Talk French 2 in the classroom: Units 6–10

Unit 6

6.1 Giving and understanding directions
Although in the real world learners are far more likely to need to understand directions than to give them out, it’s useful to have an activity where they produce the language, because it tends to fix the vocabulary more effectively than listening on its own.

One simple way of doing this is for learners to work in groups, taking it in turns to give directions to a particular destination. Where it is depends on the class: if they’re all local people, familiar with the area, they can be asked to imagine they’re directing a French visitor from one local landmark to another. Otherwise, a street map of any town will do, with everyone having a copy. The others listen (and follow the map, if used) and work out where the destination is.

6.2 Past participles
Learners need time to get their heads round the perfect tense, and a simple survey is ideal in that it provides repetitive but meaningful practice.

Display about five or six phrases using known verbs in the infinitive, for example manger du poulet, voir un film, regarder la télé, perdre quelque chose, trouver quelque chose, acheter un livre.

The aim is to find how many people have done each of these during the week. This is done by everyone circulating and asking, for example, Tu as mangé du poulet? The answers will vary according to learners’ strengths, and it’s perfectly acceptable for them to range from a simple Oui/Non to a full sentence, since the principal aim is to become comfortable with forming past participles from infinitives.

Tie it up by summarising the findings, which lets you bring in ont plus the past participle.

6.3 The perfect tense
This practises pretty much the same language as 6.2, and you need pictures of vocabulary from the first six units of Talk French 2 that will trigger statements about the past. For example, a laptop, wallet, ticket, phone or passport could lead
to J’ai perdu mon billet, items of clothing to J’ai acheté un costume, a bike to J’ai loué un vélo, a bottle of wine to J’ai bu du vin rouge, a house to J’ai loué une gîte or J’ai vu une maison, a phone and a person to J’ai téléphoné à X, and so on.

Brainstorm all the regular verbs they know – and possibly add a couple of useful new regular verbs. Then display the images and tease out statements from the learners. It may be quite slow and basic at first, but if you have enough images the statements will become more confident and imaginative.

Alternatively, stick pictures onto cards, and get learners to work in groups to produce their statements.

6.4 Directions and the perfect tense

Draw the unit together with another directions activity, this time involving narrative using the perfect tense of tourner, traverser, continuer, passer, suivre and prendre. They can be given the challenge of avoiding aller or you can supply je suis allé(e) as a vocabulary item without going into detail.

As for 6.1, destinations depend on the class – and can involve familiar local places or places from a map.

Learners work in groups, taking it in turns to tell others how they got to a place. Their story starts off at a fixed place, building or street. The others work out the destination.

6.5 Consolidation and revision

For revision, you could draw together the language of Units 3, 4, 5 and 6 by getting learners to work together in small groups to create a presentation of a village or town of their choice (anywhere in the world will do; they can be as ambitious as they like, particularly if they have access to the internet during the preparation). The presentation could include what there is to do and see, describe a particular building and explain how to get there from another specified point.

Encourage them to include at least one comparison and to express a preference or opinion about one aspect.
Unit 7

7.1 Aller: present tense
To practise aller you could use dice as for earlier irregular verbs or organise a survey where everybody mingles to ask as many people as possible in five minutes or so: Tu vas où en vacances? With real or fictional answers, they say where they’re going and when. Give them the option of adding who they’re going with and using nous allons.
Then, working in groups or as a whole class, learners reveal their findings.

7.2 Aller: perfect tense
Activity 7.1 also works with Tu es allé où en vacances l’année dernière?, but there are other ways of practising this.
Provide everyone with four blank pieces of card – it makes life easier to have two in one colour and two in another. Ask everybody to write a destination on two cards of one colour. This should be a French town or another European country. On the cards in the second colour they put down two means of transport (for vocabulary revision and to practise constructing longer sentences). The artists among them can draw a small sketch for this!
Arrange learners in pairs, shuffle the cards, then give each pair four random cards of each colour, face down. They take turns to ask Tu es allé(e) où en vacances l’année dernière? The partner picks up a place card and a transport card and replies accordingly.
Pull the activity together by asking everybody to make a statement about the person they worked with, saying where they went and how they got there.

As an alternative to transport, you could have cards with a number of years between one and five on them. The reply practises L’année dernière je ne suis pas allé(e) en vacances/je suis resté(e) à la maison, mais il y a XX ans je suis allé(e) en XXX.

7.3 Y
Tu n’as jamais été en/à ...? is a useful phrase to ask and answer, and it’s also a useful means of focusing on y. In a similar activity to 7.2, provide everyone with four blank pieces of card (two in one colour and two in another). Again, they
write a destination on two cards of one colour. But this time, on the second colour they write any year after 1970. Collect all the cards and add a few blank ones to the year pack before you shuffle them and hand them out.

In pairs, a learner picks a place card and asks *Tu n’as jamais été en/à [*the place on the card]?* The partner picks a year card and replies, including *y* in the reply, for example *Si, j’y suis allé(e) en 2004*. If a blank card is drawn, the reply is *Non, je n’y ai jamais été.*

If practice of plural verb endings is needed, learners could be told they’re speaking on behalf of themselves and somebody else: *Vous n’avez jamais été en/à [*plus the place]?, with the reply starting with *on* or *nous*.

### 7.4 Weather

What people tend to want with weather language is to a) comment on what the weather’s like - for that day or for the time of year, b) understand what weather is forecast, and c) say what the weather was like when they were at a particular place.

a) With a set of cards depicting the weather, learners can take part in a quick and simple activity involving picking up a card and saying the weather phrase indicated on it. The faster the pace the better.

You could include some cards showing the months or seasons. This would require a sentence, for example *Au mois de juillet il fait très chaud.*

Or you can use some cards depicting clothes as a trigger for a weather phrase – introducing a couple of new items has the advantage of widening learners’ clothes vocabulary at the same time.

b) Real weather forecasts are easy to find, whether in newspapers or on the internet. They require little in the way of linguistic knowledge since most rely heavily on symbols. However, the text that tends to accompany them makes useful reading comprehension. Multiple-choice questions can be useful and interesting.

c) Saying what the weather was like in the past can be done in a similar way to a) above.
7.5 Different places
Display two pictures showing different holiday destinations, for example a busy seaside resort and a mountainside, or a city and a village in the country. Invite comments and descriptive statements from the class, including comparisons (plus, moins), preferences (j’aime, je préfère) and comments on the weather. For those interested in following this up at home, suggest that they write about a visit to one of these places (or to another place of their choice).

7.6 Personal diary
In preparation for Unit 8, which involves relating an incident, you could bring together the language of Units 6 and 7, and tell the class about what you’ve been doing over the past week. Keep it simple, then draw them into the conversation, asking them where they’ve been, what they’ve eaten, who they’ve seen, and so on.
Unit 8

8.1 Consolidating the perfect tense

• Although learners have now been taught the structures for talking about the past, a lot of practice is usually needed for them to be fully confident, so activities are needed to encourage narrative. At the simplest level, this can involve learners at the start of a class chatting and sharing news about where they’ve been and what they’ve been doing since the previous meeting or on a specified day.

• You can make this more interactive with a series of statements that learners have to prove to be true or false. You need just a few statements; for example, three people went to [a local city] on Saturday, one person hired a car this week, four people ate at a restaurant, one person bought a new shirt – in short, recycling familiar vocabulary to practise the new structures. You can use your personal knowledge of the class to include at least one statement you know to be true – although it really doesn’t matter if they all turn out to be false. Everyone circulates, asking questions to find out who did what, then you can draw the activity together and find out which of your statements turned out to be true.

8.2 Fantasy lives

Variety (and some humour too) can be introduced by providing prompts for learners to describe a fantasy existence. The prompts could come from a newspaper and include, for example, scenes of places, events or people in the news, adverts for films or TV programmes, an airline promotion for cheap flights or weekend breaks, or shots of celebrities, a restaurant menu, a five-star hotel brochure, etc. Learners work in pairs with one prompt between them, and prepare a few phrases using je, on or nous as you (or they) choose. Encourage them to be as imaginative as they like. Allow a finite time for the preparation, then pairs tell the rest of the class what they ‘did’. This provides listening practice for everybody and gives you the opportunity to focus on linguistic accuracy.
8.3 Parts of the body
Describing symptoms needs knowledge of parts of the body. Like so many other vocabulary families, this can be gained effectively with picture cards. If you don’t have pictures of body parts, simply make multiple small copies of a person, and use arrows or colour to highlight the various parts. Include some plurals. These can be used very simply in the first instance by naming them at random as a card is picked up, with the pace becoming faster as the vocabulary becomes familiar.

8.4 Describing symptoms and giving health advice
One way of practising both symptoms and health advice is for learners to work in pairs, using the body-parts cards. One person picks up a card and says something involving that part of the body. The partner has to think of a useful piece of advice directly relevant to what’s just been said. This is not an easy exercise – but it tends to be one where progress is clearly visible as the activity develops.

8.5 Talking about an incident
At this level, it’s expecting a lot from learners to work independently to describe an incident or accident involving other people and at the same time describe the symptoms a third person may have. But a combined effort can yield impressive results. Display an image of someone who’s clearly in some kind of difficulty. Ask simple questions to tease out what might be hurting, where the person might be and what might have happened. Then invite suggestions about what they should do, using *devoir*. This draws the whole unit together.
Unit 9

9.1 Making suggestions

- Prompts from local newspapers, like the ones suggested for 8.2 (for example, adverts for the cinema, theatre, restaurant or sporting events) are useful for controlled practice of the first person plural imperative. They can be used for pair, small group and whole-class practice.
- If you normally organise a social occasion during the course, then this is the time to agree the format – in French.
- Set a fictional context, and ask the class to come up with suggestions for an event. Encourage the discussion to include learners’ preferences and opinions.

9.2 Oral invitations

Practice oral invitations with a paired phone activity, ideally making sure partners can’t see each other’s faces while they’re talking, since this adds the relevant ‘blind’ dimension to the activity.

Beforehand, everyone prepares individually by creating a personal diary for the week ahead and filling in eight separate entries for various commitments.

In pairs, learners take it in turns to issue an invitation for an event of their choice on a particular day: morning, afternoon or evening. Their partner replies according to their diary: if they’re ‘free’, they accept the invitation; if they have a commitment, they apologise and decline (or suggest a different day).

9.3 Written invitations

9.2 could be followed up with written invitations and replies, which can take the form of emails, letters or texts, with consequent variation in level of formality.

9.4 Talking about people

Talking about people can draw together Units 1 (family and work), 3 (leisure interests and likes and dislikes), 4 (home), 5 (clothes) and 9 (character and physical attributes) – making it an excellent opportunity for revision.

One context for this could be as witnesses to an incident. Show a picture of a person, remove it and ask learners to provide as much information as possible about what the person is like physically and what they’re wearing.
9.5 Comparing people
Extend 9.4 to include more people, of differing builds and heights and with different hair and eye colouring etc., for contrast and comparison using plus/moins mince, gros, and so on.

9.6 Describing a person in detail
Start the ball rolling by describing an unnamed famous person and ask the class to work out the identity. Go on to describe more famous people, making them progressively less easy to guess, so that learners have to ask questions to work out who they are.
Then, give learners working in small ‘teams’ some time to prepare their own descriptions: about six statements, which can include physical attributes, character, nationality, family, home, job, interests, etc.
Bring everyone together for a team activity where a member of each team reads out the team description and the other teams ask questions and work out who it is. Put a time limit on each. The first team to guess the famous person correctly wins a point; if nobody manages to guess correctly, that team wins two points.
An alternative is to play Twenty Questions, without presentations at all. Teams take it in turns to be in the spotlight, while the rest of the class have the opportunity of asking up to 20 questions to ascertain the identity of the mystery famous person. The only questions not allowed are Comment s’appelle-t-il/elle? and C’est qui?
Unit 10

10.1 Food vocabulary
- To boost vocabulary relating to foodstuffs, you could start with a whole-class activity where you name various French dishes and learners brainstorm the ingredients. Including quantities provides revision of numbers, which is always useful.
- Present about five batches of four or five ingredients, and learners work in teams to come up with dishes that can be made from each batch. The team with the most dishes wins.
- Write out a simple recipe and blank out the verbs. You can either ask learners to deduce what they are or provide them and ask learners to insert them in the correct gaps.

10.2 Understanding recipes
Write out a recipe, cut each instruction into a separate strip then ask learners in groups to rearrange the strips and tell you what the dish is. Make it more challenging by putting a time limit on it.
It’s an easy activity to prepare, so it’s worth preparing a range of recipes of varying length and complexity.

10.3 Giving out a recipe
This requires preparation at home beforehand. Ask everyone to bring in a recipe of their choice in French. In groups or as a whole class (depending on the size of the class) they take it in turns to say why they’ve chosen it, for example where and when they’ve eaten or cooked it. They then describe how to cook it and recommend what to drink with it. Wine lovers can elaborate here on the wine they recommend.
As an alternative, before presenting the recipe, you could use a similar approach to 9.6, where the class (or groups) ask the person with the recipe up to 20 questions to find out what it is without being told. Brainstorm questions beforehand if you want to make sure they include specifics, for example Il doit être servi chaud?
10.4 Memorable meals
To revise the perfect tense in another context, hand out four blank cards per person, ideally in four different colours. Ask them to write a place in France on one colour, the name of a famous person on the second, two items from a menu on the third, and a French wine on the fourth.
Collect the cards, shuffle them and randomly give one of each colour to everyone. They then circulate asking learners where they went, who they went with, what they ate and what they drank. Everyone replies according to the cards they hold. Afterwards, invite learners to talk in the third person about the most memorable combination they came across during their conversations.

10.5 Eating places
Display some pictures of various eating places, for example a fast-food counter, gourmet restaurant, large busy bar or small intimate restaurant. Brainstorm the sort of food you might eat in the different places before going on to establish as many comparisons as you can, in terms of size, price, quality, etc.

10.6 Drawing all the units together
An event of sorts is the ideal context for drawing together the Talk French 2 course content. That event could be an end-of-course party but a fictional one offers a more extravagant scope.
The activity is in several phases:

1. Start with a class discussion to come up with suggestions for the event, including place, date and time. Encourage an exotic venue.
2. Next, the guest list: everyone suggests one well-known person and has to say something about them.
3. Depending on the time allocated for the activity, they can then continue working as a whole group or go into smaller groups with specific tasks for each, for example producing the invitation, supplying directions to the venue, describing places to stay locally, summarising the weather at the time of year, drawing up menu(s), etc. Encourage debate in French, with learners expressing their opinions and preferences.
4. The products of phase three are then shared and discussed as a class – giving the opportunity to focus on linguistic detail.
5. To keep the momentum going during the ‘event’ (i.e. when learners circulate), give everyone a slip of paper with a specific task on it, which
they need to say to or ask as many people as they want. Make these varied, for example commenting on the food or wine, asking when someone arrived, asking what work someone does, whether they like water sports, have seen a particular film or been to a particular place – i.e. random questions spanning the whole course. Revisiting them like this out of the blue is very useful practice. Encourage learners to be as outrageous as they want in their responses.

6. Finish off by working in groups to come up with an email or letter thanking the host and including at least one snippet of information gathered during the event.