Delivering task instructions in multimodal synchronous online language teaching

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La formulation des consignes lors de cours synchrones par visioconférence

Müge Satar and Ciara R. Wigham
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Abstract

Multimodal synchronous online language teaching is an area of growing interest for research and practice. Emerging research investigates online language teachers' semio-pedagogical skills and competencies, which includes giving instructions to inform learners how to complete the task. However, the few studies that exist have explored trainee teachers' instruction-giving practices, while other work on instructions is grounded in face-to-face classroom settings. Using a qualitative design, this paper investigates experienced teachers' delivery of task instructions for the same task in small group multimodal synchronous online language teaching via videoconferencing. Employing grounded theory and multimodal interaction analysis, we depict both a comprehensive overview and a detailed micro-analysis of higher-level and lower-level actions that comprise task instructions-as-process. Our findings identify 13 higher-level actions and propose a framework for understanding the nature of instructions-as-process in online language teaching. We offer multimodal interaction analyses of selected higher-level actions (*communicating key task information*, *suggesting ways into task*, *launching the task*) to illustrate the multimodal elements (lower-level actions) utilised by the teachers. In our conclusions, we offer pedagogical and research directions and discuss challenges in identifying success and best practice in delivering task instructions.

L'apprentissage des langues médiatisé par les technologies est un domaine d'intérêt croissant pour la recherche et la pratique et plus particulièrement les interactions synchrones multimodales. Les recherches en cours dans ce domaine portent sur les compétences techno-sémio-pédagogiques des enseignants de langues en ligne. Une de ces compétences est la formulation des consignes pour expliquer aux apprenants comment réaliser une tâche. Cependant, les quelques études existantes examinent essentiellement la formulation des consignes par des apprentis-tuteurs en ligne ou se concentrent sur le présentiel. En adoptant une approche qualitative, cet article examine les consignes émises pour la même tâche par trois enseignants expérimentés dans l'enseignement à distance. Le contexte est celui de cours d'anglais L2 donnés par visioconférence en petits groupes. En s'appuyant sur la théorie ancrée (Grounded Theory) et l'analyse des interactions multimodales, nous proposons, à la fois, un aperçu complet et une micro-analyse détaillée des actions de niveaux supérieur et inférieur liées aux consignes. Pour situer nos analyses, nous proposons d'analyser les approches variées d'enseignants vis-à-vis de la formulation des consignes : consignes pour favoriser l'interaction authentique, consignes directives pour accomplir la tâche ou présentation écrite des consignes pour une lecture asynchrone par les apprenants en amont de l'interaction puis confirmation orale lors de l'interaction synchrone.
Ensuite, en nous appuyant sur les travaux de Markee (2015), qui a identifié six composantes des consignes lors de séances en présentiel, nous identifions 13 actions de niveau supérieur (Norris, 2004) qui composent les consignes et proposons un cadre pour étudier leur nature (instructions-as-processus). Notre analyse suggère que l'action de niveau supérieur gérer les ressources semble être

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particulièrement importante pour l'enseignement-apprentissage des langues à distance. Nous proposons ensuite une analyse multimodale de trois actions de niveau supérieur (communiquer les informations clés pour la tâche, proposer comment lancer la tâche, lancer la tâche) pour illustrer les éléments multimodaux (actions de niveau inférieur) employés par les enseignants. Les trois extraits analysés démontrent que chaque enseignant tirait parti des affordances de différents modes de communication selon le cadrage visuel qu'il adoptait (plan poitrine, gros plan ou très gros plan). En employant divers modes de communication, les enseignants ont atteint une densité modale accrue dans leurs consignes leur permettant de les présenter comme point focal de l'attention (Norris, 2004). Pour conclure, nous proposons une discussion autour des perspectives pédagogiques et de recherche ainsi qu'une réflexion sur les difficultés rencontrées pour identifier des consignes réussies.

Keywords: instruction-giving, videoconferencing, tasks, multimodality
multimodalité, consignes, tâches, visioconférence

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1. Introduction

Online language learning is an area of growing interest and one-to-one or small-group classes are gaining popularity due to the flexibility of time and space they offer. Research in this area is also gaining momentum (eg Develotte et al., 2008; Hampel & Stickler, 2012; Kozar, 2016; Guichon, 2017), especially in investigating online language teachers' semio-pedagogical activity (Guichon, 2013), which involves skills and competencies in using "various semiotic and technological resources" (Guichon, 2017, p. 57). One such skill is giving task instructions. However, without careful consideration and planning, teachers' task explanations can be problematic due to distinct affordances and challenges of the online teaching platform. This paper investigates small group multimodal synchronous online language teaching via videoconferencing (Skype). We explore how experienced teachers deliver instructions for the same task.

Research on teachers' instruction-giving practices is scarce. Emerging research has begun to explore written instructions in materials (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017) and verbal instructions in face-to-face (Markee, 2015) and online language teaching (Cappellini & Combe, 2017; Satar & Wigham, 2017). While much research has investigated trainee teachers' practices, the present study is unique in identifying how experienced online language teachers give instructions in multimodal synchronous online language teaching and the higher- and lower-level actions that constitute the instructions.

Tasks engage learners in language use and elicit linguistic output (Ellis, 2000). Tasks typically involve "(1) some input (ie information that learners are required to process and use); and (2) some instructions relating to what outcome the learners are supposed to achieve" (Ellis, 2000, p. 195). Being an essential component of tasks, the delivery of instructions is important for several reasons. First, successful task completion "is often predicated on the effectiveness of [the] instructions" (Watson Todd et al., 2008, p. 26). Second, language learning happens in meaning-focused interaction during task completion (Nunan, 2004). Instructions offer opportunities for authentic communication

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(Watson Todd et al., 2008) and foster "immediate situational feedback" (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017, p. 343). Third, instruction-giving is part of task-based teaching competencies (Raith & Hegelheimer, 2010). Fourth, instructions may constitute a significant amount of teacher talk time (Ha & Wanphet, 2016). Finally, just as task-as-workplan may differ from task-as-process (Breen, 1987), spoken instructions may differ from planned instructions, ie task instructions-as-workplan may differ from task instructions-as-process. By understanding how experienced online teachers deliver task instructions in videoconferencing, we can guide teacher training, improve the quality of online language teaching, and establish best practice. Yet we discuss the challenges for the latter in our discussion and conclusions.

In this paper, although we focus on what *the teacher* does, we do not intend to imply that instructions are a one-way process. We acknowledge that instructions can be collaboratively co-constructed with learners (eg Markee, 2015; St John & Cromdal, 2016) as an interactive process (Somuncu & Sert, 2019). We document data in relation to such interactivity in our analyses where relevant, but do not carry out a conversation analysis of the data. Our analytical method, multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004) takes as its unit of analysis the mediated action. This is defined as a "social actor acting with/through mediational means" (Norris & Pirini, 2016, p. 21). Given multimodal interaction analysis' primary interest in revealing mediated actions of social actors, it enables a sole focus on teachers' actions and does not require a turn-by-turn analysis to demonstrate the sequential organisation of interaction, which would be the case when using a conversation analytic method (for more information on conversation analysis see Seedhouse, 2005).

Using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004), we address the following research questions:
1. What higher-level actions comprise experienced online language teachers' task instructions-as-process?
2. Which multimodal elements operate in the same higher-level actions employed by different teachers in their task instructions-as-process?

In the following section, we introduce instructions within Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and elaborate on multimodality in task instructions. We discuss the ways in which our focus on instruction-giving differs from instructional conversations (Meskill & Anthony, 2007; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). We introduce Markee's (2015) task instruction fragments that form our theoretical framework and explain why we refer to them as higher-level actions, which is guided by our methodological approach.

2. Literature Review

In this section, we review literature on teachers' instruction-giving practices, including studies that offer a multimodal perspective, much of which, however, is grounded in face-to-face classroom settings.

2.1. Task instructions in TBLT

Instructions can be written (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017), spoken (Markee, 2015; Seedhouse, 2008) or a spoken instantiation of written instructions (Ha & Wanphet, 2016). Regarding written instructions, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2017, p. 345-351) identify 11 criteria including *succinctness*, ie presentation of instructions "in the briefest and most concise way" (p. 348); *specificity* of instructions clarifying what to do and how to do it; and *unambiguity* avoiding pronouns, synonyms and using clear referrals. While written instructions are "static, pre-arranged and planned," spoken instructions are "dynamic, spontaneous, and unplanned" and enhance written instructions in the classroom (Ha & Wanphet, 2016, p. 152). Investigating two English-as-a-Foreign language (EFL) classrooms in which teachers provide instructions for the same task, Ha and Wanphet (2016) describe how verbal instructions complement instructions written on the materials and facilitate learner understanding of

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the task requirements. Furthermore, they demonstrate that teachers' spoken reformulation of written instructions serves a variety of functions, including calling students' attention, checking understanding, giving options and ideas, emphasising important information, helping learners process the instructions, and creating interaction (Ha & Wanphet, 2016). Some of these functions might be considered as essential task instruction fragments, which we demonstrate in our analyses.

However, the word *instruction* can be misleading as it can be used to refer to different concepts. Lindwall, Lymer and Greiffenhagen (2015) distinguish between three types of instructions: instructions as *education*, as *directives*, and as *written texts*, such as user guides. Instructions as directives are *procedural* information targeted at "setting up tasks and making them followable" (St. John & Cromdal, 2016, p. 253) and this is the type of instruction we refer to in this paper. Instructions as directives can also be considered within *instructional conversations* (Meskill & Anthony, 2007; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Instructional conversations are dialogues "between teacher and learners in which the teacher listens carefully to groups of students' communicative intent and tailors the dialogue to meet the emerging understanding of the learners" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991, p. 1). They are social and pleasurable interactive strategies which engage learners in thinking, meaning-negotiation and consequently learning. This understanding of instructional conversation aligns with the socio-cultural approach to language learning wherein learning occurs *through* interaction (Lantolf, 2001) and interaction *is* the content in language learning. Similarly, as Thornbury (2000, p. 2) puts forth: "Teaching–like talk–should centre on the local and relevant concerns of the people in the room, not on the remote world of coursebook characters, nor the contrived world of grammatical structures." Although instructional conversations highlight the quality of interaction or talk between learners and teachers, the practice contradicts guidance provided in most teacher training courses to minimise teacher-talk time.

Exploring instructional conversation practices of teachers in an asynchronous online language course, Meskill and Anthony (2007, p. 11) demonstrate how an instructor "set[s] up the language learning task and orchestrat[es] instructional conversation around that task." In this paper, we set out to investigate the former, ie teachers' higher-level actions in "*setting up the language learning task*" and exclude the latter, ie those in "*orchestrating instructional conversation around that task*" (Meskill & Anthony, 2007, p. 11). As such, we do not address the role of the teacher or learners during the task interaction, nor the impact of how the task is set up on learner or interactional outcomes (eg learning, interactional dynamics, or ensuing instructional conversation), which are beyond the focus of this paper. However, we have observed elements of instructional conversation even in this initial *setting-up-the-task* stage (eg Extract 3). While this could be due to different teaching styles of the participating teachers (see Section 4), the videoconferencing context with participant images being constantly present on the screen might be generating pressure for teachers to be genuine participants in the ongoing social interaction.

Previous research in face-to-face classrooms has explored spoken task instructions. Seedhouse (2008) demonstrates how successful experienced teachers "create a pedagogical focus, that is, to get students to do what they want, in an apparently effortless manner" (2008, p. 42) using "instructions … full and explicit as possible whilst presenting a single, undiluted focus" (2008, p. 55). In another study that investigated an experienced teacher's classroom teaching, Markee (2015, p. 120-121) identified six task instruction fragments, which inform the learners about: (1) how they will be working (in dyads or small groups), (2) what resources they will need, (3) what tasks they have to accomplish, (4) how they will accomplish the task, (5) how much time they have to accomplish these tasks, (6) why they should do something. In this paper, we build on Markee's (2015) fragments. In this paper, in line with our analytical lens–multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004) which scrutinises mediated higher- and lower-level actions–Markee's (2015) fragments constitute various higher-level actions in which the teachers engage while giving instructions. On the other hand, the modes they employ in doing so form the lower-level actions. Thus, this study demonstrates the higher-level and lower-level actions that comprise task instructions-as-process.

Despite the key role spoken instructions play in language teaching, research focusing on instructions in online audiovisual language teaching is rare. Indeed, we identified only three studies. The first, by Codreanu and CombeCelik (2012) touches upon online tutors' use of pre-prepared instructions not only as a quick means to launch activities, using a paste-and-copy technique, but as memos-to-self to

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help them refocus interactions on the pedagogical objectives. The second, by Cappellini and Combe (2017), explores teachers' techno-semio-pedagogical competence in two online environments: an asynchronous learning management system (Moodle) and a synchronous webconferencing platform (Adobe Connect). The authors show how trainee teachers modify instructions according to mode as they negotiate instructions in conversation with the learners in the webconferencing platform. They also underline challenges of the online environment and how trainees may unexpectedly need to deliver technical instructions concerning task resources (downloading a document). However, they do not investigate experienced teachers' practices, explore the different fragments constituting instructions, nor analyse instructions' multimodal nature.

The third study is our previous work on the use of multimodal resources in instruction-giving by trainee teachers, which we explain in the next section.

2.2. Multimodality and task instructions

An increasing number of studies explore multimodality in face-to-face classroom teaching (eg de Silva Joyce & Feez, 2018). Studies of language classrooms have explored how posture shifts and mutual posture alignment signal task launch (Hellermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2010) and the ways in which participants "collaboratively converge on courses of action" (Markee, 2015, p. 127) through embodied actions such as eye gaze, gestures, and orientation to cultural artefacts. In a recent study, Somuncu and Sert (2019) focus on trainee teachers' orientation to learners' non-understanding of instructions and demonstrate how trainees successfully manage non-understanding by employing physical and digital visual artefacts.

Despite an interest in multimodality in online language learning, including a focus on gaze (Satar, 2013; Shi, Stickler, & Lloyd, 2017), gestures (Lee et al., 2019; Satar, 2016; Wigham, 2017), silence (Kozar, 2016), and webcam impact (Cohen & Wigham, 2018; Guichon & Wigham, 2016; Hampel & Stickler, 2012), very little attention has been paid to the multimodal nature of task instructions in online language teaching. Due to restrictions imposed on the interactional space by the two-dimensional webcam frame–with limited access to gaze direction, visible gestures within the webcam frame, establishment of mutual gaze, and differences in proximity (distance)–teachers' multimodal practices in instruction giving can differ significantly from their face-to-face practices. Our earlier work (Satar & Wigham, 2017), in which we observed trainee teachers' instructions for a role-playing task remains the prime example in the area. We showed how trainee teachers capitalise on non-linguistic semiotic resources including word stress, gaze, gestures, proximity to the webcam, and text-chat to mark different instruction-giving stages, allocate roles, and introduce key vocabulary. We observed deployment of text-chat and digital talk-external artefacts such as online pictures, videos, and websites during task accomplishment and demonstrated how trainee teachers appropriated such resources when performing pedagogical actions during instruction-giving.

In short, few studies have explored the multimodal aspects of language task instructions either in face-to-face or online teaching via audiovisual platforms. Moreover, research on task instructions is almost non-existent in online language teaching and only involves an examination of trainee teachers' practices. This study sets out to examine how experienced teachers deliver task instructions online.

3. Methods

Following a qualitative research design, we draw on qualitative and micro-analytic analyses of screen-recorded lessons to understand the complexity of instruction-giving. A semi-controlled corpus (Tellier, 2013) was constructed from online lessons, the basis of which was the same task. Thus, the corpus allowed the researchers to control for variation in task type and participant characteristics, which enabled a qualitative comparative analysis.

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3.1. Participants

Three experienced online English teachers (one male, two female) were recruited in Spring 2018 from two online language teaching providers: iTalki (Chen & Jiang, 2007) and SpeakPlus (Paniza & Barry, 2014). All volunteer teachers had a teaching qualification. They had a minimum of two years online teaching experience (see Table 1) and regularly taught lessons using the videoconferencing platform Skype (Skype, n.d.).

Table 1–Teacher profiles.

Teacher pseudonym	**Craig** 	**Karen** 	**Sarah** 
Teaching qualification(s)	TEFL certificate	TEFL certificate	TEFL certificate
Face-to-face teaching experience	18 months (Spain)	24 months (China)	Yes (France)
Date began teaching online	2016	2013	2007
Online lessons completed on iTalki	1454	4638	n/a
Student rating on iTalki	5 stars (out of 5)	5 stars (out of 5)	n/a

Six[1] volunteer language learners studying a foundation-level English course at a higher education institution in Turkey were recruited. They had a B1-B2 *CEFR* (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*; Council of Europe, 2001) level and their motivation to participate was the opportunity to practise speaking skills because they did not have many opportunities for such practice in their face-to-face classes. Indeed, the call for participation emphasised this opportunity. The online classes were completed outside of their institutional settings and were not graded. Two learners were allocated to each teacher. Group composition was based on learners' availability.

3.2. Data collection procedures

Each teacher held three 60-minute lessons, conducting the introductory lesson with their preferred activities. For the subsequent lessons, they were provided with exactly the same task resources (task-as-workplan) for a convergent and a divergent task (Ellis, 2003). No additional instructions to those presented on the resource sheets were shared with the teachers (Appendix A); they could introduce the tasks in the way(s) that suited their own practices.

[1] As part of the project, a further three learners participated in the lessons where one of the teachers (Craig) repeated the sequence with one learner only, and another (Karen) repeated the sequence with a different learner dyad to observe variance in instruction-giving practices as regards group size and task repetition.

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Data for this paper come from the second lesson[2], where the convergent task (Appendix A) was used. The task encourages learners to reach a consensus in order for a reasonable solution to be produced (Wegerif et al., 1999). We chose to study this task because in convergent tasks learners need to reach a single outcome collectively, meaning that they both need to understand the task information and the instructions correctly. The task is divided into two micro-tasks: an information exchange activity during which learners must compare two gift-package deals for a colleague's leaving present and decide upon one; and a collaborative email writing activity asking other colleagues for financial contributions towards the purchase of the gift package.

Primary data sources were screen recordings of the online lessons using Snagit (Snagit, n.d.) by the teachers and, to minimise potential data loss, by a researcher who participated as a silent observer with muted microphone and camera[3]. Table 2 presents the details of the semi-controlled corpus.

Table 2–Screen recordings collected for lesson 2 and lesson length.

Teacher	Screen recording by:	Length of the recordings	Total amount of data
Craig	The teacher The researcher	60 mins 60 mins	120 mins
Karen	The teacher The researcher	60 mins 60 mins	120 mins
Sarah	The researcher	50 mins + 37 mins[4]	87 mins

Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics committee and all participants gave informed consent. Pseudonyms are used for personal information. Some images are blurred according to preferences stated in participants' consent forms.

3.3. Data analysis methods

To answer the research questions, first, we used grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify which fragments comprised teachers' instructions. Informed by Markee's (2015) instruction fragments classification, but staying close to the data via multiple iterations of watching the screen recordings, we employed a bottom-up approach. We tagged the data in ELAN (Sloetjes & Wittenburg, 2008) with descriptors of the higher-level actions that emerged. During the open-coding stage, we generated categories by grouping similar items and defined and developed them until we reached theoretical saturation where we did not observe any new categories. Through constant comparison, we then related the categories to refine our higher-level actions and searched for variation within and between categories. In our analysis of instruction-giving as-process, we observed that teachers decided to divide the macro-task into smaller steps. Our analysis covers the instructions for all steps. However, we excluded teachers' task facilitation guidance through directives and questions once the learners began engaging with the task. For Craig and Karen, our analysis was largely based on the

[2] Sarah completed this lesson over two interactions. During the first interaction, there were many technical connection problems, and one of the learners was late for the lesson and had a lot of difficulty understanding the task. Therefore, the teacher preferred to give the learners time to work through the task resource sheets individually and scheduled a second session in which to complete the task.

[3] In later images, the image of the researcher is her profile picture and not a still shot of her webcam image.

[4] Sarah completed this lesson over two interactions, with a total lesson length of 87 minutes. See Note 2 for the reasons for this.

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teachers' own screen recordings but, as this was not available for Sarah, we used the researcher's screen recording. Although this does not present any issues for the data presented in this paper, it means that we did not have access to all changing screens and actions that might be taking place on Sarah's end of the online interaction (eg accessing other documents, switching to another window) and the data might be representing a semiotic lag (Wigham & Satar, in press) regarding time difference between Sarah's actual actions and when those actions were received on the researcher's screen.

Second, to examine which multimodal elements operate within the same instruction-giving fragments, we offer a detailed micro-analysis of data extracts using multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004), which scrutinises mediated actions (unit of analysis) within social practices comprising lower- and higher-level actions. Lower-level actions are "the smallest interactional meaning unit" (Norris, 2004, p. 1), or modes, and higher-level actions are "a chain of lower-level actions, with an opening and a closing" (Norris & Pirini, 2016, p. 5). Within this method, we considered each instruction-giving fragment as a higher-level action, while the lower-level actions constituted various modal units, for instance, gaze shifts, spoken utterances, head movements, etc. (See Norris, 2004, for a full explanation of the different modes and Satar & Wigham, 2017, for an explanation of different types of gestures, gaze, etc.). Extract selection was based on several criteria. First, we focused on "sequences in which the teacher produces instructions" (Seedhouse, 2008, p. 6). We also looked for sequences that illustrated the new fragments that emerged in our grounded theory analysis. Then, we refined our selection to sequences that were typical examples of the chosen fragments, but also multimodally salient to demonstrate how various modes operate together. It was also important to demonstrate variety in all teachers' practices for the same fragments. Three fragments revealed to be most appropriate for these purposes: *communicating key task information*, *suggesting ways into task*, and *launching the task*. Once the segments for micro-analysis were selected, they were transcribed (Appendix B) and analysed using multimodal interaction analysis focusing on the lower-level actions observed in each higher-level action.

Measures were taken to augment the credibility of our qualitative analyses including seminar presentations to receive feedback on potential different interpretations of data. Following independent tagging and discussion, collaborative data coding represented full agreement between the researchers. For triangulation and respondent validation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), we conducted post-lesson interviews with the participants and sought feedback from participating teachers.

4. Findings

Before addressing our research questions regarding the higher-level actions that comprise experienced online teachers' task instructions (section 4.1) and the multimodal elements that operate in the same higher-level actions of instruction-giving (section 4.2), we feel it is important to give an overview of our observations regarding the teachers' (Craig, Sarah, and Karen's) differing instruction-giving styles and instruction management practices to contextualise our analyses.

Craig dedicated about half the task time to instructions and approached instruction delivery as a venue to foster authentic communication. He employed the strategy of using instruction-giving actions for task contextualisation, personalisation, and humour, thus developing an interpersonal relationship with the learners. During instructions, he was highly present socially with expressive facial features, brisk pace of speech, and little silence. We observed that the instruction-giving phase was characterised by teacher talk and interactivity largely constituted requests for minimal responses from learners to confirm understanding either as minimal response tokens or head nods.

Karen adopted the technique of eliciting instructions from the learners and approached instruction delivery as an opportunity for learning to learn by focusing on study skills (see 4.4.1). For example, she asked learners to identify different sections of the written instructions to facilitate work with any written task instructions. This approach allowed the learners to occupy nearly one third of the floor

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space during instruction-giving and also allowed Karen to check learners' understanding of the task instructions, be responsive to misunderstandings, and, when necessary, offer immediate feedback.

We observed that Sarah's strategy was to ask the learners to read the resource sheet, confirm their understanding, and facilitate task completion once the task was underway rather than explaining all requirements upfront. Sarah conducted the lesson over two separate occasions. In the first attempt, one learner, Demet, was late for the lesson, had technical problems, and refused to read the resource sheet, hence asked for more time to focus on the resource sheet individually. Although the other learner, Sevil, had understood the task, her attempt to explain the task to Demet also failed. The teacher, Sarah, decided to reschedule the lesson and approached the instructions as written directives in the task resource to be read beforehand by the learners, and then orally confirmed learners' understanding of the instructions during the lesson. Indeed, at the beginning of the second attempt, both learners had read and understood the resource sheet and it did not take them long to begin the task following a recap of the instructions that Sarah elicited. Instructions in the first attempt were more teacher-talk centred and predominantly involved getting learners to access and read the resource sheet. Student talk in the rescheduled lesson was greater and the instruction phase was more dialogical: as both learners had read the task information, Sarah asked one learner to summarise it and then briefly recapped the key points which appeared to prove efficient.

We now turn to our analysis of higher-level actions that comprise the three teachers' task instructions-as-process and the multimodal elements that operate as lower-level actions within these.

4.1. What higher-level actions comprise experienced online language teachers' task instructions-as-process?

Following grounded theory analysis, 13 categories of higher-level actions in task instructions-as-process emerged from our data. Figure 1 demonstrates these actions, six of which (represented in beige) existed in Markee's (2015) instruction-fragments, whereas seven of these (represented in blue) are new in our study. We further observed sub-categories for three of the existing actions (represented in green), some of which, within the *managing resources* action, related specifically to online teaching (*sending the resource, receiving the resource, opening the resource)*.

Figure 1–Higher-level actions in task instructions-as-process.

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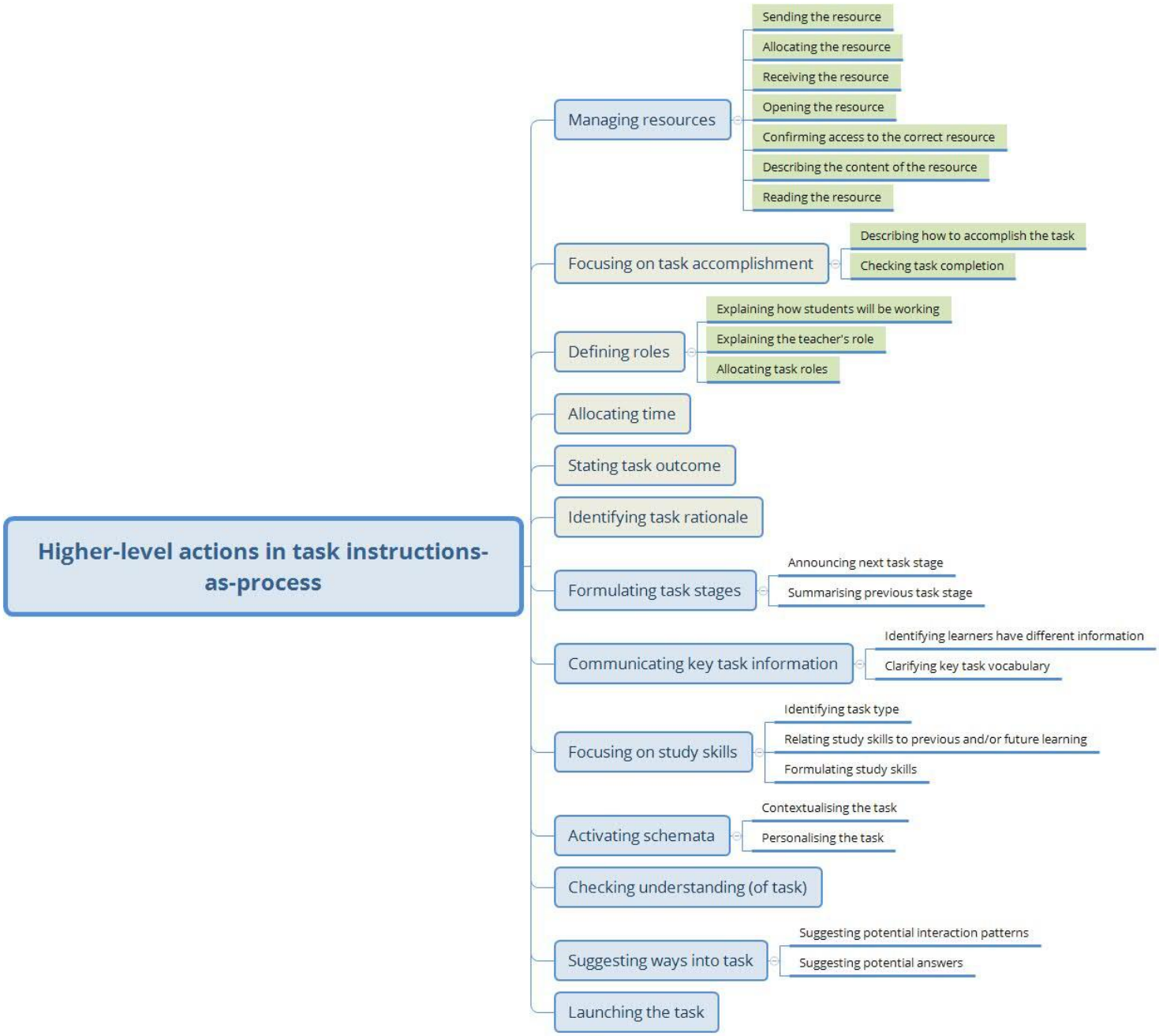

While instruction fragments specified by Markee (2015) include an identification of task resources, online teachers in our study needed to go beyond identification and actively manage the task resources. This comprised a range of further higher-level actions such as allocating different documents to different learners and instructing them on how to access the resource sheets (Wigham & Satar, in press). We also observed that online teachers made different task stages salient through summarising previous task steps as well as forward-organising subsequent steps. Other higher-level actions included clarification of key task information (such as different learner roles and vocabulary); a focus on study skills during task instructions, for instance by explicitly stating the task type; activating schemata for the task by contextualising and personalising the task; and checking learner understanding of the task instructions before launching the task. The micro-analysis presented in the next section demonstrates how online teachers communicated key task information, suggested ways in which learners can approach the task, and launched the task. Examples of all higher-level actions presented in Figure 1 can be found in Appendix C.

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4.2. Which multimodal elements operate in the same higher-level actions employed by different teachers in their task instructions-as-process?

We present three micro-analyses to illustrate the multimodal construction of three higher-level actions that comprise task instructions-as-process: *communicating key task information*, *suggesting ways into task* and *launching the task*. In the analyses, the multimodal elements represent the lower-level actions as defined by Norris (2004). Figure numbers refer to image numbers in the corresponding extract.

Extract 1–Student A is different to Student B.

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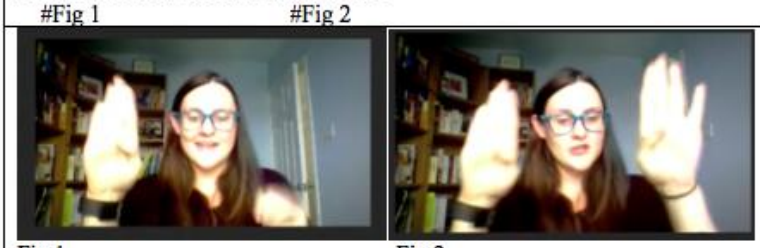
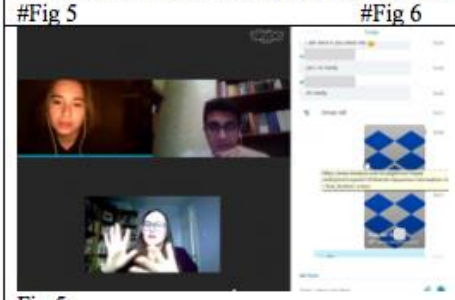
Line no. Participant Time	**Speech and multimodal elements (Lower-level actions)**	**Higher-level actions in task instructions-as-process**
1 Karen 00:28:49.096- 00:28:51.206	so #Student A is different to #Student B #Fig 1 #Fig 2  Fig 1 Fig 2	Communicating key task information (Identifying learners have different information)
2 Karen 00:28:51.206- 00:28:54.463	you have #different # information you've looked it up on different- #Fig 3 #Fig 4  Fig 3 Fig 4	
3 Karen 00:28:54.874 - 00:28:55.999	so why don't	Suggesting ways into task
4 Karen 00:28:56.461 - 00:29:00.572	#Gonca why don't you explain what #you have on #your piece of paper #Fig 5 #Fig 6 #Fig 7  Fig 5  Fig 6 Fig 7	
5 Karen 00:29:01.126 - 00:29:06.542	and then #Erol you can say #yes I have the same or #no I have something different #Fig 8 #Fig 9 #Fig 10  Fig 8 Fig 9 Fig 10	

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6 Erol 00:29:07.478 - 00:29:08.571	yes I #underst- #Fig 11  Fig 11	Launching the task (Checking understanding)
7 Karen 00:29:09.031 - 00:29:10.186	okay [off you go]# #Fig 12  Fig 12	Launching the task (Withdrawing from the floor)
8 Gonca 00:29:09.340- 00:29:10.260	[okay I under]stand	

Extract 1 illustrates Karen's use of the spoken language, gestures, gaze, posture shifts, and proximity for the higher-level actions of *communicating key task information*, followed by *suggesting ways into task*, and *launching the task*. In this extract, the male learner is Erol. Figure 5 (line 4) presents the teacher's screen layout.

Key task information is that student A and B have different information on their resource sheets. Karen communicates this linguistically and para-linguistically. In lines 1 and 2, she utters "different" three times and accentuates this through gestures. Figures 1 and 2 (line 1) show Karen's iconic gestures (McNeill, 1992), ie hands with palms turned towards the webcam which represent students A and B. This information is foregrounded in line 2; Karen's static iconic gestures are repeated and become dynamic as she moves her hands forwards and backwards. Thus, key task information is foregrounded in learners' awareness/attention and becomes the focal point of attention. This is achieved by the joint employment of language and the static and dynamic iconic gestures, resulting in high modal density.

In line 3, in the spoken language mode, the discourse marker "so" indicates the teacher is moving into a different higher-level action: *suggesting ways into task*. Language, gestures, and posture shifts operate within this higher-level action. Karen manages learner interaction in lines 4 and 5, by using learner names, ie vocatives in the language mode; she nominates Gonca to take the first turn, followed by Erol. Other lower-level actions employed for turn-management include Karen's deictic gestures (Figures 5 and 6; McNeill, 1992) and posture shifts (Figures 8 and 10), which are directed towards the learners' images on Karen's screen (Figure 5). Figure 7 shows her iconic gesture to illustrate the task resource ("piece of paper") on which Gonca can find the information to explain to Erol. Using lower-level actions in the modes of gesture, posture, and language, Karen suggests potential ways into task: in line 5, Karen's language use tells Erol what he can do in response to the information Gonca provided. By shifting her posture and directing her metaphoric gestures for "yes" and "no" (Figures 9 and 10) towards different areas of the screen, Karen foregrounds one way to accomplish the task, ie comparing and contrasting information. Therefore, in lines 4 and 5, Karen emphasises important elements of the higher-level action through high modal density; ie who ("Gonca", "Erol") is going to do what (explain, compare, contrast).

In line 6, Karen confirms (Figure 11) student understanding through an emblem (Kendon, 1982), ie a thumbs up gesture. The linguistic output in line 7, "okay", can be considered as both confirmation of understanding and moving into a new higher-level action of task launch through floor withdrawal. Karen leaves the interactional space to the learners via her language unit ("off you go") and

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proxemically by moving away from the webcam, thus increasing the interpersonal space (Andersen, 2008) (Figure 12). Spoken language and posture shifts are the multimodal elements that operate within the higher-level action of *launching the task*.

Extract 1 presented how Karen employs the modes of spoken language, gestures, gaze, posture shifts, and proximity for the higher-level actions of *communicating key task information*, followed by *suggesting ways into ta*sk, and *launching the task*. Extract 2 illustrates how Sarah communicates key task information, focuses on task accomplishment, explains how learners will work, and launches the task. The extract is from Sarah's rescheduled lesson and begins with Sarah asking Sevil to read the resource sheet. It evidences how instructions are elicited from the learner and summarised by the teacher.

Extract 2–Can you read the beginning of the task?

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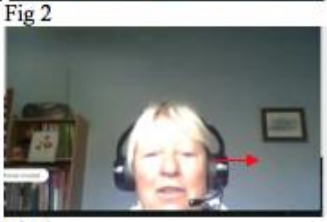
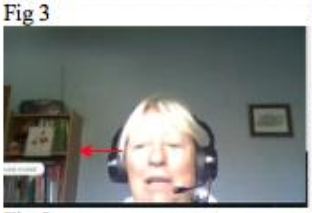
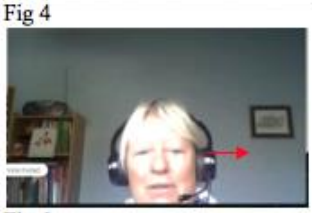
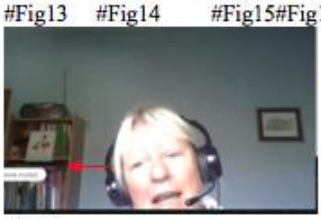
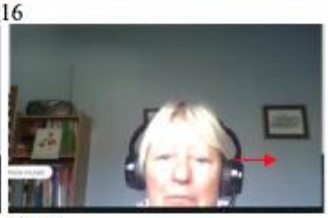
Line no. Participant Time	**Speech and multimodal elements (Lower-level actions)**	**Higher-level actions in task instructions-as-process**
1 Sarah 00:01:20.071 - 00:01:23.178	Sevil can you - can you read the beginning of the task?	Managing resources (Reading the resource)
2 Sarah 00:01:23.200 - 00:01:26.430	just so that we all (0.5) understand what the task is	
3-21 Sevil 00:01:27.058 – 00:02:45.620	<During lines 3-21, instead of reading from the resource sheet as requested by Sarah, Sevil provides a summary. Her speech, however, is not fluent and includes many hesitations and false starts. During this time, Sarah provides backchannels (continuers) via linguistic confirmation (e.g. yes), non-lexical response tokens (e.g. huh uh), head nods, and smiles.>	
22 Sarah 00:02:45.200 - 00:02:47.920	#okay #so you're going to #discuss #together #the best #option #Fig1 #Fig2 #Fig3 #Fig4 #Fig5 #Fig6  Fig 1  Fig 2  Fig 3  Fig 4  Fig 5  Fig 6  Fig 7	Focusing on task accomplishment (Describing how to accomplish the task) Defining roles (Explaining how students will be working)
23 Sevil 00:02:48.389 - 00:02:49.171	yes hehehh	
24 Sarah 00:02:49.610 - 00:02:51.372	so #you both #have e:r #Fig8 #Fig9  Fig 8  Fig 9	Communicating key task information (Identifying learners have different information)

Müge Satar and Ciara R. Wigham, « Delivering task instructions in multimodal synchronous online language teaching », *Alsic* [Online], Vol. 23 | 2020, Online since 10 September 2020, connection on 10 November 2020. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/alsic/4571 ; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/alsic.4571

25 Sarah 00:02:51.824 - 00:02:53.206	#you both #have information #Fig10 #Fig11  Fig 10  Fig 11	
26 Sarah 00:02:53.804 - 00:02:55.516	[about] a spa day Sevil: [yes]	
27 Sarah 00:02:55.971 - 00:02:58.388	so [you're going] to talk about it Sevil: [yes]	Focusing on task accomplishment (Describing how to accomplish the task)
28 Sarah 00:02:58.758 - 00:02:59.657	discuss it ((head nod))	
29 Sarah 00:03:00.050 - 00:03:01.940	and then you're going to write email ((head nod))	Stating task outcome
30 Sarah 00:03:02.527 - 00:03:03.902	[about] your decision ((head nod)) Sevil: [yes]	
31 Sarah 00:03:04.257 - 00:03:05.610	[to your] colleagues Sevil: [yeah]	
32 Sarah 00:03:05.803 - 00:03:06.310	#yes? #Fig12  Fig 12	Checking understanding
33 Sarah 00:03:06.675 - 00:03:07.180	[Okay] Sevil: [yes]	
34 Sarah 00:03:07.738 - 00:03:11.824	okay so le- let's start and compare your information so	Launching the task > Focusing on task accomplishment > Communicating key task information > Formulating task stages (Announcing next task stage) > Defining roles (Explaining how students will be working)
35 Sarah 00:03:12.130 - 00:03:14.209	we'll talk about the information that you have	
36 Sarah 00:03:14.819 - 00:03:16.584	#and then #compare it #togeth#er #Fig13 #Fig14 #Fig15#Fig16  Fig 13  Fig 14  Fig 15  Fig 16	

In Extract 2, lines 1 and 2, Sarah asks the learner, Sevil, to read the task out loud (from the resource sheet in the print mode). What follows (lines 3-21) is a series of short turns by Sevil explaining (rather than reading) sub-task outcome, key task information, and task accomplishment, which are supported by Sarah's backchannels (continuers) comprising either a single lower-level action (eg a head nod) or multiple lower-level actions (eg language: yes and facial expression: smile). In line 22, Sarah

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summarises the information Sevil gave, emphasises how the learners will be working ("together"), and simultaneously monitors both learners with frequent gaze changes (line 22, Figures 1-6). In line 22, Figure 7 is an image of Sarah's screen during this interaction, which demonstrates her gaze directed towards Sevil (Figures 1, 3 and 5) and Demet (Figures 2, 4, and 6). Thus, the higher-level action for the instruction-giving fragment *defining roles: explaining how students will be working* is emphasised through high modal density achieved via a combination of the modes of language and gaze. Sarah repeats this higher-level action in line 36 employing the same modal units of language and brisk alternation in gaze direction (Figures 13-16) and head movement by tilting her head towards the learners.

Between lines 23 and 31, Sarah repeats key task information. The fact that learners have different information is not explicitly stated in the language mode but we again observe Sarah's brisk gaze alternation between the learners (lines 24-25, Figures 8-11). Sarah then clarifies how the learners will accomplish the task: "talk about it" (line 27) and "discuss it" (line 28), which is followed directly by stating the task outcome (lines 29, 30, 31). This is accompanied by head nods (lines 28-30), serving as beat gestures (McNeill, 1992) that increase the modal density for this higher-level action.

The following higher-level action in Extract 2 is *checking understanding*(lines 32-33). We observe the modes of spoken language, gaze, and head movement operating in this higher-level action. In the spoken language, Sarah says "yes" with a rising intonation and pauses briefly after each word. Sarah's gaze direction shifts between the learners (line 32, Figure 12). Sarah's slow head nod (lower-level action) supports the higher-level action of *checking understanding* (line 32, Figure 12).

The instruction-giving phase concludes with the next higher-level action: *launching the task* predominantly in the mode of spoken language (line 34). It also comprises a repetition of other higher-level actions including *focusing on task accomplishment*, *communicating key task information*, *formulating task stages*, and *defining roles*.

Similar to Extract 1, we also observe a confirmation check (*checking understanding*) in Extract 2 preceding a clear task launch. However, while in Extract 1 Karen foregrounds her gestures, in Extract 2 Sarah's gestures are not visible. Instead, her alternation of gaze direction and head movements operate in the background. In the next extract (Extract 3), we focus on the multimodal elements of Craig's instructions for the same higher-level actions.

Extract 3–Anne Watson is changing jobs.

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Line no. Participant Time	**Speech and multimodal elements (Lower-level actions)**	**Higher-level actions in task instructions-as-process**
1 Craig 00:18:34.434 - 00:18:47.328	 Fig 1 so at the top of the #page (0.4) #Fig1 we can see here (0.4) Anne Watson (0.6) your department secretary (0.3) is changing jobs my goodness yeah (0.4) you and your colleagues have decided to join together to buy her a leaving gift	Managing resources (Reading the resource)
2 Craig 00:18:47.431 - 00:18:49.800	because you're good colleagues yeah you're all good friends yeah	Identifying task rationale
3 Craig 00:18:50.136 - 00:18:55.953	you wish to buy Anne (0.4) a spa day-pass for two people (0.6) okay	Stating task outcome
4 Craig 00:18:56.333 - 00:19:00.453	but both of #you (0.1) Eda and Didem you've been #looking for a spa day-pass #Fig2 #Fig3  Fig 2  Fig 3	Communicating key task information (Identifying learners have different information)
5 Craig 00:19:00.705 - 00:19:04.593	and you've found #two (0.5) #similar but# slightly different one #Fig4 #Fig5 #Fig6  Fig 4  Fig 5  Fig 6	
6 Craig 00:19:04.627 - 00:19:07.342	so Eda #you found yours on the #hotel website #Fig7 #Fig8  Fig 7  Fig 8	Communicating key task information (Identifying learners have different information with extra explanation from where each learner found the information)
7 Craig 00:19:07.412 - 00:19:11.835	and #Didem you found yours (0.4) from uhm I don't know Amazon maybe #Fig9 yeah  Fig 9	

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8-12 Craig 00:19:12.103 - 00:19:33.065	<In lines 8-12, Craig first engages in off-task talk about Amazon, then formulates next task stage by repetition of two higher-level actions (1) stating task outcome, i.e. that the learners will buy their friend a gift, and (2) communicating key task information, i.e. that the learners have found very similar, but different gifts.>	
13 Craig 00:19:33.331 - 00:19:34.640	#so what I'd #like you to #do	Formulating task stages (Announcing next task stage)
14 Craig 00:19:34.892 - 00:19:36.568	is talk to each other #now	Focusing on task accomplishment
15 Craig 00:19:36.790 - 00:19:38.211	and decide if (0.3) Eda if #your gift is best (0.8) or Didem if #your gift is best #Fig10 #Fig11  #Fig10 #Fig11	Stating task outcome
16 Craig 00:19:42.676 - 00:19:43.868	how are we gonna do that? (0.1) how are we gonna compare these two things?	Suggesting ways into task (Suggesting potential interaction patterns & Suggesting potential answers)
17 Craig 00:19:46.362 - 00:19:53.925	well a good way to start (0.3) would be one of you (1.8) can #tell the other (0.3) #Fig12 # about the gift that you've discovered yeah# #Fig13 #Fig14  #Fig12 #Fig13 #Fig14	
18 Craig 00:19:54.078 - 00:19:55.308	give them all the information	Focusing on task accomplishment
19 Craig 00:19:55.442 - 00:19:57.881	so you've got the screenshot you've got the picture	Launching the task > Describing the content of the resource
20 Craig 00:19:58.195 - 00:20:00.502	and underneath (0.2) you've got the benefits	
21 Craig 00:20:00.780 - 00:20:11.124	okay uhm (0.1) just take a couple of minutes to have a quick read (0.2) yeah just read quickly (0.2) uhm just to see what's going on there (0.3) and then one of you can start by explaining to the other person	> Allocating time > Suggesting ways into task
00:20:11.124 – 00:20:44.797	(33)	Silence

Extract 3, Figure 2 demonstrates Craig's screen layout. The two learners are Didem (positioned in the top right) and Eda (positioned below Didem's image). The researcher's profile picture is on the top left. Prior to Extract 3, Craig had sent two links via text-chat which pointed to online versions of the task resource sheets. The extract begins with Craig describing which part of the resource he would like the learners to look at as he reads the task context from Student A's resource sheet in a Google Document. In line 1, Figure 1, we see Craig highlighting a section of this resource, thus the print mode operates within this higher-level action of *managing resources*.

In lines 1-3, the print mode is in the foreground of Craig's attention/awareness[5] while he *manages resources*, *identifies the task rationale*, and *states the task outcome*. In line 4, his attention shifts from the print mode to the interactional space (Figure 2) when he moves to the next higher-level action: *communicating key task information* (lines 4-7). Several modes bring this information to the foreground within the learners' awareness/attention through increased modal density, which are (a) in

[5] We adopt this term following Norris (2004) who explains that a person is aware of something s/he is paying attention to, but also pays attention to something that s/he is aware of and, following Chalmers (1996 in Norris, 2004) stresses that one can be phenomenally conscious of something without paying attention to it. Multimodal interaction analysis thus employs the term attention/awareness.

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the spoken language mode: key adjectives (line 5: "similar but slightly different"), vocatives (lines 6-7: addressing the learners with their names), and intonation (underlined words in lines 4-7), (b) in the gesture mode: iconic gesture to highlight "two" (Figure 4), a beat gesture while the iconic gesture for "two" is sustained by moving the hand forwards and backwards (Figure 5), and an iconic small and closed gesture used to accompany "slightly" (Figure 6), (c) in the mode of facial expression: an animated, expressive face with eyebrows moving upwards and downwards (Figures 3-9), (d) in the gaze mode[6]: shifts in gaze direction (Figures 7-8 towards Eda, Figure 9 towards Didem).

Lines 1 and 2 also illustrate how Craig adds comments during instructions: a personal comment ("my goodness") and a comment that situates the learners already within their task roles (through the use of the second-person singular pronoun) to explain why learners will do the task ("because you're good colleagues yeah you're all good friends"). We observe Craig introducing further personalisation in lines 7-8 when he embarks on an off-topic sequence about his use of the retail website Amazon. While the extra information Craig offers in lines 2, 6, and 7 is task related and achieves the higher-level actions of *identifying task rationale*, ie explaining why the learners will do the task and serves to *communicate key task information*; comments in lines 1 and 8 are personal.

During lines 9-12, Craig repeats two higher-level actions (1) *stating task outcome* and (2) *communicating key task information*. Lines 13-15 demonstrate an attempt to *announce next task stage*, *how the learners will accomplish the task*, and a paraphrase of *task outcome* using head-tilt (a directional shift) in the mode of head movement which accompany the stressed words "your" (Figures 10, 11). The head tilt functions as a deictic gesture referring to each learner.

In line 17, Craig suggests a potential way into task. Here, the lower-level actions are the words in spoken language, some of which are stressed through intonation, facial expressions, an iconic hand gesture (Figure 12) to represent "together," and a beat facial gesture (Figure 13) with raised eyebrows to stress "about."

Lines 19-21 illustrate how the higher-level action: *launching the task* is achieved. Similar to Extract 2, this sequence incorporates other higher-level actions. First, Craig refers to the print mode he employed at the beginning of the extract and initiates this stage with a description of the resource (lines 19-20). Next, he allocates time for a silent period for task preparation and repeats his suggestion for one way into the task (line 21). In this extract, spoken language is the predominant lower-level action for the higher-level action: *launching the task* and a shift in modal density, which was high throughout the extract and reduced for task launch, leads to silence for task preparation.

5. Discussion

Instructions are an important aspect of task-based language teaching as they may predict success in task accomplishment (Watson Todd et al., 2008). This study explored instruction-giving practices of three experienced online teachers' task-based language lessons. We now discuss our findings in relation to the research questions.

Overall, our study demonstrated different approaches to instruction delivery; (1) instructions as a venue to foster interaction (Ha & Wanphet, 2016), authentic communication, and opportunities for *learning to learn*, (2) instructions as directives for task completion, which is the main venue for learning, or (3) instructions presented as written directives in the task resource to be read beforehand by the learners and orally confirmed during the lesson. Here, we also need to question the criteria for interactive instructions. Should teachers provide rehearsed, full, explicit (Seedhouse, 2008), succinct and unambiguous (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017) directives and ask for minimal responses to confirm understanding, or aim to engage learners fully in instructional conversations (Meskill & Anthony,

[6] Due to Craig's screen layout, Craig's gaze shifts are subtle in his recording, but the upward movement is identifiable in Figure 10 when he looks up while addressing Didem. Gaze shifts are more observable in the researcher's recording of the event.

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2007) and even elicit the instructions from learners? We suggest if instructions are only intended to be directives, ie getting the learners to do something, then teachers can perhaps plan them carefully, spend as little time as possible, and offer simple, unambiguous instructions, or ask learners to engage with them prior to the lesson (eg Sarah). However, if instructions are deemed as opportunities for interaction and learning, they can occupy more time and be designed to be interactive through elicitation (eg Karen) or capitalised on as venues for establishing interpersonal relationships by exchange of personal information, anecdotes, or humour (eg Craig) through instructional conversations.

Building on the six instruction-giving fragments in face-to-face classrooms identified by Markee (2015), our data illustrated 13 higher-level actions in task instructions-as-process. We provided explanations and examples of these in Appendix 3 and explained how several of these higher-level actions unfolded in interaction in our multimodal micro-analyses. We indicated that *managing resources* stood out as a highly important higher-level action for the online context. Similarly, Cappellini and Combe (2017) emphasised the semio-techno-pedagogical skills of trainee language teachers in guiding learners to access task resources. We further explore this higher-level action in a forthcoming publication (Wigham & Satar, in press).

Three extracts in section 4 demonstrated that each teacher capitalised on the affordances of different modes given their preferred visual framing (Guichon & Wigham, 2016). While Karen's visual space projected through the webcam was a head-and-torso shot, which allowed her to effectively use her hand gestures, as well as her posture in relation to sideway shifts and changes in proximity, her gaze shifts were less observable. In contrast, Craig's visual frame was a head-and-shoulders shot, which foregrounded his facial expressions allowing him to employ various features of his face, including gaze, but especially his eyebrows for emphasis. However, being closer to the webcam, his gestures were not always visible. Craig's practices illustrated how teachers can benefit from the print mode by asking learners to refer to documents shared online. Both Karen and Craig illustrated effective ways of combining multiple modes with spoken language to achieve emphasis. Finally, Sarah's visual frame was a close-up shot whereby her shoulders and hands were never visible. Within this framing, she predominantly employed the spoken language mode accompanied by gaze shifts, head nods, head tilts, and smiles. In the spoken language mode, Sarah's pace was slower with salient pauses, especially compared to Craig and Karen's brisk pace. In our previous work (Satar & Wigham, 2017), we observed similar employment of multimodal elements by trainee teachers who used vocatives, gaze shifts, and head tilts to allocate roles and postural shifts to demonstrate withdrawal from the interactional space to launch the task.

Table 3–Teachers' framing and predominant multimodal elements for instruction-giving.

Teacher	**Framing category (Guichon & Wigham, 2016)**	**Predominant multimodal elements**
Karen (Extract 1)	Head-and-torso shot	spoken language, hand gestures, posture shifts, proximity shifts
Craig (Extract 3)	Head-and-shoulders shot	spoken language (strong intonation), print (reading the task resource), facial expressions (especially eyebrows), hand gestures, gaze shifts
Sarah (Extract 2)	Close-up shot	spoken language, gaze shifts, head tilts, head nods, some facial expressions (smiles), print (asking learners to read the task resource)

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Overall, by employing various modes, the teachers achieved increased modal density in their instructions and thus presented the instructions as the focal point of attention by foregrounding them in the learners' awareness/attention (Norris, 2004). This could be one reason why all learners successfully completed the task regardless of differences in how instructions were delivered.

6. Conclusion

Online teaching offers increased access to language learning, especially for learners from remote areas, who have limited mobility, who do not have teaching services nearby, or busy learners who need flexibility regarding lesson time and place. Therefore, high-quality, effective online language teaching has the potential to have a large socio-economic impact, yet we do not know much about the practices and skills of experienced online language teachers. This study bridges this gap by investigating experienced online language teachers' delivery of task instructions in an online multimodal space using a qualitative research design.

Our study demonstrated variety in teachers' multimodal composition of higher-level actions linked to task instructions-as-process within respective visual framing. All learners in our data successfully completed the task: They all exchanged information, made a decision, and composed an email albeit within various lengths of time or quality. Regarding theory, although research and pedagogical advice for instructions focuses on brevity and succinctness, we questioned whether instructions could be exploited as a venue for authentic, interpersonal, and pedagogical interaction (eg in the form of instructional conversations); designed interactively and elicited from the learners; or implemented in task facilitation through interaction with the learners during task completion. Our data come from an online context; however, such questions have not yet been answered in face-to-face contexts, either. Future research attempting to answer such questions would need to identify success criteria before drawing conclusions, ie whether the success of instructions will be based on an evaluation of task outcomes (cognitive, social, affective, or task-based), or, following Wigham and Guichon (2019), it will be related to time (eg task completion or teacher-talk time). Existing best practice recommendations seem overly simplistic given the complexity of instruction-giving.

Our findings are limited to the small data set generated as a semi-controlled corpus. Data from a larger set of fully naturally-occurring data could help generalise the results. In line with Shi, Stickler, and Lloyd's work (2017) amongst others, other data collection methods, such as eye-tracking, would also be useful in multimodal analysis to track where learners' gaze is directed during and after the instructions. Concerning the number of students in our setting, we incorporated two learners and one teacher in each lesson to allow for comparisons with our previous research, yet we have also collected further data to investigate differences in relation to learner numbers, which will be reported in future publications. Moreover, our participating teachers had a minimum of two years' online teaching experience. However, none had received any specific training to teach online and in one case (Sarah) their previous experience was largely based on teaching without the webcam as it was more convenient due to slow Internet speeds. Thus, our findings emphasise the importance of teacher training especially regarding semio-pedagogical competence, which relates to teaching competencies and skills in employing "various semiotic and technological resources" (Guichon, 2017, p. 7). Our analysis of lower-level actions that operate in task instructions-as-process shows that each teacher employed different levels of multimodality when giving instructions in online classes. As Chun, Kern, and Smith (2016, p. 5) remind us each communication tool "brings its own material properties, feel and techniques of use, affordances and limitations," thus pedagogical skills developed in face-to-face training are not always transferable to online teaching contexts which have different affordances and limitations. Finally, our participating teachers' understanding of their roles varied slightly from keeping learners happy, providing grammatical and study skills support, to task completion, which could have impacted on their instruction-giving practices. These views were expressed in the interviews conducted, which we have not reported in this paper due to space restrictions.

Instruction-giving in synchronous online language teaching is an area ripe for future research. Beyond our previous suggestions, other potential directions include exploring (1) affordances and challenges of online environments for instruction-giving, eg managing resources, (2) the interactive, collaborative

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nature of instructions within a recipient design focusing on how misunderstandings are resolved, (3) identifying successful ways of providing instructions against predetermined success criteria, (4) impact of task-repetition by the teacher or different number of learners in the lesson on higher-level actions employed in instructions-as-process, (5) task instructions in completely naturally-occurring settings, (6) instructions for task facilitation once the learners are engaged in the task, (7) personalisation and contextualisation during instructions, (8) managing time in relation to instructions, and (9) the impact of task design on the higher-level actions in instructions-as-process required for task completion.

By focusing on one aspect of online language teaching, this paper has demonstrated the multimodally complex nature of higher-level actions comprising instruction-giving practices of experienced online teachers. An investigation of different teachers' instructions for the same task enabled us to present variety in task instructions-as-process while illustrating certain patterns in higher- and lower-level actions observed across different teachers' practices. We have proposed several future research directions, which will significantly enhance our understanding of instruction-giving as one aspect of online language teachers' semio-pedagogical skills.

Author contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the manuscript.

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Appendix A: Convergent task resource sheets

Student A.
Anne Watson, your department secretary, is changing jobs. You and your colleagues have decided to join together to buy her a leaving gift. You wish to buy Anne a spa day pass for two people. Talk to one of your colleagues to compare the information you found about the Marriott spa deals on the Marriott website with the information your colleague found on an experience gifts website.
With your colleague, write a short email to your other colleagues. Explain which website you are going to use to buy the present and why. Use this Google Doc page: <we will provide a link>
What's included?
- A gift pack with a personalised voucher and message card
- Full use of the leisure facilities for two people.
- A complimentary tea or coffee.
- The possibility to join the Mariott spa Leisure Club and pay no membership joining fee.

On arrival at the leisure club you are both free to make full use of the extensive facilities on offer for one day. Facilities include gym, pool, sauna, steam room and jacuzzi. You will also receive complimentary use of towels.
Access to our restaurant and a 5% discount on the lunchtime special.
NB. The minimum age is 18 and the voucher cannot be used at weekends.

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Student B.
Anne Watson, your department secretary, is changing jobs. You and your colleagues have decided to join together to buy her a leaving gift. You wish to buy Anne a day pass for two people. Talk to one of your colleagues to compare the information you found about the Marriott spa deals on an experience gifts website with the information your colleague found directly on the Marriott spa's website.
With your colleague, write a short email to your other colleagues. Explain which website you are going to use to buy the present and why. Use this Google Doc page: <we will provide a link>
What's included?
- A gift pack with a personalised voucher for two people and a message card.
- On arrival at the leisure club you are both free to make full use of the extensive facilities on offer for one day.
- The possibility to join the Mariott spa Leisure Club and receive 10% discount on the membership fee.
- Facilities include gym, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, sauna, steam room and a relaxation lounge. You will receive complimentary use of dressing gowns. Clients, however, must provide their own towels.
NB. Please note that lunch is not included. The minimum age is 18 and the voucher can be used any day except bank holidays.

Appendix B: Transcription conventions
(1.4) Numbers enclosed in parentheses indicate a pause, represented in seconds.
[utterance] Portion overlaps with a portion of another speaker's utterance.
(( )) Description of an action in the verbal mode eg ((coughs)).
Time when the screen capture indicated by the Figure number in the subsequent line was taken.
: Sound is extended.
<u>utterance</u> Portion of speech that is produced with emphasis.
- A dash indicates an abrupt cut-off where the speaker stopped speaking suddenly.
(inaud) The transcriber was not able to decipher the audio.

Appendix C: Instruction fragments, examples, and observations

Fragments		Examples	Observed in the lessons of		
			Craig	Karen	Sarah
Managing resources	Sending the resource	I'm gonna send you some information, now	X	X	X
	Allocating the resource	Eda, this one is for you	X		
	Receiving the resource	Sevil, did you see the document I sent you?	X	X	
	Opening the resource	Can you open the documents now?	X	X	X
	Confirming access to the correct resource	Have you got the documents? Can you see them?	X	X	X

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	Describing the content of the resource	The next paragraph also contains instructions	X	X (elicits)	
	Reading the resource	at the top of the page we can see here Anne Watson your department secretary is changing jobs	X	X	X
Focusing on task accomplishment	Describing how to accomplish the task	You're going to talk about it, discuss it, and then you're going to write an email	X	X	X
	Checking task completion	Okay have you read underneath?		X	
Defining roles	Explaining how students will be working	Compare it together	X	X	X
	Explaining the teacher's role	I'm gonna try not to say too much … I'm not gonna interrupt whilst you doing it I'm just gonna watch you	X		
	Allocating task roles	There is going to be Student A and Student B. Who would like to be Student A?	X	X	X
Allocating time		just take a couple of minutes to have a quick read	X	X	
Stating task outcome		Write an email about your decision to your colleagues	X	X	X
Identifying task rationale		… to buy her a leaving gift because you're good colleagues	X		
Formulating task stages	Announcing next task stage	What we're gonna look at now is kind of a case study	X	X	X
	Summarising previous task stage	what we've decided then I think is we're gonna go for the cheapest one	X		
Communicating key task information	Identifying learners have different information	Student A is different to Student B you have different information	X	X	X
	Clarifying key task vocabulary	A gown is a big dress … a dressing gown is the comfy thing that you wear over your pyjamas	X	X	X

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Focusing on study skills	Identifying task type	Good, information gap task. So, there is gonna be gaps in the information		X	X
	Relating study skills to previous and/or future learning	whenever we open a new exercise what's the first thing we should do?		X	
	Formulating study skills	Background gives you information about the task. Instructions are what you are going to do		X	
Activating schemata	Contextualising the task	This is a case study about a lady who is leaving her job	X		
	Personalising the task	Have you been to a spa before?	X		X
Checking understanding		So does that make sense?		X	X
Suggesting ways into task	Suggesting potential interaction patterns	Gonca, why don't you explain what you have on your piece of paper	X	X	X
	Suggesting potential answers	talk about things like price talk about things like the benefits that they include with the package	X		
Launching the task		Okay, ready to go, go for it	X	X	X