



# CIFLTE NEWSLETTER

*In Celebration of Our Two-Day Symposium “Task-Based Language Teaching in Action: Global Perspectives & Practices”*



## IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

*TBLT in Action* through  
a Dual Lens • 03

Video: Roundtable  
Highlights • 05

Integrating Chinese  
Calligraphy into  
TBLT • 05

Video: Highlights from  
Keynote Q&A • 07

Crossing the Rubicon:  
TBLT's Momentum and  
the Road Ahead • 08

Preparing Teachers for  
the AI-Integrated TBLT  
Classroom • 11

## Celebrating the Success of *TBLT in Action*

In this issue, we celebrate the success of *Task-Based Language Teaching in Action: Global Perspectives & Practices*, an online symposium hosted by the Center for International Foreign Language Teacher Education (CIFLTE) at Teachers College, Columbia University, on November 14–15, 2025. Co-chairs Ashley Beccia and Zhizi (ZZ) Chen welcomed educators and researchers from 15 countries to the event.

Over the course of four sessions, attendees explored a range of topics, such as TBLT implementation in real-world contexts, critical and socially engaged TBLT, and AI for task design.

*Continued on page 02*

The program featured a dozen individual and partner presentations, a panel discussion organized by the International Association of Task-Based Language Teaching (IATBLT), an academic roundtable, and a powerful closing keynote speech by Professor ZhaoHong Han on Task-Based Language Teaching in the Age of AI Revolution. Each session included dedicated time for Q&A and discussion, allowing for meaningful dialogue between practitioners and researchers worldwide.

The CIFLTE team extends its sincere appreciation to all presenters for their insightful contributions, and to the many participants whose engagement enriched every session. A special thank-you goes to IATBLT for supporting our outreach efforts.

Continue reading for an inside glimpse into the symposium sessions, as well as reflections by both presenters and attendees. ■



## Symposium Sessions

### *At a Glance*

#### Session 1: Task Design & Innovation

November 14 | 7:00–10:15 AM (ET)

#### Session 2: Critical & Socially Engaged TBLT

November 14 | 6:30–9:00 PM (ET)

#### Session 3: TBLT for Foundational Skills

November 15 | 7:00–9:00 AM (ET)

#### Session 4: TBLT in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

November 15 | 6:30–9:00 PM (ET)

## TBLT in Action

### Global Perspectives & Practices

#### NOVEMBER 14 • SESSION 1

7:00-7:30 AM (ET)	<b>Task Complexity x Foreign Language Anxiety in CFL</b> Zhupeng Li, University of Connecticut, USA
7:30-8:00 AM (ET)	<b>Young Learners &amp; Sustainable Development Goals with Tinkercad</b> Marcela Danowski, Argentina
8:30-9:00 AM (ET)	<b>ChatGPT for Task Design: A Chinese Lesson on MBTI Personality Types</b> Allison Payne & Fenghua Zhao, Teachers College, Columbia University, USA
9:00-9:30 AM (ET)	<b>TBLT in Higher Education: Using Digital Stories in English Preparatory Classes</b> Prof. Arzu Ekoç-Özçelik, Yıldız Technical University, Türkiye
9:30-10:15 AM (ET)	<b>PANEL: Global Innovations in Task-Based Language Teaching: An Invitation from IATBLT.org</b> Prof. Laura Gurzynski-Weiss, Georgetown University, USA Prof. Claudia Fernández, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA Prof. YouJin Kim, Georgia State University, USA


**TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**  
 Center for International Foreign Language Teacher Education

Click [HERE](#) to view the schedule



# ***TBLT in Action*** **through a Dual Lens:** **My Experience as a** **Presenter & Attendee**

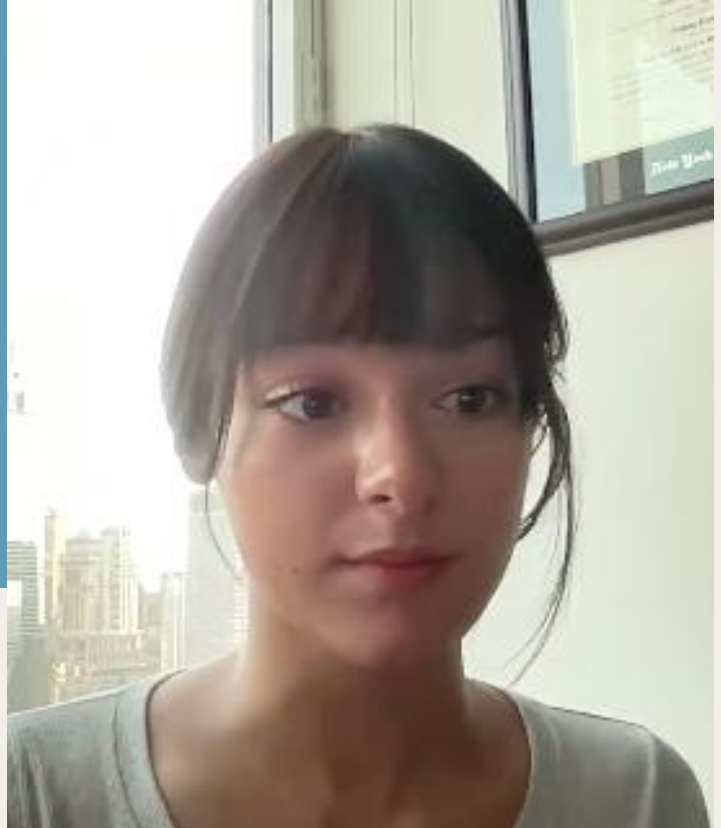
***By Isabella Trezza***

*Pictured right: Isabella presents on TBLT  
for preschoolers during Session 3*

The symposium *TBLT in Action: Global Perspectives & Practices* was a wonderful and inspiring opportunity to share and learn alongside those who are reimagining classroom practice via task-based language teaching. As a presenter as well as an attendee, I was lucky enough to experience the event from two perspectives, which were equally energizing and meaningful. The collaborative atmosphere, as well as the diversity of perspectives, made the symposium a memorable experience.

My presentation focused on applying TBLT principles in early childhood education, with a specific focus on preschool learners. I shared examples from my work in designing developmentally appropriate tasks that integrate play, physical movement, and social interaction. These are all oriented toward meaningful language use, as opposed to isolated drills. My goal was to show how even our youngest learners are able to engage with tasks when they are designed in accordance with their cognitive, social, and linguistic readiness.

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***“As a presenter as well as an attendee, I was lucky enough to be able to experience the event from two perspectives, which were both equally energizing and meaningful.”***



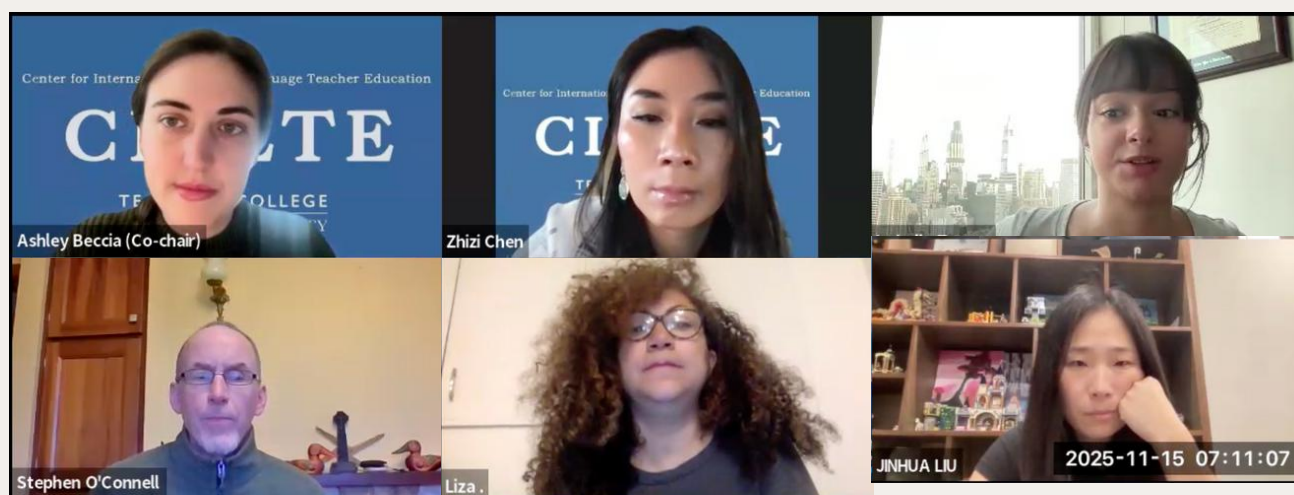
*Photo credit: Brick Township Public Schools*

Presenting these ideas opened important yet hard-to-come-by conversations with other individuals excited about expanding TBLT into less explored instructional contexts. Many attendees expressed curiosity about how task-based methods can support very young emergent bilinguals. It was encouraging to see so much enthusiasm for adopting task-based pedagogy in early childhood classrooms. To me, this affirmed the importance of treating young children as capable communicators with very rich potential for meaningful language use.

From an attendee's viewpoint, I was also delighted by the range of sessions that demonstrated how TBLT continues to evolve across contexts, from K-12 to

university classrooms and even community-based programs. The symposium highlighted the versatility of TBLT and its power to make language learning more human and impactful. I know understand that TBLT is not simply a method; it is a mindset.

I am immensely grateful to CIFTLE for creating a space where educators could share innovations, reflect on practice, and imagine pathways for the future of language education. Being part of the symposium more than strengthened my commitment to implementing TBLT in meaningful and accessible ways. I look forward to future opportunities to contribute to this vibrant community of practice. ■



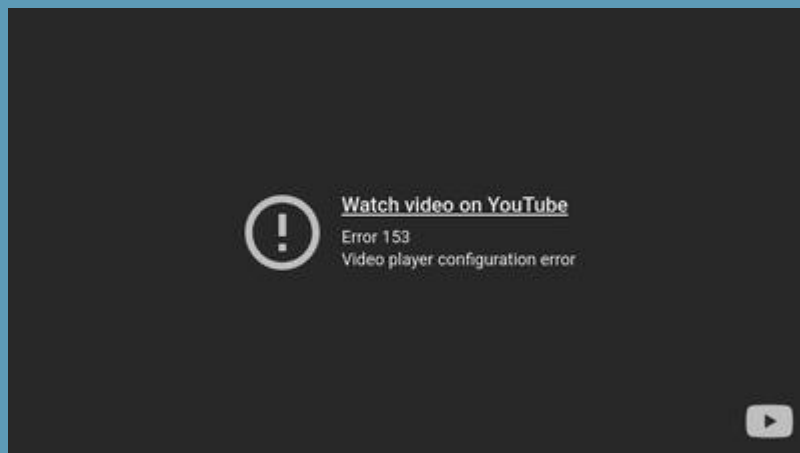
*Symposium attendees listen carefully as Isabella Trezza (top right) makes her presentation*



*Isabella Trezza is an early childhood educator and former preschool teacher now pursuing an M.A. in Special Education/Developmental Disabilities at Teachers College, Columbia University, with plans to continue to a Ph.D. in Cognitive Neuroscience. She serves as Head of Education and Outreach at a community-based garden and participates in research on children's learning and genetic biomarkers.*

# Critical TBLT Across the Americas

## *Highlights from the Academic Roundtable*



This highlight video captures key moments from the roundtable “Doing Critical TBLT across the Americas,” where scholars from Brazil and the United States discuss how task-based language teaching can be expanded through critical perspectives to support more socially just language education.

Click to [HERE](#) to watch on YouTube

## Integrating Chinese Calligraphy into Task-Based Language Teaching

***By Ning He***

During Session 3 of *TBLT in Action*, I presented my research on my TBLT class that integrates Chinese culture into language teaching. It was a great honor to be part of the event. I truly appreciate CIFLTE for providing me with the opportunity to participate. I am also grateful for the questions from the Zoom audience that contributed to the insightful discussions on the tasks I presented.

Each year, I offer students enrichment classes in Chinese calligraphy and language. The classes incorporate

lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on calligraphy practices, such as writing a 福 (fú, meaning “good fortune”) character. Students usually greatly enjoy authentic cultural practice; however, they often lack an in-depth understanding of the structure of Chinese characters. Reflecting on how to enhance students’ cultural experience by engaging them in more student-centered and task-based class learning, I adopted a backward design approach for an enrichment class that integrates Chinese calligraphy into language teaching.

*Continued on page 06*

The 福 (fú) artwork task is designed as a jigsaw task, which is broken down into smaller tasks to reduce the overall complexity and maximize student engagement in meaningful language use. Scaffolding the task supports students' understanding of Chinese calligraphy as an art form of Chinese characters and of the evolution of Chinese characters through the five calligraphy scripts.

The subtasks, comprising three group-level facilitating tasks and one class-level final task, are designed to build upon one another. The focus of the tasks progress from traditional writing tools, known as the Four Treasures of the Chinese, to an exploration of the five basic scripts and the origin of the 福 (fú) character. This is followed by the final task involving the evolution of 福 (fú), brush writing, and appreciating the character 福 (fú) after synthesizing the information from the prior subtasks.

***“Scaffolding the task also contributes to students’ thorough understanding of Chinese calligraphy as an art form of Chinese characters and of the evolution of Chinese characters through the five calligraphy scripts.”***

As a jigsaw task, the information gap among the tasks provides an opportunity for interaction among students, as they need the missing information to understand and complete the final task: creating their own artwork by writing a 福 (fú) character for a cultural event.

Students in each group present to peer-teach the assigned content within the task, playing the roles of both a presenter/demonstrator and a question master. The question master role enables students to interact and exchange information, promoting collaboration among student groups for the final task.



*Ning He presenting her Chinese calligraphy tasks during Session 3*

The new TBLT design of the enrichment class inspires students to delve into the foundation and historical background of Chinese characters, as well as to appreciate them as an art form. Focusing on both the meaning and the language form within the cultural context, the calligraphy task goes beyond merely writing the 福 (fú) character stroke by stroke with a calligraphy brush in that students also demonstrate their understanding of the character's cultural significance and original meaning. According to student feedback from a survey and interviews, the final task of writing 福 (fú) provided students with a valuable experience in connecting the character's structure with its ancient

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meaning, thus strengthening their recognition of the character and confidence in writing it.

Byram (1997) advocates for the integration of cultural understanding within language education, emphasizing the development of cultural competence alongside linguistic proficiency. Kramsch (1993) also posits that language learning is a form of cultural

practice, requiring learners to navigate and interpret cultural norms, values, and contexts. When engaging in the calligraphy practice of Chinese characters, students are immersed in an authentic cultural context that they have created to develop their cultural competence (calligraphy culture) alongside their proficiency in the Chinese language (Chinese characters). ■

## References

- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

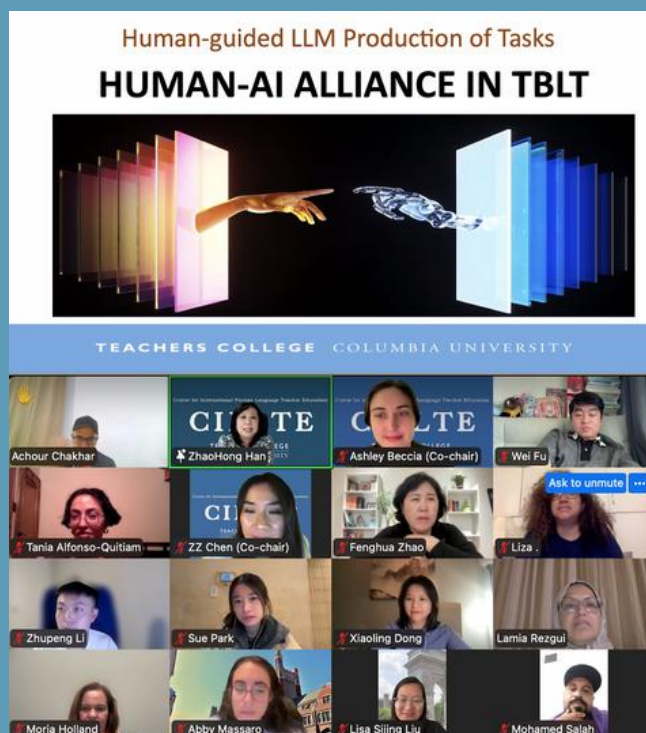


*Ning He is a Mandarin Chinese instructor at Fordham University in New York City. She is currently pursuing a second master's degree in applied linguistics at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her teaching approach integrates the Chinese language and Chinese calligraphy art, utilizing TBLT to enhance her students' learning experiences. Her research interests include second language acquisition, language use, and the integration of language and culture in teaching.*

## TBLT in the Age of AI Revolution

### *Highlights from the Keynote Speech by Prof. ZhaoHong Han*

The grand finale of the symposium was a keynote speech by Professor ZhaoHong Han (Teachers College, Columbia University) on TBLT in the age of AI revolution. Her talk offered copious food for thought, evidenced by the lively Q&A session that followed. Check out highlights of the Q&A [HERE](#).



*Screenshots from Prof. Han's keynote*

# Crossing the Rubicon: TBLT's Momentum and the Road Ahead

***By Achour Chakhar***

The symposium was true to its expectations to its very end—nay its ending was to the symposium as a cherry to a cake! It has evidenced that the TBLT approach has crossed the Rubicon in that it is gaining momentum despite its recent history on the SLA landscape, and it is here to stay!

The themes of the symposium fell upon a continuum with “Global Innovations in Task-Based Language Teaching” being on one end, while “TBLT in the Age of AI Revolution” on the other. As for the other themes, they constituted the various practices of TBLT across the world.

I found the presentation of Profs. Laura Gurzynski-Weiss, Claudia Fernández and YouJin Kim particularly interesting for



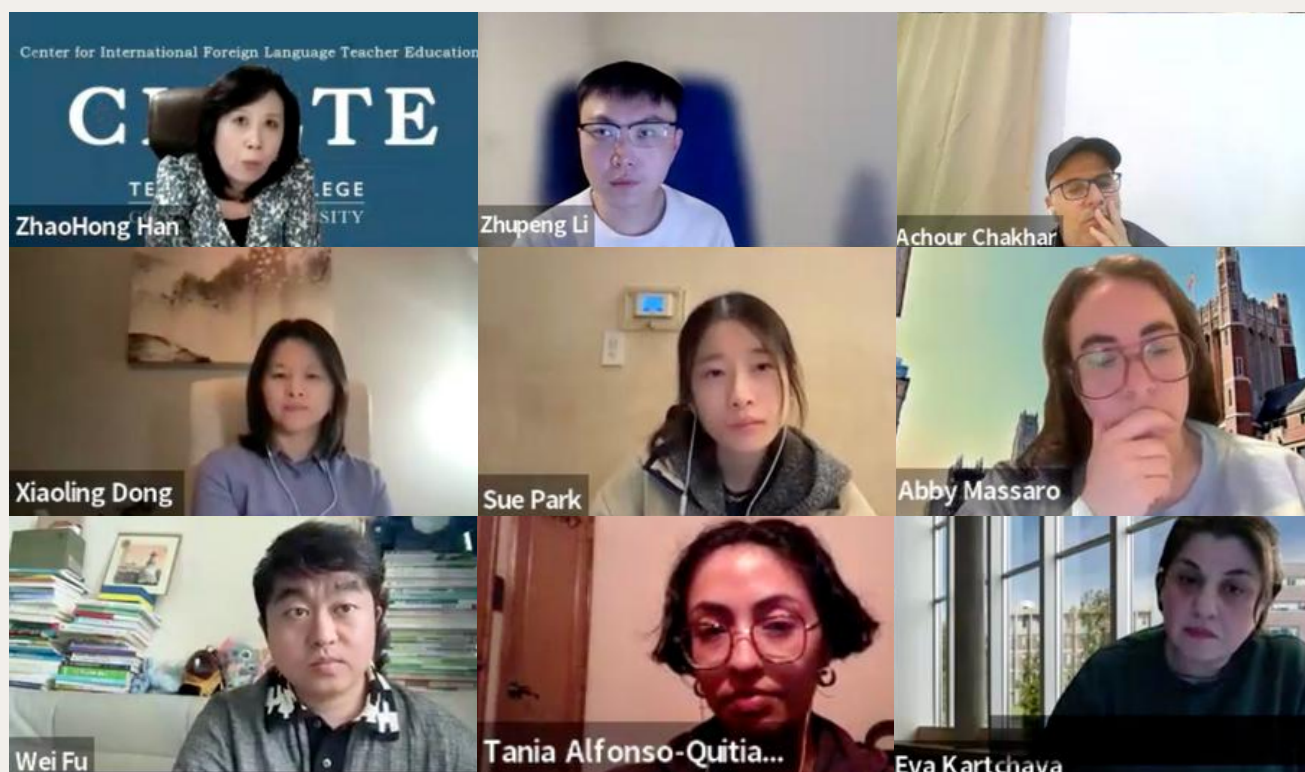
*Achour participating in the Q&A session after Prof. Han's keynote*

novice teachers wishing to implement the TBLT approach in their lessons but need a gentle nudge as where to start and how. I was lucky enough to participate in the [TC-Tunisia Foreign Language Teacher Education Project](#) (2021-2022) where I came to know for the first time about the TBLT approach, and one result of the training was to incorporate the TBLT approach into the syllabus of the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) course for prospective primary school teachers at my institute of higher education in Tunisia. However, because of the nascency of the approach, there was a dearth of resources. As such, I was particularly glad to find out that the IATBLT offers helpful resources, such as the [Task Bank](#), the [Automated Task Design Generator](#), [TASK journal](#) and [book series](#), available to practitioners worldwide. I am planning to make use of these resources and share them with my students. I also plan to stay connected with this vibrant international community to keep up-to-date with the current research and implementations of TBLT.

On the other end of the continuum was a quite interesting and insightful keynote by Dr. ZhaoHong Han on the TBLT in the age of AI. The presentation was an eye-opener in the sense that some latent bottlenecks that might constitute real conundrums for stakeholders and practitioners, such as designing a curriculum based on the TBLT approach and the time costliness of task-based lesson planning, were made apparent.

*Continued on page 09*





*Prof. Han delivering her keynote as symposium attendees attentively tune in*

Though these and similar issues might hold the demise of the TBLT approach, as critics of the approach argue, Dr. Han provided some tentative solutions that are very likely to mitigate, if not eradicate, these hurdles by exploring the potentials of AI though the 'success' of this endeavor, Dr. Han stresses, is contingent on careful intervention on the part of the teachers. Though Dr. Han sought to wrap up on a high tone by suggesting some solutions, her presentation is also a constant reminder that there exists no theory or approach that fits all learning/teaching situations and that the teacher's touch and adaptation of the materials and resources are a prerequisite.

Between these two extremes, the remaining presentations were placed on the continuum, testifying that the TBLT approach can be implemented in various

classrooms from preschools through higher education. It was quite reassuring to have concrete examples of TBLT classroom applications that I can share with my prospective primary school teachers. Browsing through the different sessions of the symposium, it is easily noticed that there was a great deal of thought and effort behind each step during its organization. This undoubtedly helped the participants and attendees, in particular, to join the dots within and across the sections. Reading these presentations in article formats would be even more helpful for researchers and practitioners. Perhaps the most relevant presentation to me, given the fact that I teach TEYL to future primary school teachers, was Isabella Trezza's implementation of TBLT with preschoolers.

*Continued on page 10*

Judging by her hard work while preparing for the lesson one can only feel the love and dedication that Isabella put into the lessons with her kids. Perhaps these two factors are among the criteria of a successful teacher that we often fail or miss to highlight, another takeaway from the presentation.

The TBLT approach was seen in action with cultural aspects, Chinese in particular, integrated in such interesting ways that I sincerely wished I had been among the learners. There was much care and patience on the part of the respective teachers during the three stages of the task-based lessons.

Finally, one presentation that raised many questions was “Darija as a Bridge, Not a Barrier: Task-Based Approaches to Early

Literacy for Young Learners in Tunisia,” a research conducted by Mohamed Salah. I still have a number of questions that need to be discussed at length, but tapping into something that most scholars take for granted is not a matter that Mr. Mohamed would engage in for the sake of simply going against the current; rather, it is a bold stance that questions even the long standing beliefs, given the fact that with the changing generations and situations, new challenges arise and their solutions can be sometimes found where least expected.

The other presentations were not less informative, but they merit a longer scope of time to do them justice. CIFLTE has given us an amazing opportunity to be part of this international symposium. I am ever in their debt! ■



*Mohamed Salah, Khaled El Houche, and Lamia Rezgui—alumni of the TC-Tunisia Project like Achour—attending Session 2 of the symposium*



*Achour Chakhar holds an M.A. in Linguistics and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Critical Discourse Analysis. His work focuses on SLA, language pedagogy, and innovative methods such as task-based learning, technology-assisted project-based learning, and learning-oriented assessment. His research centers on sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. He currently teaches TEYL, Didactics, and core skills to pre-service primary school teachers at the Higher Institute of Arts and Crafts.*



*Fenghua Zhao and Allison Payne presenting on co-designing tasks with ChatGPT, drawing on their Capstone Project in CIFLTE's TCSOL Certificate Program*

## Preparing Teachers for the AI-Integrated TBLT Classroom

***By Fenghua Zhao***

My biggest takeaway from this symposium is that it is an unavoidable trend: AI will enter every part of our lives in the future. It is a big challenge for every language teacher to break away from the traditional teaching methods and explore new ways working with AI. One of the new approaches which combines AI with TBLT teaching will lead language teachers to go out of their comfort zone and explore how AI can help us in teaching. Therefore, this process will take a lot of time and effort to learn and reflect.

We should be like engineers who know how to work with AI and operate it well. More importantly, to use AI to create TBLT-based course plans, language teachers need training that develops their theoretical, pedagogical, and practical knowledge. And this is the real value of CIFLTE's TCSOL Certificate Program, where teachers are offered principled, holistic, and contemporary training in teaching Chinese, including how to leverage AI tools for task-based instruction. ■



*Fenghua Zhao is a Chinese Language Instructor at Teachers College, Columbia University. She focuses on helping learners naturally acquire real-world language through TBLT and comprehensible input, and creates her own teaching materials to support this approach.*





# The TCSOL/TESOL Dual Certificate

Summer Program Online and Summer Program in Osaka, Japan

The Center for International Foreign Language Teacher Education (CIFLTE) at Teachers College, Columbia University is now accepting applications for the TCSOL/TESOL Dual Certificate Summer Program Online and the TCSOL/TESOL Dual Certificate Summer Program in Osaka, Japan. These collaborative programs, sponsored by CIFLTE and Osaka Gakuin University (OGU), were developed by Columbia professors with the intention of providing participants with a strong foundation in linguistic theory while also developing their understanding of English and/or Chinese pedagogy with a focus on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

## Online Program

### ● Program Schedule

**Dual Track:** May 25-June 12

**TCSOL only:** May 25-29, June 8-12

**TESOL only:** June 1-12

### ● Location

All sessions conducted **online via Zoom**

### ● Application Deadline

**Early:** January 1

**Priority:** March 1

**Final:** May 15

## On-site Program

### ● Program Schedule

**Dual Track:** July 13-31

**TCSOL only:** July 13-17, July 27-31

**TESOL only:** July 20-31

### ● Location

**Osaka Gakuin University**

(2-36-1 Kishibe-Minami, Suita-shi, Osaka)

### ● Application Deadline

**Early:** February 1

**Priority:** April 1

**Final:** June 15

## Program Webpage

For more information regarding how to apply, application requirements, program schedule, and other program offerings, please visit the center's website by using the URL below or the QR code:  
<https://www.tc.columbia.edu/ciflte/prospective-students/>



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# INFO SESSION

**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS SUMMER 2026**

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**The TCSOL/TESOL  
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**The TCSOL/TESOL  
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