

A new approach to Business & Tourism The experiences of four Austrian language teachers

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Abstract

We are teachers of English in four Austrian vocational schools. We use a software program that we find extremely effective and which really motivates our students. We use it for English, French, Italian and Spanish – and for helping with German.

About the software

We use the software mainly for Business and Tourism, though the DVD offers another 20 programs – for telephone, email, job-search, shopping and so on. We now have the latest version. It is called Tick-Tack TT2009. It offers programs in many languages including Chinese, Japanese and Arabic.

Why we find it so useful

Later in this article are descriptions of some of the tasks.

In addition to the benefits for our students, we teachers particularly appreciate a number of features offered by the programs. These include:

- *a wide range of ready-made tasks and exercises ideal for our needs*
- *students have to work on their own, thus allowing the teacher freedom to concentrate on students that need attention or help*
- *students can check their own work against model answers, thus relieving the teacher of constant correcting*
- *students not only learn specific vocabulary but they learn it "in context"*
- *the tasks can be further developed by teachers*
- *authentic case-studies simulate life in a busy office and a lively hotel*
- *detailed lesson plans enable teachers can get started straightaway*
- *each task is given the appropriate grade of the Common European Framework.*

The practical tasks - the feature of special interest to us

For business and for tourism we like the wide range of tasks based on an International Trading Group that manufactures and markets sports goods. It has companies in London, Paris, Munich, Madrid and Florence.

The student takes the part of a trainee working in the company whose language he or she is studying. They work in each of the main departments and in a hotel linked to the company.

A new approach

We are teachers of English in four Austrian secondary schools which have a vocational emphasis. We use a software program that we find extremely effective and which really motivates our students. We use it for English, whilst some of our colleagues use it for teaching French, Italian and Spanish – and also for helping with German.

We'd like to explain how we use the programs so that other teachers know about them and can see how useful they are.



About the software

The software is called Tick-Tack. We learnt about it at one of the work-shops that the author runs for language teachers in Austria. It was called "Blended learning: Integrating ITC with traditional teaching" The author sometimes gives training sessions to students in our top classes.

We use the software mainly for Business and for Tourism though the DVD offers another 20 programs – for telephone, email, job-search, shopping etc. We now have the latest version, called Tick-Tack TT2009. It has recently been much enhanced, and now offers some of the programs in Chinese, Japanese and Arabic as well as many other languages. These have proved useful for our immigrant students.

Why we find it so useful

Later in this article you will find descriptions of some of the popular tasks and exercises provided in the program. They have proved highly motivating and the students really enjoy doing them.

In addition to the benefits for our students, we teachers particularly appreciate a number of features offered by the programs. These include:

- a wide range of ready-made tasks and exercises ideally suited for our needs
- students have to work on their own, thus allowing the teacher freedom to concentrate
- on students that need attention or help
- students can check their own work against model answers, thus relieving the teacher
- of constant correcting
- students not only learn specific vocabulary but they learn it "in context"
- the tasks can be further developed by teachers
- authentic case-studies simulate life in a busy office and a lively hotel
- detailed lesson plans enable teachers to get started straight away.
- each task is allocated the appropriate grade of the Common European Framework.

In one of the schools where we teach we have, for several years, been pioneering a multilingual approach. As Tick-Tack offers the same tasks in five languages, it means we can run joint classes in French and English, and in Italian and English, with both teachers taking an active part. We were sceptical at first and doubted if it would work. But the students love it and manage very well. They are able to switch back and forth constantly between the two foreign languages. We hope other schools will follow our lead.

How we use it

We use the programs about three times a week, mainly with the older students, in our "Notebook classes". They all have laptops which they bring to school each day. They all have a copy of the DVD since they also need to use the programs for homework. Having the software at home gives their families a chance to use the programs for brushing up their language skills.

In Austria we have many immigrant students. They and their families find the software valuable for improving their German as well as helping with their mother tongue. They find the shopping program especially useful.

The software is installed on the school network so that all teachers and students have access to it. We also introduce the programs briefly to students in some of the lower classes. Students who need to revise their grammar find the tasks for the Starter and Everyday programs very helpful.

We understand that the software is used in schools and universities in many countries, and that the most popular programs on the DVD are the ones that we use the most, namely those for business and for tourism.



How it works - the library of sentences

These are used in some of the tasks but we also exploit them a lot for learning vocabulary, revising grammar and practising aural comprehension - because each sentence has its own voice-recording.

Each program provides a library of 300-500 relevant sentences, in mother tongue and target language which our students can select to create their text. First they scroll through the various languages and select their mother tongue and their target language.

[Screen-shot: selecting the languages]

They then scroll through the themes and sentences and select the ones they want to use. In this way they can very easily create an interesting and relevant text on a wide range of topics in the target language – “ready for editing”.

[Screen shot: selecting themes & sentences]

It is the editing, the manipulating of text on the screen, to turn the rough draft into a final text, which we find educationally so valuable.

[Screen-shot: how to call-up sentences]

[Screen-shot: Business French into Italian]

Voice recordings

For Business and Travel & Tourism (as well as for the Starter and Everyday programs) there are voice-recordings of all the sentences in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

The practical tasks - the feature of special interest to us

For business and for tourism we like the wide range of practical tasks. It is these tasks that really make Tick-Tack so useful. They are based on a virtual enterprise: an International Trading Group that makes and markets sports goods. It has companies in London, Paris, Munich, Madrid and Florence.

The student takes the part of a trainee working in the company whose language he or she is studying. They have to work in each of the main departments such as Sales, Buying, Marketing, Management, Personnel and so on. In the travel tasks the student is working partly in the company's Travel Department and partly in a hotel, which has close links to the sports company. The trainee has to deal with the multiplicity of activities and problems that arise in a busy office, and in a lively hotel, every day.

[Screen-shot: Travel task menu – first half]

Each task takes 30-45 minutes and provides a model answer. Students are not told what to do. They discover what is needed by reading an incoming letter, fax, email or memo, or by listening to a telephone call or a voice-mail. These reveal the situation that they have to deal with.

Each is a thoroughly practical and authentic task. Some tasks indicate the code-numbers of sentences that they can call up to help them create their letter fax or email reply. In some tasks student have to use their microphone as a telephone to make a phone call or to record a voice-mail message.

Everything in the tasks is in the target language. If any of our students are not really sure what the task requires, they can run through the equivalent task in their mother-tongue version, i.e. German. This is a tremendous help especially for the less-confident students. The tasks are replicated in the



five languages - as closely as language and culture permit – though names, locations and milieu reflect the local scene.

Here are some examples to show the wide variety of situations covered by the tasks.

Business Task A: Getting Started

The Managing Director’s secretary hands you a memo. You click the link and read it. It’s from the MD. She wants you to update the “What’s new” page on the company’s web-site by removing old items and inserting a list of new items such as sales successes, exhibitions & personnel changes since last week. You have to call up the web-page and edit it with all the new information.

screen-shot of last week’s edition

What’s new at Promotics UK

Our weekly on-line news update

Exhibitions	Promotics Italia will be showing their new après-ski collection at the Berlin Gala Show in October.	
Sporting events	We will have a hospitality stand at the Horse of the Year Show at Olympia in July.	
New products	Our new range of riding clothes will be unveiled at the Salon de Printemps in Paris from 22-25 April.	
Personalities	Peter Morrison has joined our advertising team as television assistant.	
Visitors from abroad	Frau Fischer, Managing Director of Promotics Germany is paying us a visit this week.	
Production	The output of our ski-wear will be doubled next year following growing demand from the Continent	
Conferences	Our Sales Manager Louise Pearson will be attending the All-Ireland Sports conference in Dublin in August	
Overseas tours	Michael Sanders, our Marketing Manager, is to make a tour of our South American markets this autumn	
Advertising news	We are planning a television promotional campaign to coincide with this summer’s Henley Regatta,	
Head Office news	We are pleased to welcome Geraldine Wilson, the new trainee, who has just joined the company	
Technical news	All members of our UK Sales team will be issued with new mobile phones linked to our Intranet	
Our Hall of Fame	This week our star celebrity is Felicity Barber who won the European Badminton Tournament in Oslo	

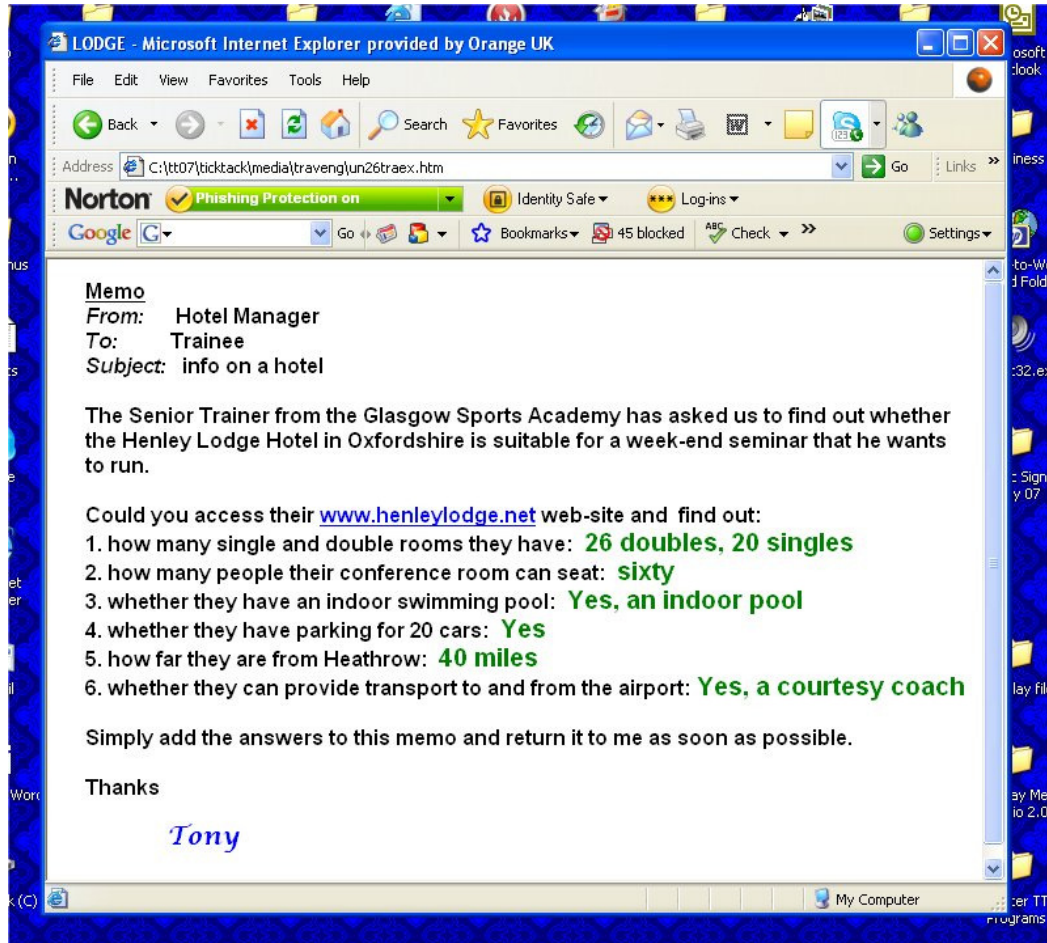
Travel Task 26: The hotel

You find a note in your in-tray from the hotel manager. A sports academy in Glasgow wants to hold a week-end seminar. They need to know if the Henley Lodge Hotel in Oxfordshire is suitable. The memo asks you to go to their web-site and find out a number of specific details, such as how many single and double rooms they have, car-parking, swimming-pool, distance from the airport etc. It asks you to type the answers on the memo itself and return it to the manager.

You click on the link to the web-site and listen to the hotel’s Marketing Manager making a presentation giving all kinds of information about the hotel – much of it of no relevance to you. You have to listen carefully for the particular details that you need. As you spot each one, you must type the information



on the memo. In a separate stage of the task you have to type out, word for word, the text of the presentation. **screen-shot of model answer**



Business Tasks

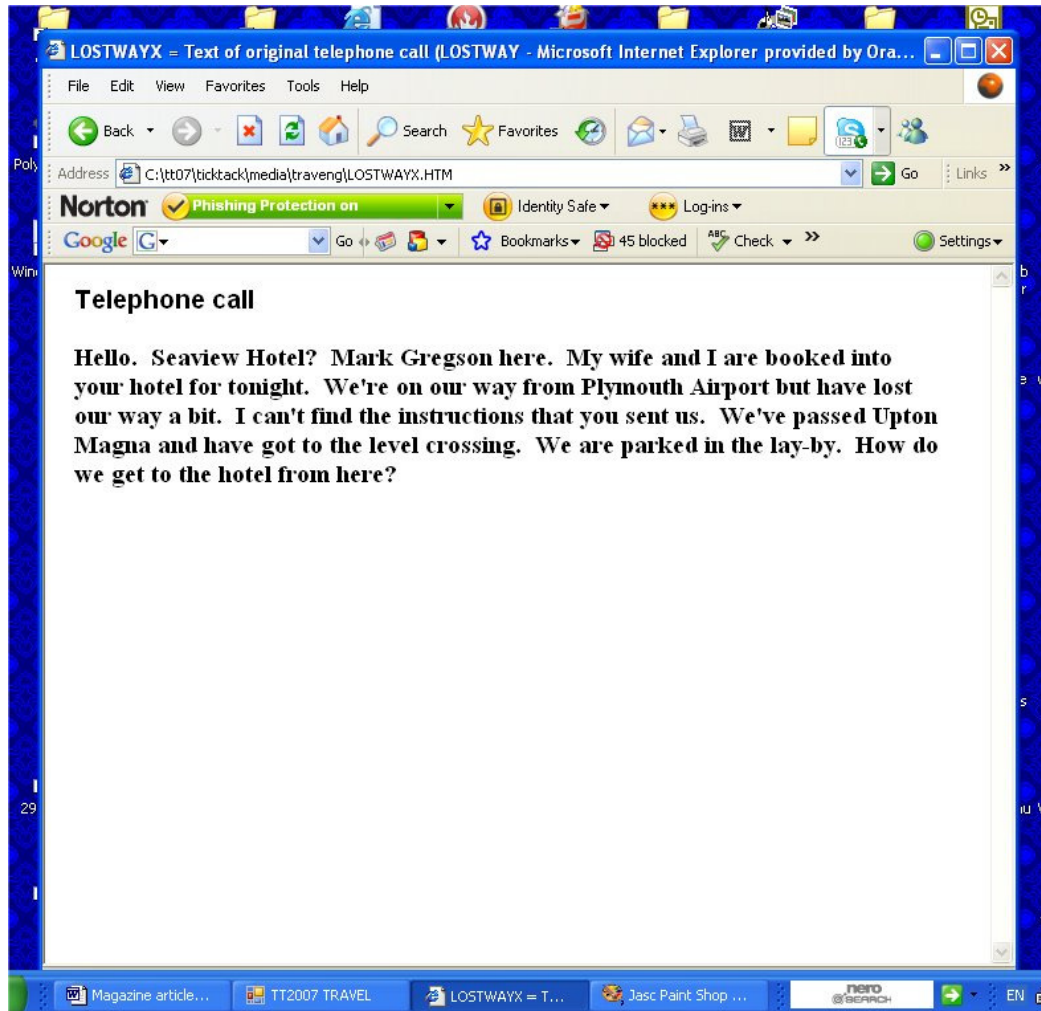
The business tasks are split into six main sections. Each one is a linked series of activities in which you have to:

- study an incoming letter with a handwritten note at the foot from the manager
- write a letter in reply following the note from the manager
- then listen to a subsequent voice-mail message or telephone call
- then create an email message in reply
- then re-write it as a voice-mail message, as the email failed to transmit
- finally use your microphone as a telephone and record your message

Business Task IV: Sales

First you must reply to a letter from your distributor in Texas complaining about late delivery of riding boots that they ordered. Next listen to a voice-mail message from Texas from your distributor's very angry Vice-President. He is furious at the delay to his order. You have to type out, word for word, what he says and pass it to your manager who tells you to send an email. You create the email, but it fails. So you have to record a voice-mail message.

telephone call from guest who has lost his way



Travel Task 27: Giving directions

You are cycling into town and find a queue of cars waiting at the level-crossing. A driver calls to you. You click the link and listen to what he says. He wants to know how to get to the supermarket.

You have to study the town plan, decide what to say and then type your answer. Then pick up the microphone and record what you tell him.

[Screen-shot of Town Plan]

Travel Task 23: Advert for hotel staff

Arriving late, you pass the Hotel Manager in the corridor. He hands you a newspaper cutting with a note stapled to it. You click the link and find it is a memo from him. The cutting is a press advert from last week's local newspaper. He needs to advertise for an assistant Hotel Manager. The memo asks you to create a press advert along similar lines, but giving a different job profile and listing special requirements. You have to edit the advert accordingly.



[Screen-shot of last week's Job Advert]

Engineering Task O: Video-clips

The Engineering program also has a wide range of tasks. Many of these are useful for general business and tourism. One task involves watching video clips and answering questions about them. The first shows a young man who has just joined the company. He arrives at the reception desk at the company's head office. The receptionist mistakes his name and he has to spell it out. He then asks if he can see the Manager.

The Tick-Tack web-site (www.2clix.net).

This gives access to "Tick-Tack on-line" which offers a wide selection of programs and languages. The DVD contains a duplicate of the web-site for studying off-line – though "Tick-Tack on-line" can only be accessed if you are connected to the Internet.

Lesson plans

Comprehensive lesson plans are available for teachers to use. They can be downloaded from the web-site or accessed from the DVD.

Free updates

These can be downloaded free-of-charge from the web-site.

Personal copy of the DVD

Teachers and students can buy a personal copy of the DVD for €25 for use on their own computer at home. Schools can buy a network licence.

Help

We welcome the fact that Help is available 365 days a year - by email - provided by the author of the software. He has been willing to run training courses in our individual schools - where it fitted in with his travel plans. He is a linguist with a lifetime of experience in business and exporting. He once ran a major sports group.

Teachers interested in further information should access the Tick-Tack web-site: www.2clix.net or contact the author at Primrose Publishing Cambridge: davidsephton@btconnect.com