funny. He is intelligent. He is clever.)
Learner BE: L’aspect physique: petit, animal, jeune. Le psychologie est bête. (The physical appearance: short, animal, young. The way of thinking is dumb.)
Teacher: Bête? (Dumb?)
Learner BE: Le psychologie – parce que – comme un enfant. (The way of thinking – because – like a child.)
Recording, Task #3, September 21, 2016.

In the above conversation, learners are using the vocabulary that has been introduced to them through this unit of study in their French classroom. As they string their words together to attempt a conversation, one of them struggles to create a complete sentence while others struggle to use the correct pronoun (see Learner BC: he personality, rather than his personality). These misuses of grammar do not deter learners from attempting communication, arriving at a shared meaning, and being willing to speak and take risks. When the teacher steps into the conversation and clarifies a choice of adjective (learner BE: bête), the learner attempts to clarify his thinking by explaining his word choice. The video clip learners had watched as a prompt, a clip from a French cartoon called “Tro Tro,” is about a child donkey who does many silly things as he plays independently and with his friends. Tro Tro’s child-like naïveté may be what prompted the
learner’s choice of the word “bête.” While the word choice may never be fully explained to the listeners, the learner’s attempt to justify the usage, and the learner’s choice to do so in French, rather than in his native language, is an example of willingness to speak, and a strong indication that the learner felt safe in taking classroom risks.

While foreign language learners may repetitively rely on simplistic structures and similar vocabulary words throughout their conversational exchanges, the learners’ struggles are apparent but their effort is equally as present. As learners listen and respond to one another, they scaffold communication using the example linguistic patterns of their group members. Because of the first visible pattern of learner interactions during tasks, learner use of classroom supports, the second visible pattern of learner interactions during tasks, learner willingness to speak and take risks, was possible because of the safety of the classroom environment. The support of sympathetic listeners and safe speaking practice partners cannot be underestimated in growing speaking skills. The third theme, learner motivation to complete tasks, is discussed in the next section.

**Theme 3: Foreign language Learner Motivation to Complete Tasks**

Foreign language learners were able to complete tasks that were challenging but accomplishable during this study because they had access to classroom supports such as sympathetic partners and groups, an environment that delivered repetition of a prompt as needed, along with opportunities for reflection and metacognition. Learners were able to meet task completion goals by leveraging classroom supports as safety nets for risk-taking and willingness to speak using the foreign language. In order to provide learners with concrete pathways to task
completion, in every task, foreign language learners considered three items as a framework for discussion of the featured hero in the reading, video, or audio clip: caractère (personality), psychologie (way of thinking), and aspect physique (physical attributes). In the following exchange from an information gap task, foreign language learner orientation to the task takes the form of organizing conversation around the three items: personality, way of thinking, and physical attributes:

Learner O: Okay, for the psychologie (way of thinking), I said, il est drole (he is funny). Il est astucieux (he is astute). And il est (he is)… wait…
Teacher: Oui. Tu vois? Mes questions: psychologie et aspects physique. (Yes. See? My questions: psychologie and physical attributes.)
Learner O: Qu’est-ce qu’il héro? (What is he hero?)
Learner P: Wait, are you asking what kind of hero?
Learner O: Oui, um, if, if he’s a hero?
Learner P: Um, non, parce que il, il n’est pas les autres. (No, because he, he isn’t the others.)
Teacher: [Looking at the notes on Learner B’s paper] il n’aide pas. Il n’aide pas les autres. (He doesn’t help. He doesn’t help the others.)
Learner O: Oui. (Yes.)
(Recording, Task 3, September 21, 2016)

Foreign language learners could find the material difficult to grapple with in an open-ended format. However, learners found guidance in what to listen for and note as relevant information that could later be used to have a conversation by focusing on three items: personality, way of thinking, and physical attributes. By honing in on the three items, learners were able to structure information to facilitate endurance in the task and to be able to complete it.

Focus on the three items: personality, way of thinking, and physical attributes, also applied to dictogloss task completion. The following excerpt is one example of foreign language learners tackling a difficult prompt and attempting to hold and maintain a conversation. The conversation is wrought with mistakes but learners have the structure of personality, way of
thinking, and physical attributes to facilitate organization of their thoughts. Note, also, that the group featured in this excerpt from a dictogloss task displays evidence of orienting toward the task with various comments made in English.

   Learner Q: Caractère - intelligent. (personality – intelligent.)
   Learner R: I say Tro Tro en karate et il parler. (Tro Tro in karate and he speak.)
   Learner S: I said, il est (he is)...[trails off and does not finish sentence]
   Learner R: Tro Tro is – he is – Tro Tro est intelligent. (Tro Tro is intelligent.)
   Learner Q: Tro Tro veut être champion de Judo. (Tro Tro wants to be a Judo champion.)
   (Recording, Task 3, September 15, 2016)

When a prompt presented difficulty in learner comprehension, the learners coped with the information using personality, way of thinking, and physical attributes as guidance to direct their conversation, allowing them to maintain the conversation and complete the task, even if their sentences are simplistic. More information about the three items used to center learner attention on specific characteristics of a hero in their conversations will be presented in the discussion of the findings of research question three.

   To review, foreign language learners supported oral proficiency through three visible interactions that emerged among learners and across tasks. Learners used support systems in the classroom. Learners demonstrated willingness to speak and take risks. Learners were motivated to complete tasks and used task structures to do so, even when tasks were challenging. Each of the support systems available to language learners in the classroom was strategically designed by the teacher, placed into the task cycle purposefully, to support learner oral proficiency development. The following section addresses findings for the third research question and explores the role the teacher plays in learner oral proficiency development.
Teacher Role in Foreign language Learner Oral Proficiency Development

The third research question asked, “What role did the French teacher play in high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development during dictogloss and information gap tasks?” As previously presented in this paper, there were no significant differences in growth scores in oral proficiency between three different classes completing three different task interventions to support speaking skills. The lack of variance among and between test scores may be attributed to classroom instruction. Three themes and some sub-themes emerged about the role of the in the development of foreign language learner oral proficiency. These themes, present in video transcripts, teacher interviews, and classroom observations, are outlined in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Findings for Research Question #3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Strategic Task Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graphic Organizers</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pre- and Post-Task Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Teacher’s Monitoring and Prompt Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouragement, Validation, and Prompting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modeling and Rephrasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Teacher Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout each type of task, the teacher demonstrated three consistent instructional strategies in each of the 24 classroom video segments collected for this study. The first purposeful strategy employed by the teacher was task design. The teacher gave careful consideration to the support systems within the task, from documents and graphic organizers to pre- and post-task activities. The second purposeful strategy employed by the teacher was her monitoring of and prompt feedback to learners. The teacher provided encouragement, validation,
and prompting for learners. She also modeled language and rephrased learner speech to demonstrate proper pronunciation and structure. Finally, the teacher participated in learner conversations, asking questions about learner opinions on the conversational topic and sharing her own speaking proficiency as she modeled fluent speaking skills.

In each of the 24 video clips, the teacher who participated in this study consistently demonstrated the outlined instructional strategies on multiple occasions. Furthermore, three separate interviews with the teacher elicited further information about her instructional design process and the professional decisions she made to promote growth in foreign language learner oral proficiency. Her patterned use of consistent techniques served as a support mechanism for the development of foreign language learner oral proficiency skills.

**Theme 1: Strategic Task Design**

The participating teacher in this study demonstrated three consistent instructional strategies across tasks. The first strategy was her instructional design. She created a pre-, during-, and post-task structure in every classroom every day. Through the use of support documents, graphic organizers, and pre- and post-task activities, the teacher layered various types of support to strategically provide every learner with a safety net in their efforts to take academic risks inside the classroom.

**Support documents.**

The teacher used several support documents across all classes participating in this study for the purpose of directing learner attention, providing organization, and disseminating
important, shared information. The teacher gave each learner a packet of vocabulary, readings, and questions at the beginning of the unit of study. Repeatedly, the teacher referred to this packet, reminding learners that they could use the packet to support their creation of spoken questions and answers. Here, in an excerpt from an interview with the researcher, the teacher explained how she intended for the learners to employ the vocabulary packet as a support mechanism:

    In level two, we’re considering them [learners] novice, for proficiency, where they’re parroting. And so, it’s a lot of recall and memorized words and phrases. So, they would have to look at their packet for their questions. I’m trying to incorporate it more as I go. (personal communication, October 8, 2016)

Of course, foreign language learners are capable of producing much language independently. However, the teacher intended for the packet to provide support and help establish a level of independence for learners when learners needed support in remembering what is needed, or when learners needed to see an example of sentence structure. The teacher did not spend a lot of time directly teaching grammatical structure and vocabulary. In the following exchange from an interview with the researcher, the teacher explained the packet in more detail:

    Researcher: So, how do you strike a balance between how learners are not exposed to direct grammar and structure in instruction but they’re trying to accurately develop their speaking skills?
    Teacher: It’s all through their packet. It is by seeing questions and possible answer stem formats to use something that’s relevant to them (personal communication, September 17, 2016).

In other words, a foreign language cannot be learned one word or one sentence at a time. It requires imitation of language structure and access to the opportunity to use a wide variety of vocabulary, such as in this excerpt from instructions for a dictogloss task:

    Teacher: They’re giving you vocabulaire (vocabulary), too. And, it’s giving you some vocabulaire that you can add down, also. Someone just asked about the word “happy.”
So, it’s in there. One of the words is in there. Also, it sounded interested, it used words like justicier (justice-maker/creater). That’s directly out of that Types de Personnages (Types of Characters) that we read (Recording, Task 8, October 27, 2016).

Vocabulary terms authentically related to the hero theme continuously resurfaced throughout the unit of study, both exposing learners to hearing the terms in authentic context and offering opportunities for learners to make use of the words conversationally. By providing vocabulary in the packet, the teacher was able to expose learners to more information in less time and provide a reference point for holding successful conversations.

Graphic organizers.

The teacher’s first consistent instructional strategy across tasks, the support documents she created, was related directly to the graphic organizers she used with learners during each task. She took into consideration the vocabulary packet, which included readings and other resources that she occasionally used to implement speaking tasks, when she was planning task-based instruction. For each task completed, no matter what type of task was being planned, the teacher provided a graphic organizer for the learners. The teacher arranged each graphic organizer according to the task type. On each graphic organizer, she also included information about people featured in the reading, video clip, or audio clip used to generate the speaking task. The teacher designed all graphic organizers around an initial reading from the beginning of the unit, which described various types of heros by specific features: their physical appearance, their psychological way of thinking, and their personality traits. Here is an excerpt from a dictogloss task where learners were trying to recreate the sequence of a video clip and were using their graphic organizer to structure their conversation:
Learner MM: Astérix est intelligent et astucieux. (Astérix is intelligent and clever.)
Learner NN: I put that – il est un héros de tous les jours. [Learner indicates the graphic organizer on which many notes are written in each column.] Pour les aspects physiques, il est petit, fort, et il a les cheveux blonds et les yeux marrons.
Learner MM: La psychologie, [code-switches to English] he’s scared of the Romans taking over.
Teacher: Alors, est-ce qu’il y a une phrase pour décrire Astérix? Peut-être pour l’aspect physique? Est-ce qu’il y a une phrase? Qu’est-ce que tu penses?
Learner MM: Il est petit.
Learner NN: Il est très intelligent. Astucieux.
Learner MM: More like la mentalité?
Teacher: Oui. La mentalité. Psychologie, la mentalité.
(Recording, Task 2, September 15, 2016)

The teacher’s graphic organizer helped foreign language learners to center their focus on main ideas that could be used to describe a complex heroic character while also struggling to incorporate new vocabulary and hold a conversation. In the midst of these conversations, the teacher also repeatedly made reference to the various types of heros and their attributes:

So, we had several types de personnages – héros classiques, héros moderne, antihéros, le rival, le mauvais, le justicier, all of those, right? Quel type de personnage est Astérix?
Après, quelles sont les caractéristiques, les traits, d’Astérix? L’aspect physique – comment est-il? Quel caractère est-ce qu’il a? (So, we had several types of characters – classical heros, modern heros, antiheros, the rival, the bad guy, the good guy, all of those, right? Which type of personality is Astérix? Then, what are the characteristics, the traits of Astérix? The physical appearance, how does he look? What personality does he have?)
(Recording, Task 2, September 15, 2016)

In conversations with foreign language learners during tasks, the teacher also made reference to the types of heros presented at the beginning of the unit, and the attributes those heros display in literature and film. Here is an example:

Teacher: Quelle était ta question?
Learner GG: Quel type de héro est-il? (What type of hero is he?)
Learner HH: Il est super-héro parce qu’il aide les autres. Il protège les peuples.
Teacher: Parce qu’il protège les peuples. Et, c’est quelque chose de la psychologie, l’aspect physique, ou caractère?
Learner HH: Psychologie.
Because the teacher had presented a variety of specific types of heros and because she had discussed physical appearance, way of thinking, and personality, as a starting point for hero analysis at the beginning of the unit of study, she was able to continuously connect to these themes with open-ended questions that could be answered using stem responses and vocabulary from the vocabulary packet.

During information gap tasks, the teacher divided the attributes of the hero central to the reading, video clip, or audio clip, “Partenaire A, you’re going to be writing questions for partenaire B about la psychologie et l’aspect physique. Partenaire B, you’re going to be writing questions for partenaire A about le caractère et l’aspect physique” (Recording, Task 7, October 18, 2016). In this case, the teacher assigned any learner playing the role of partenaire A to jot notes down on the graphic organizer to highlight specific information about the hero’s personality and physical appearance. This way, a conversation could later take place as the speaking task. The teacher also designed graphic organizers for learners participating in the dictogloss task. By contrast, her design of the graphic organizer accompanying the dictogloss tasks asked all learners to make notations about physical appearance, psychologie, and personality. On the graphic organizer, the teacher also provided an area for learners to put certain events or information learned from the reading, video, or audio clip into chronological order so that it would be easier to reproduce the events in conversation. The teacher used her first two consistent instructional design strategies, support documents and graphic organizers, to create a framework for all tasks implemented in her classroom. She launched task cycles using pre- and
post-task activities, often as “bellringers” at the beginning of class, to connect each day to the next and each weekly task to the next.

**Pre- and post-task instruction.**

The teacher never presented any graphic organizers to foreign language learners without significant investment in setup of context and activation of background information. To begin each class, the teacher presented an “*activité du cloche,*” or a bellringer, as a pre-task activity, which set learners up to make specific predictions and listen for key information. Most importantly, the teacher designed the *activité du cloche* to serve as a building block to accelerate thinking and accelerate the generation of speech to practice oral proficiency. The teacher’s design of pre- and post-task activities was simple in appearance but powerful in building comprehension and background knowledge, and generating speaking. The teacher purposefully designed each pre- and post-task activity to generate learner thinking and set up schema:

For example, on Friday, in my bellringer activity, I asked, ‘Who’s your favorite superhero and why? Give me a description.’ And some of them gave me ‘Je préfère Batman parce qu’il aide les autres.’ (I prefer Batman because he helps other people.) We added then, basically just looking at the packet for ‘Il met un costume distinctif,’ (He wears a distinctive costume.) or ‘Il met une cape,’ (He wears a cape.) or ‘Il a une identité secrète.’ (He has a secret identity.) They’re using their packet to continue to add on to their speaking capabilities (personal communication, October 8, 2016).

The teacher’s pre- and post-task activities served as a deeply connected building block to conversation and a nexus to vocabulary building and growth in oral proficiency. By using a task cycle, the teacher incorporated quiet thinking time and processing time for foreign language learners to plan their ideas and reflect on how they would incorporate their thoughts into comprehensible spoken language. The teacher allowed for the emergence of components of a
structured conversation through the strategic use of bellringers as pre-task activities as a focus at the beginning of classes. The teacher was able to connect the pre- and post-task work to the use of the vocabulary packet and the graphic organizer for each speaking task, regardless of the type of task being used.

**Theme 2: Teacher’s Monitoring and Prompt Feedback**

The participating teacher in this study displayed three instructional strategies constantly throughout each task. The first instructional strategy was the teacher’s strategic task design, which was addressed in the previous section. The second instructional strategy was the teacher’s monitoring of and prompt feedback to learners. Regularly, across task types, the teacher provided encouragement, validation, and prompting for learners. She also modeled and rephrased language to help learners accurately pronounce and structure their oral communication. This section discusses the attributes of the teacher’s monitoring and prompt feedback. Consistently, all the time during interaction with each group or individual language learner, the teacher prompted and encouraged the foreign language learners in her classroom. The tasks the teacher asked the learners to complete, either information gap or dictogloss, or an every-other-task rotation of the two, were challenging.

**Encouragement, validation, and prompting.**

In this study, all of the time, consistently and habitually, the teacher’s filmed and observed interactions with learners either included verbal encouragement and validation of learner speech or prompted learners with questions or ideas. For example, the following exchange that took place between teacher and learner demonstrated both encouragement and
prompting, and supported learners in structural control over spoken sentences. In this information gap example, the learners were prepared, had written notes in French on their graphic organizers, and were attempting to fill in information gaps by having a question-answer exchange. The teacher entered the conversation after standing and listening briefly. When the teacher began encouraging and prompting, she was recognizing one learner’s difficulty in expressing questions and her goal was to coach the learner in formulating the questions so that the group could proceed with their conversation afterwards. The following excerpt is taken from an information gap task:

Learner C: Est-ce que, est-ce que tu penses il est héros de tous les jours? (Do you, do you think he is an everyday hero?)
Teacher: Excellent. Bon! Autres questions? (Excellent. Good! Other questions?)
Learner C: Qui est-ce qu’il veut aider? (Who does he want to help?)
Teacher: Oui. C’est très bien. (Yes. That’s very good.) How about est-ce qu’il a des pouvoirs? Des super-pouvoirs? (Does he have any powers? Super powers?) So, what kind of an answer am I giving?
Learner C: Oui ou non. (Yes or no.)
Teacher. Oui ou non. Exactement. (Yes or non. Exactly.) And so we would have to ask follow up. So, we’ve got our pourquoi, comment, quand, (why, how, when) right? (Recording, Task 6, October 13, 2016)

The above exchange is notable because the teacher did not reprimand the foreign language learner for asking a simplified yes or no question in the first attempt to speak. Instead, the teacher prompted for a second question, and the learner provided a completely different format, which would not have garnered a yes or no response. Then the teacher made a suggestion using a yes or no question structure herself. She checked for understanding to determine if the foreign language learner recognized the yes or no structure. When she discovered the learner did recognize the structure, she reminded the learner that a follow up question would be required to
continue to generate conversational speech, and she provided three options for a follow up question stem.

Throughout the exchange, the teacher remained positive, reassuring, and professional, repeatedly verbalizing encouragements. Her tone of voice was calm as she engaged the learner in a dialogue that was supportive of his ability to practice the conversation with confidence. Here, in another instance during a different task, the teacher calmly and persistently prompted vocabulary out of a learner, encouraging and drawing out use of new vocabulary words that learners had only been recently exposed to:

Learner AA: Astérix est courageux. (Astérix is courageous.)
Learner BB: Astérix est petit. (Astérix is short.)
Learner CC: Il est puissant. (He is powerful.)
Learner DD: Astérix est intelligent. (Astérix is intelligent.)
Teacher: Oui, et quel est un autre mot pour intelligent? (Yes, and what is another word for intelligent?)
Learner DD: Can you repeat?
Teacher: Oui. Quel est un autre mot, du paquet – paquet de vocabulaire, pour intelligent? (Yes. What is another word, from the packet – vocabulary packet, for intelligent?)
Learner DD: Je ne sais pas. (I don’t know.)
Teacher: Commence avec un “a.” (Starts with an “a.”)
Learner DD: Oh!
Teacher: Oui. Audacieux. (Yes. Daring.) That’s daring. Il est audacieux. Mais, quel est un autre mot pour intelligent? (He is daring. But, what is another word for intelligent?)
The other one. If it wasn’t audacieux, we have…
Learner BB: Astucieux! (Clever!)
(Recording, Task 2, September 15, 2016)

Across tasks and various classroom groupings, the teacher repeatedly upholds the importance of helping learners to practice new vocabulary and language structure. For the teacher, participating in learner groups to increase learner capacity for vocabulary use is important. When asked about her classroom culture and her habit of providing verbal prompting, encouragement, and validation in her interactions with foreign language learners, the teacher said, “I try to reinforce
when I hear it correctly because then that does help to motivate them to do it again” (personal communication, September 17, 2016). The teacher provided similar prompting and encouragement in the following excerpt from a dictogloss task during which the teacher was attempting to facilitate some reproduction of the prompt through some questioning strategies:

Teacher: On décrit la vie d’Édith Piaf. Est-ce que sa vie était difficile ou facile? (We’re describing the life of Edith Piaf. Was her life difficult or easy?)
Learners: Difficile. (Difficult.)
Teacher: Très difficile. Ce sont le point de cette petite lecture. À quelle âge est-ce qu’elle est morte? (Very difficult. These are the points of this little reading. At what age did she die?)
Learners: Quarante-sept. (47.)
Teacher: Oui. Est-ce que vous pensez Édith est un héros pour les personnes agées ou les jeunes personnes? (Yes. Do you think Edith is a hero for older or younger people?) Remember, we’re thinking about l’aspect physique, le caractère, la psychologie (physical attributes, personality, way of thinking).
Learners: [Making suggestions as a whole group] Elle est héros pour les âgées, les jeunes. Elle avait des problèmes avec la santé. (She is a hero for older people, for younger people. She had lots of problems with health.)
Teacher: Pourquoi elle est un héros? (Why is she a hero?) [Prompts continue and whole class discussion continues.]
(Recording, Task 8, October 27, 2016).

The safety net the teacher provided with her calm encouragement and steady prompting was one of the attributes of the classroom culture that lent itself to so many of the foreign language learners in this classroom being willing to speak and take risks in practicing conversational skills.

The teacher’s organization of task sequences was highly detailed and well-executed. However, she did not necessarily view this as the most important factor in growing speaking skills. When asked what the most important factor is in facilitating the development of foreign language learner speaking skills in the high school French classroom, the teacher stated:

I think building their skills is mostly getting them through that fear of communicating – getting them through the fear of saying something and having people laugh at them or
being wrong. Mostly, I’m just trying to have them speak. I’m like, “You just need to talk” (personal communication, October 23, 2016).

In other words, the support the teacher provided through verbal encouragement and prompting functioned as a support mechanism to build foreign language learner confidence, which moved learners forward toward task completion. As one attribute of the teacher’s monitoring of and prompt feedback for learners, encouragement, validation, and prompting by the teacher supported learners when communication became difficult. Aside from providing this support, the teacher also monitored and provided prompt feedback by modeling and rephrasing language for learners. The participating teacher’s use of modeling and rephrasing is discussed in the next section.

**Modeling and rephrasing.**

At times during the study, foreign language learners lapsed into their dominant native language as they attempted to phrase their thoughts into a coherent conversation. Foreign language learners who did this during the study demonstrated that they understood a portion of the French input from the reading, video or audio clip that was presented to them to generate the task-based conversation. In these cases, the interactions between teacher and foreign language learners across task types demonstrated the teacher’s strategy of modeling pronunciation and structure of French through the process of rephrasing the learner’s speech when it was incoherent, or confusing and ineffective to the conversation. The following are two excerpt examples of the teacher’s encouragement and rephrasing:
Information Gap
Learner I: Ils aiment, parce qu’il est aime les autres et – est-ce que tu as – is rien (They like, because he likes the others and – do you have – is nothing) here, like, it said a phrase, but I was like, I don’t know if I can change that here?
Teacher: Oui. Il a peur (Yes. He has fear) would be he is scared or he is afraid. So, les personnes ont peur, are you trying to say?
Learner I: Yeah, like, is he afraid of anything?
Teacher: Oh. So, est-ce qu’il a peur? Est-ce qu’il a peur? (Is he afraid? Is he afraid?)
Learner I: Est-ce qu’il a peur? (Is he afraid?)
Teacher: Responsable. (Responsible.)
Learner I: Responsable pour les autres, pour beaucoup de personnes. Pourquoi est-ce que tu penses qu’Astérix est courageux? (Responsible for the others, for a lot of people. Why do you think that Astérix is courageous?)
Learner I: Um, parce que, um, il, he used to – (Um, because, um, he - )
Teacher: Tu as raison. (You’re right.)
Learner I: How do you say this?
Teacher: Les villageois. Il a besoin d’être courageux? Quelle est ta question encore? (The villagers. Does he need to be courageous? What was your question again?)
Learner J: Pourquoi est-ce que tu penses qu’il est courageux? (Why do you think he is courageous?)
Learner I: Je pense qu’Astérix est courageux parce qu’il – [hesitates] (I think that Astérix is courageous because he - )
Teacher: Oui, continue. C’est super! (Yes, continue. That’s super!)
Learner I: Il protège les peuples. (He protects people.)
(Recording, Task 2, September 15, 2016)

Dictogloss
Learner V: Il est (he is) angry?
Teacher: Ah, fâché. Il est fâché contre les Romains. Oui. Tu penses qu’il n’est pas content? (Ah, angry. He is angry toward the Romans. Yes. Do you think he isn’t happy?)
Learner V: Il n’est pas content. (He isn’t happy.)
Teacher: Il n’est pas content, Astérix, oui? Contre les Romains ou avec les villageois? (He isn’t happy, Asterix, yes? Against the Romans or with the villagers?)
Learner V: Le...le... (the...the...) can you repeat it?
Teacher: Il n’est pas content avec les villageois, les Gaulois? Ou avec les Romains? (He isn’t happy with the villagers, the Gauls? Or with the Romans?)
Learner V: Les villageois. (The villagers.)
Teacher: Les villageois, ah, tu penses qu’il est mécontent avec les villageois. (The villagers, ah, you think he is discontent with the villagers.) Okay. Continuez. (Continue.)
Now, trois phrases. (Three sentences.) We’ve already done two. All you have now is your psychologie, (psychology – way of thinking) right?
(Recording, Task 2, September 15, 2016)
The teacher attempted to direct the learner’s thought process toward generating conversation that might lead to a deeper comprehension of the material. She provided repetition and an example for learners to follow in her speaking pattern. At times, the teacher was modeling. At other times, she was asking questions that provided a structured example or a re-introduction of contextual vocabulary for the foreign language learner to reuse in his or her own French utterance.

In task six, the classes participating in the study were presented with a video and a question to generate conversation. The video was a clip of a legal immigrant from Mali who was living near Paris and working in a supermarket that was, unfortunately, the location of a terrorist attack. The video showed the immigrant addressing an audience of French politicians and reporters to accept and thank them for giving him full French citizenship for the role he played in saving the lives of several French shoppers in the supermarket at the time of the attack. The question learners were addressing was whether or not the speaker was a hero. However, the learners did not have the background information of the speaker prior to watching the video. They had to use their French listening and speaking skills to try to figure out what happened and respond to whether or not the speaker was a hero. The following conversation is from an exchange that took place between teacher and learner during task six:

Learner N: He seems like a regular old dude. Like he’s nervous. Cause, I mean, he’s not a politician.
Teacher: Okay. So his caractère (personality) and his psychologie (way of thinking) were leading you to think he was just a héros de tous les jours (everyday hero)? Oui? (yes?)
Learner N: It was obvious he was nervous because he was stuttering.
Teacher: Oui. Est-ce qu’il est français? Sa nationalité? Quelle est sa nationalité? (Yes. Is he French? His nationality? What is his nationality?) (Recording, Task #6, October 13, 2016)
From this exchange, it is clear that the foreign language learner comprehended certain aspects of the video that had been played to generate conversation for this task. However, the learner was not able to grapple immediately with the construction of a French question that would generate a conversational exchange to help the learner’s group determine whether or not the speaker was a hero. The teacher reminded the learner of the attributes of heroes that were being used throughout the unit to build conversation, here, caractère and psychologie, or personality and way of thinking. The teacher was able to back track for the learner by reverting to questions that the learner would be capable of generating, such as discussing the speaker’s nationality.

While a question about the speaker’s nationality alone may seem far too simplistic to help a group begin to generate conversation to determine whether the speaker in the video was a hero, it is actually a brilliant move designed by the teacher. In watching the video, it was apparent that the speaker was stumbling through some aspects of his French speech and French was not his native language. Visually, he stands at a podium that reads, “Ministre de l’Intérieure,” (Minister of the Interior) which suggests that there was a political component to the event shown in the video. The speaker in the video uses words and phrases learners would recognize, including mentioning geographic regions of the world, such as Africa (he was from Mali), Europe, and France itself. He mentioned his emotions and he even stated that he was not a hero. The teacher was able to use the familiarity of the speaker’s vocabulary set to design a track for foreign language learner conversation at a basic level, such as in this excerpt from task six:

Learner U: …au supermarché (at the supermarket) …something was about a supermarché. 
Teacher: Something about a supermarché, you said? In here, you heard? 
Learner U: Yeah. 
Teacher: Okay.
Learner U: Il...Il est malien. Il est grand. Il met un costume. (He is Malian. He is tall. He is wearing a suit.)
Teacher: C’est pas un costume distinctif, mais, c’est un costume. Oui. Oui. Okay. Qu’est-ce que tu penses?
Teacher: Oui.
Learner Y: For the psychologie – psych – psychologie [struggles to pronounce] (for his psychology, psych, psychology)...
Teacher: [Modeling pronunciation] Psychologie (psychology)
Teacher: Bon. Il a de l’intégrité. Il est fier de France, oui. (Good. He has integrity. He is proud of France, yes.)
Learner Z: Il est Afrique. Calme [looks at teacher]. (He is Africa. Calm.)
Teacher: Calme, oui, calme. (Calme, yes, calm.)
Learner Z: Calme. (Calm.)
(Recording, Task 6, October 13, 2016)

All of the speaker’s comments during the bellringer were comprehensible to learners because they had taken French 1, and because they had been studying some of the vocabulary in the hero unit and had support documents, such as their vocabulary packet. Knowing all of this to have been in place, the teacher was able to leverage basic foreign language learner vocabulary and structure to generate speaking practice and to integrate some new vocabulary into foreign language learner conversations. The teacher’s consistent instructional strategies, strategic task design, and monitoring of and delivery of prompt feedback to learners provided scaffolded support to learners who needed it. When learners were communicating well, a third instructional strategy was employed by the teacher. She participated as a group member within some of the learner conversations. The teacher’s participation in the task is discussed in the next section, and is the third point of observation in response to the third research question for this study.

**Theme 3: Teacher Participation**
Throughout the study, on occasions when the teacher found that learners were speaking well and did not require prompting or encouragement, she actively and genuinely participated in learner conversations. When asked about her genuine and sincere participation with certain groups, the teacher explained, “I just want them to talk. Without that, they won’t develop their skills” (personal communication, September 17, 2016). The teacher engaged in this style of conversational participation with groups when she was monitoring discussions and discovered that certain conversations were moving along with accuracy. The following excerpt from a video transcript is an example of such an instance during an early dictogloss task. During this excerpt, the group did not necessarily need a support for task completion, but the teacher entered the conversation for the purpose of increasing the level of rigor in the classroom with specific attention to increasing learner capacity to select vocabulary:

Learner T: Il est très intelligent. (He is very intelligent.)
Teacher: Il est très intelligent. Pour la psychologie, oui. Peut-être il est intelligent. Je pense un autre mot – pas intelligent, mais un mot de votre liste de vocabulaire. (He is very intelligent. For the way of thinking, yes. Maybe he is intelligent. I’m thinking of another word – not intelligent, but a word from your vocabulary list.)
Learner T: Astucieux. (Astute)
Learner T: La mentalité. (The mentality.)
(Recording, Task 3, September 21, 2016)

While the participating teacher recognized that the group was able to complete the task without her help, and that learners were capable of conversing using a wider scope of vocabulary, she opted in and raised the conversational level by introducing her own higher proficiency level into the interaction. She did the same in this exchange during an information gap task:

Learner W: Tro Tro est champion de Judo? (Is Tro Tro a Judo champion?)
Learner X: Oui, parce qu’il a – c’est, ah, il est malin. (Yes, because he has, it’s, ah, he is clever.)
Teacher: Il est malin, un peu, avec la cravate. Il est astucieux, oui? C’est un exemple de la confiance? (He is clever, a little, with that tie. Is he also astute? Is it an example of confidence?)
Learner W: Tro Tro est champion. Et, les, um, les cravates – is that what you call it? (Tro Tro is a champion. And, the, um, the ties - )
Teacher: Les cravates? Oui. C’est bon. (The ties? Yes. That’s good.)
[Teacher exits conversation. Oui. C’est bon. (The ties? Yes. That’s good.)
(Recording, Task 3, September 21, 2016).

The teacher stepped in during this task to connect learner claims and statements to evidence visible in the prompt video. While the foreign language learners were completing the task and would have likely found their way to the end stage of the task, the teacher’s participation introduced concepts and connections that the learners did not have the natural inclination in French to speak aloud in French.

Through purposeful instructional design and implementation, the participating teacher in this study was able to support learner needs across tasks and learner proficiency levels by effecting three consistent instructional strategies. First, her strategic task design, including several elements such as support documents, graphic organizers, and her organization of pre- and post-task activities in task cycles, provided visual and structural support for learners when they needed examples or ideas to maintain conversation. The participating teacher continuously monitored learner conversations and provided prompt feedback for learners as she moved through the classroom listening to her learners. For those learners, who needed encouragement, validation, or prompting, the participating teacher provided these things, supporting learners in maintaining their conversation and moving toward task completion. The teacher was able to model proficiency and rephrase wording and structure to support learner needs. When learners were able to maintain conversation and complete tasks independently, the teacher participated in
the conversations alongside the learners, modeling a wider scope of vocabulary and raising the conversational level through her higher proficiency in the foreign language.

Conclusion

Examination of the first research question in this study, which asked whether there was a difference in learner scores between a pre- and post-test of oral proficiency depending on the type of task learners completed, demonstrated that there were no significant differences in test scores for learners who completed different task sequences. Through observation of learner participants in this study, exploration of the second research question was possible. The second research question asked how learners develop oral proficiency in the foreign language classroom. No matter the type of task being used, learners used classroom support systems, demonstrated willingness to speak and take risks in the foreign language, and demonstrated a motivation to complete each task, even when the task was challenging. Learner persistence in finding strategies to maintain conversation in the foreign language was present across task types. The third research question, which explored the role the teacher played in the development of oral proficiency, facilitated consideration of how the teacher plans and implements instruction that will support learner growth in speaking skills. The teacher’s strategic design of support documents, graphic organizers, and task cycles, alongside the teacher’s presence to monitor and provide feedback to learners, and the teacher’s participation in learner conversations, all demonstrate best practices in teaching and may bear influence on learner oral proficiency development.
The examples and excerpts highlighted in this chapter are taken from across various points in this study. But each instance is representative of learners’ strategies and the teacher’s instructional habits. The descriptive statistics outlined in the beginning of this chapter demonstrate that all three classes of varied foreign language learners participating in this study did not demonstrate a variance in their speaking pre- and post-test scores. Despite variance in task types used for this study in participating classes, there are consistent support systems in place across classes and consistent instructional strategies employed by the teacher to generate consistent improvement in oral proficiency skills. Chapter five will provide further discussion about these findings.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This mixed-methods study examined the development of conversational oral proficiency in a high school French classroom using a three-way task intervention. One class completed a series of information gap tasks while a second class completed a series of dictogloss tasks. A third class completed an alternating series of tasks using information gap one week and dictogloss the next week in a pattern that continued throughout the study.

The three research questions examined by this study indicate that the high school foreign language classroom is a complex environment that unites diverse learners in a common goal of speaking a foreign language.

The three research questions addressed by this study are as follows:

1. Were there differences in high school foreign language learners’ oral proficiency development by types of tasks used: information gap, dictogloss, or a combination of these two types?

2. How did high school foreign language learners develop oral proficiency in French when different types of tasks are used?

3. What role did the French teacher play in high school foreign language learner oral proficiency development during dictogloss and information gap tasks?
These three research questions allowed for deep examination of the foreign language oral proficiency development process unfolding in a high school classroom where learners were studying French as a foreign language. The mixed methods aspect of the study enabled a profound understanding of the complexities of the instructional design process in a task-based system, as well as the scope of foreign language learner strategies, and the role of the teacher in the foreign language learning process.

The first research question was measured quantitatively using a French 2 pre- and post-speaking exam used with the featured hero speaking unit in all French 2 classes in the district. The findings of the first research question suggested that, regardless of the task type used, learners’ speaking skills increased. The second and third research questions in this study, both qualitative, examined how the teacher and foreign language learners interacted in the classroom environment to support oral proficiency development. The examination of the three research questions facilitated a deeper understanding of what was taking place in the classroom that supported foreign language learners’ oral proficiency growth.

**Revisiting Findings**

Research in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the area of foreign language learning has been ongoing for a couple of decades (Abraham & Vann, 1996; Murphy, 2003; Newsom-Ray, 2016; Nunan, 1992; Salimi, 2015; Skehan, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). The findings of this paper suggest that the teacher’s role in implementing TBLT in the foreign language classroom should be defined by school leaders as part of the curriculum, learned and examined by foreign language teachers as a non-negotiable instructional strategy embedded in
the curriculum, and utilized by foreign language learners who have an interest in becoming foreign language speakers. This section will review the highlights of the findings that were outlined in detail in Chapter 4.

**Differences in Task Types in Oral Proficiency Development**

The findings for the first research question suggested that there were no significant differences between learners’ post-test scores based on the type of task learners completed. Foreign language learner participant pre-test and post-test scores were collected by the teacher participating in the study using the district oral proficiency speaking assessment for the French 2 unit about heroes. Mean pre- and post-test scores collected for this study put forward an increase in mean scores for each class ranging from a low of 6.48 points of increase to a high of 7.93 points of increase. This represents only a 1.45 point difference between the mean score increases from pre- to post-tests between classes, despite the differences in task sequences. After running ANOVA on the scores, no significant difference was found to exist within or between groups of foreign language learner participants in this study.

Literature in the field of TBLT consistently proposes that foreign language learner oral proficiency is more dependent upon the role of the teacher than the task itself (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Bruton, 2005; Collins & White, 2015; Doughty & Pica, 1996; Felder & Henriques, 1995; Kao et al., 2011; Kirkgöz, 2011; Nunan, 1992; Rose & Harbon, 2013). The lack of significant differences in oral proficiency growth scores between foreign language learners in three different classes following three different task sequences in the French 2 classrooms in this study is notable. It suggests that the teacher, the only commonality among the
three participating classes, may be a force of influence in foreign language learner oral proficiency development in this study.

The closeness of the scores is of key interest to this study because it suggests that type of task is less important to foreign language learning than the role played by the teacher. The teacher’s role in the task is implemented both behind the scenes in task design and preparation as well as within the classroom during tasks when the teacher becomes a participant in learner conversations. The foreign language learners’ roles in tasks were also visible throughout the study’s findings. Because of the teacher’s strengths in task implementation and provision of foreign language learner support, foreign language learners were able to take ownership in their own oral proficiency development. The second and third research questions were qualitative examinations of how the learners worked to develop oral proficiency and what the role of the teacher was in oral proficiency development. The findings for research questions two and three are discussed in the following sections.

**Learners’ Ownership of Learning in Oral Proficiency Development**

This section discusses the findings of the second research question, which addressed the role of the learner in developing oral proficiency. Findings for the second question suggested that, no matter which type of task learners were completing, they made use of classroom supports such as documents, partners, and the task structure itself. Learners also demonstrated willingness to speak and take risks and learners demonstrated motivation to complete tasks, even if tasks were challenging. Each of these findings demonstrate learners taking ownership of their
learning in oral proficiency development. The findings will be discussed in more detail in this section.

There is sometimes a disconnect between the foreign language learner’s comprehension of the language and the learner’s capability to engage in realistic, time-bound conversational exchanges (Al Muhaimeed, 2013; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Merrill, 1991; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). Accordingly, regardless of the type of task, learners in this study reached out to the many supports at their disposal to ensure success in task completion during the study. Learners accessed classroom supports, including documents and partners. In order to cope with the complexity of conversing in a foreign language, learners also leveraged pre-task activities built into the task cycle, which helped to develop background information and primed learners to be ready to learn during speaking tasks.

Learners interacted with each other and with the teacher as a support system, demonstrating a willingness to speak. In this way, if a group of learners was able to hold a higher-level conversation, their task complexity level could be scaffolded to a higher level by the collaborative input of group members within the conversation. Likewise, for struggling groups of foreign language learners, barely holding onto their conversations, they could access the teacher for prompts and encouragement. When learners are able to interact with a highly proficient foreign language speaker, such as the teacher, they are also exposed to the modeling of fluent conversational skills (Gardner, 2001; Ryan & Makarova, 2011) and can move forward in their own oral proficiency development. Learners obtain as much value, as well, from a learning experience that opens the door for collaboration with their peers who are also learning the
language. The teacher is not the only person who can socially scaffold a conversation with foreign language learners.

Learners’ collaboration with one another, as learning peers experiencing similar situations during tasks, was also a form of scaffolding prevalent in this study. Consistently, across all task types, learners used their partnerships with other learners to work out effective communication. Wink & Putney (2002) explain in the introduction to their book that “all thought and all language have separate roots, but…they grow together and change each other in a multitude of unforeseen ways in a never-ending process” (xxv). When learners have the opportunity to complete tasks in a social setting, they are able to construct meaning together, allowing their communication skills to evolve as they are exposed to new ways of understanding. Wink & Putney further explain this concept:

In classrooms, as learners talk and write, the pedagogy shifts away from teacher-directed to learner-centered. As this pedagogy demonstrates, learner-generated ideas have the potential to build on each other and to develop even more thoughts and more language. The relationship between thought and language moves in any direction and touches all as it develops. Words expand as thinking deepens. (xxv).

Access to social interaction and the task structure of collaborative partnerships among learners was very likely a strong force for learners in taking ownership over their learning and their personal oral proficiency development. No matter the task type, the social structures in place across the classroom lent themselves to strong learning opportunities for all learners. There is a connection apparent in the themes that arose from examination of the learner role and examination of the teacher role in TBLT during this study.
Teacher’s Role in Oral Proficiency Development

The third research question, which examined the role the French teacher played in foreign language learner oral proficiency development across information gap and dictogloss tasks, highlighted the teacher’s purposeful, instructional techniques. The strength of the teacher’s role in the development of foreign language learner oral proficiency, in the case of this study, gracefully unifies the quantitative and qualitative questions examined in this paper.

The teacher consistently performed three practices across every task, every time a task was implemented. Firstly, the teacher meticulously designed task sequences, from pre- to post-task activities. Such design supported foreign language learners in developing the appropriate background information and in sharpening listening and oral proficiency skills to support oral proficiency development. Secondly, the teacher monitored learners and delivered prompt feedback. By actively moving through the classroom and interacting with learners, the participating teacher was able to prompt the learners to complete the task each time they encountered a potentially task-disruptive challenge, momentarily decreasing task complexity and connecting learners to the next step of their spoken conversation. Lastly, the teacher participated genuinely, and sincerely, in learner conversations, whenever possible. This participation mainly allowed the teacher to increase task complexity for learners who needed a greater challenge. It also allowed learners the opportunity to interact with a fluent speaker of French and provided a model for appropriate and accurate conversational skills.

Literature in the field of TBLT and foreign language learning suggests that teachers can take on varied roles in the task-based classroom: facilitator, participant, or observer, for example. Productive use of TBLT in the foreign language classroom is dependent upon how the teacher
enacts his or her role to build learner capacity to complete a task successfully (Collins & White, 2015; Kao et al., 2011; Ryan & Makarova, 2001). Side-by-side, teacher participation in the task with the learners, lends itself to successful task completion (Gardner, 2001; Kao et al., 2011; Ryan and Makarova, 2011). When the teacher’s role shifts to one of participant in the foreign language task, the experience is influential for the foreign language learners involved (Gardner, 2001; Ryan & Makarova, 2011). The teacher’s participation in a conversation serves as an opportunity for learners to interact with a genuine speaker of the foreign language who is sympathetic to the difficulties of the foreign language learning process and who also speaks at a level of proficiency that far exceeds that of the learner. In this regard, the teacher is a mentor and a model (Wertsch, 1985) of what is possible in foreign language communication.

In this study, the participating teacher’s task structure, which utilized a three-way focus on attributes of heroes: character, psychology or way of thinking, and physical appearance, created a framework for conversation topics that helped learners to tackle some of the open-ended aspects of the task. The teacher’s structure empowered learners to focus on what they were able to do, rather than what they were unable to do. Task structure in this study created a sense of security for the learners and supported learners in risk-taking and willingness to speak. Task structure facilitates learner capability to be successful in communication and move toward task completion (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Kao et al., 2011). Without the structure, foreign language learners would have been more likely to experience frustration and to withdraw from the task (Nunan, 1992, Rose & Harbon, 2013).

The findings of the third research question relate to the findings of the second research question and complementary threads tie the two sets of findings together. The teacher designed
the task sequence, including pre- and post-task activities that framed the context of the task itself. The task design delivered support and structure to learners. The learners made use of the task structure, taking ownership over their learning in collaborative conversations with their peers and teacher. As learners endeavored to arrive at coherent conversations with their peers, the teacher’s participation in tasks added a layer of support that motivated learners to complete the task.

When the role of the foreign language learner and the role of the teacher blend together, the synergy created is effective at moving learners forward on the continuum of oral proficiency skill development. This is why conversations about foreign language learning need to shift from whether to incorporate tasks, to how to best support teachers in implementing tasks that are rigorous in complexity and valuable learner-centered opportunities for practice. Learners must feel safe to be willing to speak in order to make effective use of TBLT practices.

Implications of the Study

In each instructional setting, there is a recommended curriculum mandated by federal, state, or national organizations. To explain simplistically, typically, the recommended curriculum is adopted by local school districts and given to teachers in written form. This written curriculum becomes a taught curriculum as teachers implement it in the classroom. When teachers bring the written curriculum to life, they add layers of texts and tasks. They bring personal experiences, passion, and excitement about the topic to the learning process. Such persistent passion and love for learning cannot be expressed on paper through charts of standards and lists of assessments.

The implication of this study is that it demonstrates the power of the taught curriculum through the role the teacher played in supporting foreign language learner oral proficiency
development. The participating teacher in this study was a lead learner who embraced her non-native French speaking skills as an opportunity for continuous personal growth side-by-side with her students. Through her own identity as a supportive mentor to the learners in her classroom, she regularly demonstrated a high level of patience and steadiness in coaching her foreign language learners. She created systems that allowed learners to access and use information independently. The participating teacher gave space to learners to allow them to collaborate with their peers and scaffold their own communication to create their own meaningful exchange of information. The power that a teacher has to affect the development of learners in an academic content area cannot be underestimated.

It bears mentioning that, at the time of this study, the state of Illinois had, years prior, adopted the Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument (Danielson, 2014). As an implication for this study, the Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument divides effective teaching practices into four domains, one of which focuses solely on effective instruction: Domain 3. In Illinois, the difference between a proficient teacher and an excellent teacher is instructional design and implementation that is learner-centered, learner-driven, and responsive to learner-led inquiry and learner-generated engagement in the classroom. In this study, the learners played a major role in their own oral proficiency development. Their empowerment to drive their own learning was possible because of the teacher’s ability to design and implement tasks that provided authentic practice and collaboration between learners. The learners who participated in this study were never passive recipients of decontextualized knowledge disseminated by the teacher. The learners in this study directly affected the taught curriculum through their participation in tasks and the direction of their conversations as they moved toward
task completion. In response to learner social interactions, the teacher scaffolded class structure and conversations to fit the needs of each learner. It is possible that learner scores on the speaking assessment increased from pre- to post-test because of the supportive, student-centered structure of the classroom.

Finally, there is no replacement for a strong teacher who is confident in her content area and who demonstrates caring for her learners’ needs through anticipation of their potential struggles. The teacher who participated in this study demonstrated a conscious ability to position herself on the same level as her learners, taking care of them and acknowledging their needs, adjusting instruction, and setting up support systems and task cycles she knew would create a safe environment. There is no material item that can replace the value of a collaborative process for learning in which a teacher becomes a lead learner, joining those she mentors in equal partnership to practice a set of skills. This study implies that it is not the task itself that matters. It is the teacher and the learners who are the main characters in the story of foreign language learning. And, it is the teacher and the learners who bear the most influence on one another in process of developing oral proficiency.

**Recommendations**

Two important avenues of recommendations for those who work in the field of education arise from this study: specific suggestions for the foreign language teacher, suggestions for those who work in the field of teacher education, and suggestions for those who work in the field of school leadership and curriculum development. In each of these areas, it is imperative for teachers and district-level staff to recognize that the teacher’s role in the classroom directly
affects learner learning. This message resounds across the field of education in a day and age where teacher quality and evaluation cycles of coaching and monitoring instruction are prevalent.

**Recommendations for Foreign language Teachers**

For those who are serving a learner population in the classroom as a foreign language teacher, the importance of a task design that creates opportunities at a high rigor level for foreign language learner communication cannot be underestimated. Foreign language teachers who cross the intersection of language acquisition and TBLT must uphold tasks that are designed to be challenging, but accomplishable, that generate opportunities for learners to strive to complete the task (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Kao et al., 2011; Nunan, 1992). A teacher’s purposeful fusion of challenges and structured, safe practice environments creates a synergy that drives learners toward willingness to speak, and a confidence to make attempts at learning that may not be possible in tasks that are either too facile, or too trying. The force of the teacher’s role around the task is powerful.

**Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs**

The importance of creating an environment of authentic communication in the foreign language classroom cannot be ignored. The teacher is capable only of controlling the communicative environment within the classroom itself. Teacher education programs must teach teachers how to implement TBLT in the foreign language classroom to maximize the limited time that teachers have to teach foreign language learners how to speak. From the ability to
design useful tasks and control task complexity (Collins & White, 2015; Kirkgöz, 2011; MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015) to understanding how learners acquire a foreign language (de la Colina & Mayo, 2009; Swain & Lapkin, 2000), the power of the teacher in designing novice-appropriate tasks and supporting novice learners is so significant that it needs to be incorporated into foreign language teacher education programs.

Those who instruct pre-service teachers in foreign language teaching methods classes would be wise to ask each student to present and implement tasks to classmates for the purpose of simulating the placement of tasks within the context of recommended learning standards. The participating teacher featured in this study situated her classroom tasks within the framework of learners’ mastery of standards. If learners have mastered a standard, the teacher can make a claim about what the learner knows and is able to do. The question teachers must ask themselves is how they know a learner knows and is able to do something. To answer this question, learners must generate evidence of their knowledge. Such evidence is generated through tasks. The conceptual understanding of where tasks fit within the framework of an instructional cycle and how TBLT can be used to foster development of learners’ oral proficiency skills cannot be underestimated. The cycle of standard, claim, evidence, and task, lends a concrete structure to the complexity of foreign language instruction.

**Recommendations for School Leaders and Curriculum Developers**

At the building-level or district-level, for those who create or evaluate curriculum, it is a misconception to think that a foreign language can be learned to the point of fluency and high proficiency in a short class period, five days per week, nine months per year. Foreign language
learners living daily life in their native language increase their skills incrementally through exposure to classroom opportunities to use the language to communicate, such as in conversational speech (Brooks & Donato, 1994; de Jong et al., 2012; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Dörnyei, 2002; Pica et al., 2006). In many cases, a classroom structure that recognizes that learners are not fully immersed in the foreign language throughout their day-to-day activities outside of the classroom is the most solid program for oral proficiency development. Such a program can make use of social constructs within the classroom and create opportunities for scaffolding. A classroom that uses task cycles that promote authentic communicative opportunities to speak and time for learner reflection, such as the classroom featured in this study, are powerful forces in enabling foreign language learner oral proficiency development. This is because foreign language learners increase their skills incrementally through exposure to opportunities to use the language to communicate, such as in conversational speech.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

Throughout interviews conducted with the participating teacher during this study, the teacher mentioned that she wished she had measured listening skills in direct relationship to this study because she believed that foreign language learners were demonstrating growth in listening skills after completing each task. She commented that it appeared learners were more easily hearing vocabulary terms or items mentioned in pre-task activities as they worked through task completion in the mid- to late-stages of the study’s duration. Future studies might use the structure of this study to examine foreign language learner growth in listening comprehension skills. Foreign language learner ability to comprehend, at least on some level, what is taking
place in the prompt, influences learner ability to hold and maintain a conversation with other speakers (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; de la Colina & Mayo, 2009, Van Patten, 1998). The connection between modalities of communication: reading, writing, listening, and speaking, makes the potential for measuring other aspects of foreign language communication accessible to future researchers.

Because this study was conducted with a common teacher among foreign language learner groups, replication of the study in specific locations using material from another district’s curriculum would be beneficial for any foreign language instructor attempting to determine the effectiveness of specific teaching techniques. Replication of the study using the same materials with three separate teachers would also shed some light on which teaching techniques may be more or less effective in building the most powerful environment for growing foreign language learner oral proficiency skills. Replication of the model of this study over the course of a longer period of time might also yield information regarding the implementation of different types of tasks.

For the purpose of examining the research questions in this study, demographics of each individual participant were not analyzed in comparison to participant test scores. Further study that examines monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual learners’ acquisition of foreign language oral proficiency could shed some light on cultural influences of foreign language learning. While linguistic background likely plays a role in a learner’s familiarity with a foreign language learning process, such a topic is large enough to merit studies of its own.
Conclusion

Oral proficiency takes time and practice to develop. Outside of living daily life in an immersion setting, the process of oral proficiency development is encapsulated within specific time frames of the weekday foreign language class, making it even more difficult for the foreign language learner to build his or her skills. It is this foreign language learning structure that is so commonly played out across the high school setting that led to this study. Furthermore, it is for this reason that TBLT is so important and must be incorporated into the foreign language classroom. The complexity of language learning is highlighted in this study by the classroom support systems in place in the participating classroom: documents, pre- and post-task activities, teacher prompts, teacher participation, peer support, opportunities for silent reflection, and access to repetition. All of these things blend together to create an environment that can effectively increase foreign language learners’ levels of oral proficiency.

The interconnectedness of the themes that arise from this study cannot be extricated from one another. They create the classroom culture and set the tone for foreign language learner task goals. While learners use the environment to their advantage, the system is envisioned and enacted by the participating teacher in her classroom. It is designed to support foreign language learner needs and to grow learners from each individual’s own starting point to meet their own potential. Without the teacher’s careful planning and guidance, the outcome of this study could have been very different. The role of the foreign language teacher must be highly valued and the teacher’s instruction must be carefully coached and cultivated to ensure that every foreign language learner accesses supports and opportunities to engage in conversation at their current
proficiency level and slightly above it. It is only through the power of the role of the teacher that oral proficiency development can take place in the high school foreign language classroom.
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Kirkgöz, Y. (2011). A blended learning study on implementing video recorded speaking tasks in task-based classroom instruction. Turkish online journal of educational technology, 10(4).


APPENDIX A

CONSENT LETTERS
Consent Letters

RESEARCH STUDY PERMISSION FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF MINORS

Your child is invited to participate in a research study titled Examination of Task-Based Language Teaching Strategies on High School Second Language Learner Oral Proficiency Development by Emily Erickson-Betz, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University.

The purpose of this study is to examine how a French teacher and high school second language students use speaking tasks to facilitate student development of speaking skills.

Your child’s participation in this study will last approximately nine weeks. He or she will be asked to participate in classroom speaking tasks, as would normally be expected of French 2 students. This study will directly use the work that is already being done in class as part of your child’s French studies. Students will still be required to complete all class work as usual whether they are participating in the study or not. Participants will be asked to allow the researcher to look at their pre- and post-test scores and to allow the researcher to observe and videotape classroom tasks. All information pertaining to your child’s identification will be kept confidential.

Your child’s classroom will be videotaped during speaking tasks in order to review the complex speaking interactions between students and teacher. Video will never be shown publicly and will be viewed only by the researcher for the purpose of the research.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort your child could potentially experience during this study.

The benefits your child could personally receive from this study include targeted growth in French speaking skills, and experience in speaking French conversationally around specific topics.

Information obtained during this study may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings, but any information which could identify your child will be kept strictly confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Any quantitative data collected will not be tied to student names or other student identifications in any way.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child, as well as his or her assent to participate will not negatively affect you or your child. Your child will be asked to indicate individual assent to be involved immediately prior to participation, and will be free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. This research has no effect on student grades.
Any questions about the study should be addressed to Emily Erickson-Betz, emilyericksonbetz@yahoo.com, 1-815-751-8811 or Dr. Euikyung Shin, Associate Professor, Department of Literacy and Elementary Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, 1-815-753-8492.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University: 1-815-753-8588.

I agree to allow my child to participate in this research study and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

______________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian                                      Date

I agree to allow my child to be videotaped participating in classroom speaking activities for the purpose of this study.

______________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian                                      Date
RESEARCH STUDY PERMISSION FORM FOR STUDENTS 18 YEARS AND OLDER

You are invited to participate in a research study titled Examination of Task-Based Language Teaching Strategies on High School Second Language Learner Oral Proficiency Development by Emily Erickson-Betz, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University.

The purpose of this study is to examine how a French teacher and high school second language students use speaking tasks to facilitate student development of speaking skills.

Your participation in this study will last approximately nine weeks. You will be asked to participate in classroom speaking tasks, as would normally be expected of French 2 students. This study will directly use the work that is already being done in class as part of your French studies. Students will still be required to complete all class work as usual whether they are participating in the study or not. Participants will be asked to allow the researcher to look at their pre- and post-test scores and to allow the researcher to observe and videotape classroom tasks. All information pertaining to your identification will be kept confidential.

Your classroom will be videotaped during speaking tasks in order to review the complex speaking interactions between students and teacher. Video will never be shown publicly and will be viewed only by the researcher for the purpose of the research.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort you could potentially experience during this study.

Information obtained during this study may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings, but any information which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Any quantitative data collected will not be tied to student names or other student identifications in any way.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not negatively affect you. You will be free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. This research has no effect on your grades.

Any questions about the study should be addressed to Emily Erickson-Betz, emilyericksonbetz@yahoo.com, 1-815-751-8811, or Dr. Euikyung Shin, Associate Professor, Department of Literacy and Elementary Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, 1-815-753-8492.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University: 1-815-753-8588.
I agree to participate in this research study and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

______________________________________________________________________________
Signature                                      Date
______________________________________________________________________________

I agree to be videotaped participating in classroom speaking activities for the purpose of this study.

______________________________________________________________________________
Signature                                      Date
RESEARCH STUDY PERMISSION FORM FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANT

You are invited to participate in a research study titled Examination of Task-Based Language Teaching Strategies on High School Second Language Learner Oral Proficiency Development by [Name], a graduate student at Northern Illinois University.

The purpose of this study is to examine how a French teacher and high school second language students use speaking tasks to facilitate student development of speaking skills.

Your participation in this study will last approximately nine weeks. You will be asked to implement specific classroom speaking tasks, as would normally be expected of French 2 students. You will also be asked to do three one-on-one interviews with the researcher about your experiences using speaking tasks. These interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, last approximately 30-45 minutes, and take place within the first 12 weeks of the school year.

Your classroom will be videotaped during speaking tasks in order to review the complex speaking interactions between students and teacher. Video may not be taken of non-participating students. These students will need to be seated in a section of the classroom that is not being videotaped.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort that you could potentially experience during this study.

The benefits you could personally receive from this study include targeted growth in your students’ French speaking skills, and experience in implementing specific types of tasks in the French classroom.

Information obtained during this study may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings, but any information which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Any quantitative data collected will not be tied to participant names or other identifications in any way.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not negatively affect you. You will be free to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Any questions about the study should be addressed to [Name], [Email], [Phone] or Dr. Euikyung Shin, Associate Professor, [Department], Northern Illinois University, [Phone]. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University: [Phone].
I agree to participate in this research study and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be videotaped participating in classroom speaking activities for the purpose of this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

I agree to be audio recorded during interviews for the purpose of this study.

Signature of Participant

Date
APPENDIX B

ASSENT FORM
Assent Form

RESEARCH STUDY ASSENT FORM FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE

You are being asked to participate in a research study that examines how a French teacher and high school students use classroom speaking tasks to develop French speaking skills. Classroom speaking tasks will be videotaped. Pre- and post-test scores will be collected for research purposes. This research directly uses existing classroom structures and activities. Students are to participate in classroom activities whether choosing to participate in the research study or not. All student information and identifying factors will remain confidential.

This study will last approximately nine weeks.

Participation in the study is voluntary and includes allowing your classroom tests and activities to be utilized for research purposes. Choosing not to participate, or choosing to opt out of the study at any point, will not result in a penalty or loss of privileges or research benefits. Participation in this study has no effect on your grade.

I agree to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________________________________
Student Signature                         Date

I agree to allow myself to be videotaped during classroom tasks.

____________________________________________________________________________
Student Signature                         Date
APPENDIX C

WORLD LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT HERO UNIT OUTLINE
World Languages Department Hero Unit Outline

Unit 1 Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit:</th>
<th>Heroism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>~8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics:</td>
<td>Heroism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Theme:</td>
<td>Personal and Public Identities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning Scenario:**
Students will consider how the media portrays several heroes. Students will identify and consider the life and accomplishments of past and current heroes in French/Francophone and American culture. Students will generate a list of famous heroes, both real and fiction, from various cultural and social backgrounds. They will write a list of characteristics and qualities that describe a hero as well as things that heroes do/don’t do. Students will be asked to describe the life of a personal hero by discussing their qualities, actions, biographical information and other important aspects that make him/her a hero.

**Desired Results**

Enduring Understanding

Heroism is defined by character traits and actions.

Essential Question

- What is a hero?/C’est quoi un héraos?

Assessments

Interpretive: Read/listen/watch about heroes and determine what does/doesn’t make them a hero and why.
Interpersonal: Describe who you consider a hero and why. Find similarities with a partner. Look at several pictures and discuss if the person is a hero or not.
Presentational: Nominate someone for the Hero of the Year Award.

**Learning Targets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“I can…”</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>With Help</th>
<th>Not Yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>describe criteria for fame</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe what a hero does</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe what a hero is/is not (name things normally associated with heroes/ super heroes/ legendary heroes)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-describe positive characteristics/traits of a hero (personality, lifestyle, activities)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-describe negative characteristics/traits of a hero (personality, lifestyle, activities)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express opinions to determine if hero status is warranted</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe personal hero (who inspires me and why)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nominate and defend my choice for hero of the year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Core Vocabulary

### Week 1: describe criteria for fame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What makes someone famous?</th>
<th>Pourquoi est-ce qu’une personne est célèbre?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone who... (is admired by others).</td>
<td>Quelqu’un qui...(force l’admiration des autres).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is a source of inspiration/inspires others</td>
<td>...est une source d’inspiration/inspire les autres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...can change/improve the world</td>
<td>...peut changer/améliorer le monde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...can fight against the bad</td>
<td>...peut lutter les forces/sources du mal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has power and force</td>
<td>...a du pouvoir et de la puissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is rich, famous</td>
<td>...est riche, célèbre, fameux (fameuse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is a historical figure/is a saint</td>
<td>...est un personnage historique, est un(e) saint(e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...makes a large social/historical/religious contribution</td>
<td>...fait une grande contribution sociale, historique, religieuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is a mythical/legendary or imaginary person</td>
<td>...est une personne mythique/légendaire ou imaginaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Week 2: describe what a hero does

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does a hero do?</th>
<th>Que fait un héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A hero is someone who... (persists).</td>
<td>Un héros est quelqu’un qui ...(persistence).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...cares for/helps others</td>
<td>...se concerne aux autres/...aide les autres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...fights (for others)</td>
<td>...lutte (pour les autres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...supports a cause</td>
<td>...soutient une cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...protects the weak</td>
<td>...protège les faibles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has superpowers</td>
<td>...a des super pouvoirs / a des pouvoirs surhumains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...saves/rescues people</td>
<td>...sauve les gens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...takes responsibility of his actions</td>
<td>...prend la responsabilité de ses actes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...flies</td>
<td>...vole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...overcomes (problems)</td>
<td>surmonte (des problèmes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...perseveres</td>
<td>persévère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...can knows how to handle things/get by/manage himself</td>
<td>...peut se débrouiller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Week 3: describe what a hero is/is not (name some things normally associated with heroes/ superheroes/ legendary heroes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is a hero?</th>
<th>C’est quoi un héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A hero is someone who... (persists).</td>
<td>Un héros est quelqu’un qui ...(persistence).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has integrity</td>
<td>…a de l’intégrité</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...isn’t afraid of (nearly) anything</td>
<td>...n’a peur de rien (ou presque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has self esteem/believes in himself</td>
<td>...a confiance en soi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is in comics/cartoons</td>
<td>...dans les bandes dessinées</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is part of a legend</td>
<td>...fait partie d’une légende</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...is proud (of)</td>
<td>...est fier (fière) (de)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is a super-hero?</th>
<th>C’est quoi un super héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A superhero is someone who... (wears a distinctive outfit).</td>
<td>Un super héros est quelqu’un qui ...(met un costume distinctif).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...wears a mask</td>
<td>...met un masque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...wears a cape</td>
<td>...met une cape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...has a secret identity</td>
<td>...a une identité secrète</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 4: describe positive characteristics/traits of a hero (personality, lifestyle, activities)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the positive characteristics/traits of a hero?</th>
<th>Quels sont les traits positifs d’un héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/she is...(generous).</td>
<td>Il est...généreux/Elle est...(généreuse).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>honnête</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>courageous/brave</td>
<td>courageux/courageuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clever</td>
<td>astucieux/astucieuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>fidèle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>fort/forte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>juste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daring</td>
<td>audacieux/audacieuse/intrépide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful</td>
<td>puissant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>mystérieux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacious</td>
<td>ténace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is his/her profession?</th>
<th>C’est quoi, son métier?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/She is... (a lawyer).</td>
<td>Il est...(avocat). /Elle est...(avocate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>politician (president)</td>
<td>homme/femme politique (président)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>journaliste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>pilote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>acteur/actrice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>chanteur, chanteuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>écrivain, auteur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighter</td>
<td>pompier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police officer</td>
<td>policier, agent de police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>médecin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>infirmier/infirmière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>businessman/woman</td>
<td>homme d’affaires/femme d’affaires</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 5: describe negative characteristics of a hero (personality, lifestyle, activities)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the negative traits of a hero?</th>
<th>Quels sont les traits négatifs d’un héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/she is... (arrogant).</td>
<td>Il/elle est... (arrogant).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egotistical</td>
<td>égoïste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>violent/violente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an antihero</td>
<td>un antihéros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a killer</td>
<td>un tueur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an assassin</td>
<td>un assassin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What bad things does he/she do?</td>
<td>Quelles mauvaises choses fait-il/elle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she...punishes others.</td>
<td>Il/elle...punit les autres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...creates chaos</td>
<td>...crée le chaos/la pagaille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...breaks the law</td>
<td>...enfreint la loi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...escapes</td>
<td>...échappe/fuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...assassinates, kills</td>
<td>...assassine, tue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 6: express opinions to determine if hero status is warranted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think/believe he/she is a hero?</th>
<th>Est-ce que tu pense/crois que ...est un héros?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think/believe that he/she is a hero because...</td>
<td>Je pense/crois qu’il/elle est un héros parce que...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree?</th>
<th>Es-tu d’accord?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I agree</td>
<td>Oui, je suis d’accord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I disagree</td>
<td>Non, je ne suis pas d’accord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 7: describe personal hero (who inspires me and why)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who inspires you?</th>
<th>Qui est-ce qui vous inspire?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________ inspires me</td>
<td>______________________ m’inspire parce que…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who influences you?</th>
<th>Qui est-ce qui vous influence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________ influences me</td>
<td>______________________ m’influence parce que…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 8: nominate and defend my choice for hero of the year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In your opinion, who is hero of the year?</th>
<th>À ton avis, c’est qui, le héros de l’année?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion, the hero of the year is...because...</td>
<td>À mon avis/ d’après moi, le héros de l’année est...parce que...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

SUPER HERO READING
C’est quoi un super-héros ? Partie 1 : Les quatre critères

On sait qui est le premier super-héros : Superman, créé en 1938 par Jerry Siegel et Joe Schuster. Apparu dans Action Comics #1, ce surhomme en collants bigarreés, soulevant une voiture à main nue, va marquer la naissance d’un nouveau type de personnages, d’un genre même, et surtout annoncer la création d’une pléthore de ses successeurs (pour ne pas dire d’imitateurs). C’est logiquement chez Superman qu’on retrouve les éléments constitutifs du super-héros, une série de critères présents ensuite chez tous les autres personnages rattachables à ce genre. Et c’est par là qu’on va commencer. On peut en effet identifier quatre critères, présents chez Superman et chez tous ses successeurs, qui semblent permettre de caractériser le super-héros. A noter bien sûr que ceux-ci se sont affinés avec le temps, et le présent article s’est efforcé de tenir compte de cela pour arriver à une liste a priori exhaustive et précise. Signalons aussi que ces critères sont cumulatifs. Qu’il en manque un seul et on n’est plus face à un super-héros. Peut-être est-ce là la conséquence de la jeunesse (relative) du super-héros en tant que figure littéraire : il faut être d’autant plus précis pour le différencier de ceux qui l’ont précédé. Le super-héros se doit donc d’avoir : un costume, des pouvoirs, une identité secrète et une mission.

Information Gap Person 1

1) LE COSTUME (ou l’apparence)

En effet il est une sorte d’uniforme, que le super-héros porte systématiquement et pour remplir sa mission. C’est une première différence majeure par rapport à ce qui serait le look iconique d’un personnage donné comme le smoking de James Bond ou la casquette de Sherlock Holmes, qui n’a ni dimension systématique, ni finaliste. Autre exemple : si Astérix porte toujours un débardeur noir et un pantalon rouge (il y a donc bien systématisme), il ne le fait pas parce qu’il va remplir une mission. C’est juste qu’il s’habille toujours comme ça. Il manque donc la dimension finaliste du costume de super-héros.


2) LES POUVOIRS (ou les gadgets)

« Plus rapide qu’une balle, plus puissant qu’une locomotive… », on connaît la chanson. Un autre élément caractéristique du super-héros est qu’il possède des capacités surhumaines : ses super-pouvoirs. Peu de choses à dire sur ce sujet si ce n’est que l’origine desdits pouvoirs importe peu : résultat d’un accident ayant eu le genre de conséquence improbable propre au genre (l’araignée irradiée qui refle des pouvoirs, une bonne dose de produits chimiques et un éclair…), capacité naturelle due aux origines (extra-terrestres,
atlantes…) ou à une mutation génétique (les Mutants, Inhumains…), médicamente, expériences scientifiques, magie… Toutes les origines sont acceptables. La nature des pouvoirs a aussi peu d’importance, et ceux-ci sont on ne peut plus variés, allant des classiques vol, force ou pouvoirs psychiques et j’en passe jusqu’au fait d’avoir un système digestif hors de son corps sous la forme de deux larves (si, si, Maggott des X-Men, et oui…).

**Information Gap Person 2**

### 3) L’IDENTITE SECRETE (devenue le « nom de guerre »)

Ce troisième critère est à n’en pas douter celui qui a connu l’évolution la plus radicale, au point qu’il faille aujourd’hui le reformuler au lieu de simplement l’affiner pour qu’il reste pertinent. En effet dès l’origine il est établi que le super-héros possède une identité secrète d’homme ordinaire lui permettant de vivre sa vie lorsqu’il n’est pas en train de défendre la veuve et l’orphelin. On peut distinguer deux schémas en la matière. Le plus répandu est celui du héros dont l’identité civile est la véritable identité, et l’identité super- héroïque un « masque » qu’il revêt pour aller combattre le Mal. La vie super-héroïque peut prendre plus ou moins de place par rapport à la vie civile, mais elle reste artificielle, créée par un acte de volonté du héros.

### 4) LA MISSION (pour le bien)

Ce dernier critère est sans doute celui qui nécessitera le moins de développements, mais il est tout aussi important que les trois précédents. Agir pour le bien est une évidence pour tout héros, super ou pas. En revanche le super-héros en fait sa raison d’être. Il va activement chercher le mal à combattre et pas seulement réagir quand celui-ci pointe le bout de son nez.

En fait ce critère sert surtout à différencier le super-héros du super-vilain, qui partage avec lui les trois autres critères. A noter d’ailleurs que le fait pour le super-héros d’avoir une galerie d’ennemis attitrés n’est par contre pas un critère d’identification dudit super-héros. En effet tout personnage principal récurrent va acquérir au fil de ses aventures toute une pléthore d’ennemis avec lesquels il va développer des antagonismes plus ou moins personnels. On pourrait arguer qu’avoir une galerie de super-vilains est par contre l’apanage du super-héros, mais ce serait inexact.

From Comictalk.fr
APPENDIX E

PRE- AND POST-TEST RUBRIC
## Pre- and Post-Test

### Interpersonal Speaking

**Name:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS (A)</th>
<th>GOOD PERFORMANCE (B)</th>
<th>MEETS MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS (C)</th>
<th>APPROACHING EXPECTATIONS (D/F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____/50</td>
<td>I am easily understood. Errors in speaking do not interfere with communication. I respond accurately and appropriately to all questions.</td>
<td>I am easily understood. Errors in speaking are minor and do not interfere with communication. I am mostly accurate and appropriate with my responses.</td>
<td>I am understood most of the time. I may need to repeat or reword occasionally. Errors in speaking do not interfere with communication. My responses may not always be appropriate to the question.</td>
<td>I am difficult to understand at times I may ask for help expressing ideas (ex: &quot;How do you say....?&quot;). Some errors in speaking may interfere with communication. I struggle to understand questions and don't respond appropriately.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mistakes I make that would make it difficult for a native speaker to understand me:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much new and appropriate vocabulary do I use?</th>
<th>I take risks while using a wide variety of new vocabulary, including new personal vocab.</th>
<th>I use a wide variety of new vocabulary/appropriately as related to the unit.</th>
<th>I mostly use a variety of familiar vocabulary, and may include a few new vocabulary/expression from the unit.</th>
<th>I rely on simple and familiar vocab that sometimes may not relate to the topic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How well do I complete the task?</th>
<th>I elaborate to complete the task by adding interesting and relevant details.</th>
<th>I complete the task.</th>
<th>I complete most of the task.</th>
<th>I am able to complete only a small portion of the task.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task completion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How involved am I in the conversation?</th>
<th>I ask a variety of relevant questions to keep the conversation going. I respond to questions and/or add follow-up comments/queries &amp; information. I encourage others to participate.</th>
<th>I ask relevant questions to keep the conversation going and can complete my thoughts, respond to questions and/or make a follow-up comment. I am an equal participant in the conversation.</th>
<th>I ask a few relevant questions and I respond to questions simply.</th>
<th>I am unable to ask questions but can respond to questions simply.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active participation &amp; continuing conversation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What communication strategies do I use?</th>
<th>I ask for repetition or clarification as needed. I can carry on a conversation comfortably and follow up when needed.</th>
<th>I ask for repetition or clarification as needed. If a word is unknown, I can use gestures to express meaning.</th>
<th>I can say &quot;I don't understand&quot; in the target language but can still maintain the conversation by changing the topic.</th>
<th>I can say &quot;I don't understand&quot; as needed. If a word is unknown, talking stops.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comm. strategies / Circumlocution</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How easily do I deliver my thoughts?</th>
<th>My conversation flows with few pauses. I complete my thoughts easily.</th>
<th>I pause, but my hesitations seem natural. I complete my thoughts.</th>
<th>I hesitate often and my pauses are awkward. I have few or no incomplete thoughts.</th>
<th>My speech is slow and halting; long pauses may occur. I struggle to complete or do not complete thoughts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluency, timing &amp; pauses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted June 2015 from ACTFL Keys to Planning for Learning by Clementi & Terrill © 2013
APPENDIX F

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL AND EXAMPLE OBSERVATION NOTES
Classroom Observation Protocol

1. What materials are being used by the teacher and the students?
2. Do the learners ask the teacher or each other any questions?
3. What do learners do to begin the task?
4. What are learners saying and doing during the task?
5. What is the teacher saying and doing during the task?
6. Does the teacher make modifications to the topic or the task?

Example Observation Notes

Task 4 – Édith Piaf

9:54 Learners have begun a new task that does not have a video component. It is a reading and is sound only. It is about Édith Piaf. It gives biographical information about her life.

9:55 All learners write on their papers. Teacher plays the sound three times. Learners write questions and descriptions.

9:57 Teacher gives learners a two minute time to write their questions and descriptions. Then she plays the sound again. She turns the learners to their partners and allows them to converse. They need to answer the question, “Est-ce qu’elle est un héros?”

10:00 One learner can be heard saying, “Elle est hero parce que….” And her partner responds, giving her a question in return. They talk about Edith Piaf’s drug problems.

10:03 Learners converse with each other.

10:04 Teacher notes that learners picked up on the words “drogues” and “prostitution.” She asks the learners some questions to redirect them to focus on Édith Piaf’s life as a whole.

10:05 Teacher says, “If you get an image d’Édith Piaf, what are you going to ask?” Teacher reminds learners they are focusing on “aspect physique, caractere, psychologie.” Learners raise hands and offer examples of some questions that could be asked about a person in a picture during the speaking test.
10:09 Teacher puts “Questions de Comprehension” on the board. She tells learners they are going to listen to the clip again and answer the questions as they go.

Task 6: L’Émouvant Discours de Lassana Bathily

Information Gap Only

9:32 Teacher explains the activity and passes out the papers with the graphic on them. She asks learners to watch the video and use their vocabulary lists from their packets to create questions on their graphic about one aspect of heroism: either psychology, character, or physical appearance.

9:33 A video of Lassana Bathily plays on the screen at the front of the classroom. Learners watch the screen and some learners make notes on their paper.

9:35 Observer note: prior to viewing the video, the teacher had a bellringer, called activite de cloche, during which she had French-language quotations from Lassana and a photo of him, along with some information about his nationality on the screen. She asked for predictions from the class based on textual and visual evidence from the screen: “nationality, heroic act, etc.”

9:38 Most learners remain still and listen. Video ends and Teacher says, “Maintenant, ecrivez des questions…” She says, “Ca, c’est tres important parce que pour les conversations, on a besoin des questions.”

9:39 Teacher asks learners, for the questions, do we see patterns? Someone mentions, “Qu’est-ce que…” And Teacher writes “Qu’est-ce que” on the board. She proceeds with some examples: “Qu’est-ce que tu etudies? Qu’est-ce qu’il fait?” She reminds them they have stems of questions on a pamphlet they were given at the beginning of the year. She reminds them that just asking, “Is he or she a hero?” is not enough to develop conversational skills.

9:44 Teacher walks through the classroom and she quietly stops at various tables and speaks with learners, answering questions and checking on their progress.

9:45 She restarts the video and directs learners, now in English, to write their descriptions for either character or psychology.

9:48 Teacher stops the video. She tells learners that they should “reflechis” and write their questions and descriptions.

9:49 Teacher moves throughout the classroom. A learner raises his hand and asks her, “Is he a native French speaker? Because he seems very uncomfortable speaking French.” She quietly tells him he is right.
9:50 Learners move through the room and find a partner with the opposite paper of their own. Learners sit together and begin comparing written notes. One girl engages her partner by asking a question to him in French. He hesitates. But, she waits and she persists in French. He responds but he is nervous.

9:55 The noise level in the classroom increases. English is heard, but French conversations can also be heard. Teacher sits with groups in turn. She listens, then she indicates something on the board at the front of the classroom. She helps a learner say, “A mon avis…” as a sentence starter.

9:56 Teacher moves to another group and asks, “Okay, quelles sont les questions.” Groups she is not with are unable to maintain their French language or their conversation.

9:59 Teacher stops the class, tells the learners their conversations have come a long way. She restarts the video from where it left off. It continues to play and learners write.

10:00 Learners listen and write on their papers, referring to their packets.

10:01 The last line of the video is Lassana saying, “Vive la France.” When this plays and Teacher stops the video, a learner can be heard repeating it.

10:02 Learners converse together. Teacher circulates throughout the classroom.

10:05 At the front of the classroom, Teacher returns to a screen regarding the same predictions she had asked learners to make about Lassana’s profession, nationality, and heroic act.

10:07 Learners tell Teacher they think Lassana is a senator. Another learner says he isn’t a senator because she heard him address the senators. Learners tell her they heard “famille en Afrique,” “amis de football,” and more. Discussion continues and learners tell Teacher they think Lassana is not French. They can tell he seems nervous and unsure about his language. “Il est nerveux.” Teacher says, “Il est nerveux. Mais, il a fait quelque chose de bravoure.” Ms. Jones explains to learners that “Il a cache des personnes. Il a sauve les vies. Il est employe au marche a Paris.”
APPENDIX G

PRE-STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Pre-Study Interview Protocol

1. Describe your teaching style.

2. Describe your process for teaching your learners how to speak French.

3. Based on your experience as a foreign language teacher, what is the most important factor in the development of foreign language learner oral proficiency?

4. Is there a balance between grammatical accuracy and clear meaning and expression of learners in foreign language speech?

6. How do you use instructional supports in your classes to help learners develop their speaking skills?

7. What do you typically do while learners are working through a speaking task?

8. What aspects of speaking do you focus on during speaking tasks?

9. Do you ever participate in learner speaking task conversations? If you do, how do you do that?

10. What is your most powerful instructional tool for teaching speaking?

11. Is there a method that you use to control the complexity of speaking instructional tasks? If so, what is it?

12. What makes a speaking task effective in the foreign language classroom?

13. Do you think that speaking tasks are effective tools for developing oral proficiency?
APPENDIX H

MID-STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Mid-Study Interview Protocol

1. Describe the speaking tasks learners completed.

2. What were the benefits of each speaking task?

3. How could each speaking task be improved?

4. How did each speaking task support language learner oral proficiency development?

5. Did speakers have any difficulty completing speaking tasks? Why or why not?

6. What did you do while learners were completing the speaking tasks?

7. What aspects of speaking did you focus on or need to monitor as learners completed speaking tasks?

8. Did you participate in any conversations during speaking tasks?

9. What instructional supports, such as partners, groups, vocabulary prompts, or other, were in place to help learners complete tasks?

10. What was the difference between the classroom execution of each task?

11. Was one task more or less effective than another in supporting development of foreign language learner oral proficiency?

12. Do you think that the speaking tasks are effective tools for developing learner oral proficiency?
APPENDIX I

POST-STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Post-Study Interview Protocol

1. What did you find beneficial about information gap tasks throughout the study?

2. What could be improved in implementing information gap tasks in your classroom?

3. What did you find beneficial about dictogloss tasks throughout the study?

4. What could be improved in implementing dictogloss tasks in your classroom?

5. What would you do differently if you continue to use either information gap task or dictogloss tasks in your classroom?

6. Describe the typical process that led up to learners completing a task. Did lessons before and after the task support learners in completing the tasks? How?

7. Are the tasks effective in helping learners to develop speaking skills? If so, how? If not, why?

8. Overall, do you think that using information gap and dictogloss was effective in developing learner oral proficiency?
APPENDIX J

EXAMPLE TASK INSTRUCTIONS AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS
Task #1 Information Gap “Les Types de Personnages”

Partner 1 has descriptions of (1) le héros classique, (2) le héros moderne, (6) le rival ou le mauvais, and (7) le faire-valoir. Partner 2 has descriptions of (3) le super-héros, (5) l’anti-héros, (4) le justicier, and (8) les personnages secondaire.

Partners have only their own set of descriptions in their possession and must not show one another the list and descriptions each person is holding. Partners will work together to fill out a compare and contrast table according to the pairs of heros listed below and their characteristics such as character, psychology, and physical attributes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caractère</th>
<th>Psychologie</th>
<th>L’Aspect physique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le héros classique</td>
<td>Similarités</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’anti-héros</td>
<td>Différences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Le faire-valoir</td>
<td>Similarités</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les personnages secondaires</td>
<td>Différences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le rival ou le mauvais</td>
<td>Similarités</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le justicier</td>
<td>Différences</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le héros moderne</td>
<td>Similarités</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le super-héros</td>
<td>Différences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task #1 Dictogloss “Les Types de Personnages”

All students have the table below. The teacher reads the description for three of the types of characters listed: (1) Le héros classique, (3) Le super-héros, and (4) Le justicier. The teacher may read the descriptions three times. Students take notes on the table provided.

After all three readings have been completed, students put pens and pencils away and work with a partner to reconstruct or paraphrase the definitions of the three types of characters that were read aloud. Students’ oral reconstructions must include aspects of character, psychology, and physical attributes. Each reconstruction should be a minimum of three simple, but complete sentences. Students should also be able to give an example of each type of character defined.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caractère</th>
<th>Psychologie</th>
<th>L’aspect physique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Le héros classique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le super-héros</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Le justicier</td>
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</table>
Task #2 “Domain des Dieux” Teacher Links:

Domaine des Dieux Trailer in French (no subtitles):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXjbJnym4ZA

Domaine des Dieux (Mansion of the Gods) Trailer in French (English Subtitles):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGy72w2AIGU&list=PL-Vvm0V2zVPjQbJl9zqDcnYt5hGLIEtqc

Task #2 Information Gap “Asterix: Le Domaine des Dieux”

All students watch the trailer. The teacher chooses with or without subtitles according to supports students may need for comprehension. For the purpose of this study, research shows that using one’s native language as a reference point to comprehend or orient toward a task is a support system when used metacognitively, not a hindrance to speaking.

Partners have the same table in their hands. Partner A will focus on describing the character and physical appearance of Asterix. Partner A will also focus on asking about physical appearance and psychology of Asterix.

Partner B will focus on describing the psychology and physical appearance of Asterix. Partner B will also focus on asking about the physical appearance and character of Asterix.

Partners will fill out the information for their designated areas (Partner A – character and physical appearance; Partner B – psychology and physical appearance). Partners will also write some questions they could ask in a conversation to discover the attributes of each description theme (character, psychology, physical appearance).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTENAIRE</th>
<th>Caractère</th>
<th>Psychologie</th>
<th>Physique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.</td>
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Mes questions:

Comment je décris le psychologie et l’aspect physique d’Astérix:

<table>
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<th></th>
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<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTENAIRE</td>
<td>Caractère</td>
<td>Psychologie</td>
<td>Physique</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mes questions:</td>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment je décris le caractère et l’aspect physique d’Astérix:</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task #2 Dictogloss “Asterix: Le Domaine des Dieux”

All students watch the trailer. The teacher chooses with or without subtitles according to supports students may need for comprehension. For the purpose of this study, research shows that using one’s native language as a reference point to comprehend or orient toward a task is a support system when used metacognitively, not a hindrance to speaking.

The video may be shown three times or more, as need is determined by the teacher.

While the video is playing, students should make notes in French about character, psychology, and physical appearance of Asterix.

After video viewing has been completed, students put pens and pencils away and work with a partner to reconstruct the action by answering the question: What is the movie about and how do you know? Each reconstruction should be a minimum of three simple, but complete sentences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASTERIX</th>
<th>Caractère</th>
<th>Psychologie</th>
<th>L’aspect physique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Break the video clip down into four major points. What is happening in the video clip?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4.