



# Language Association Journal

New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers

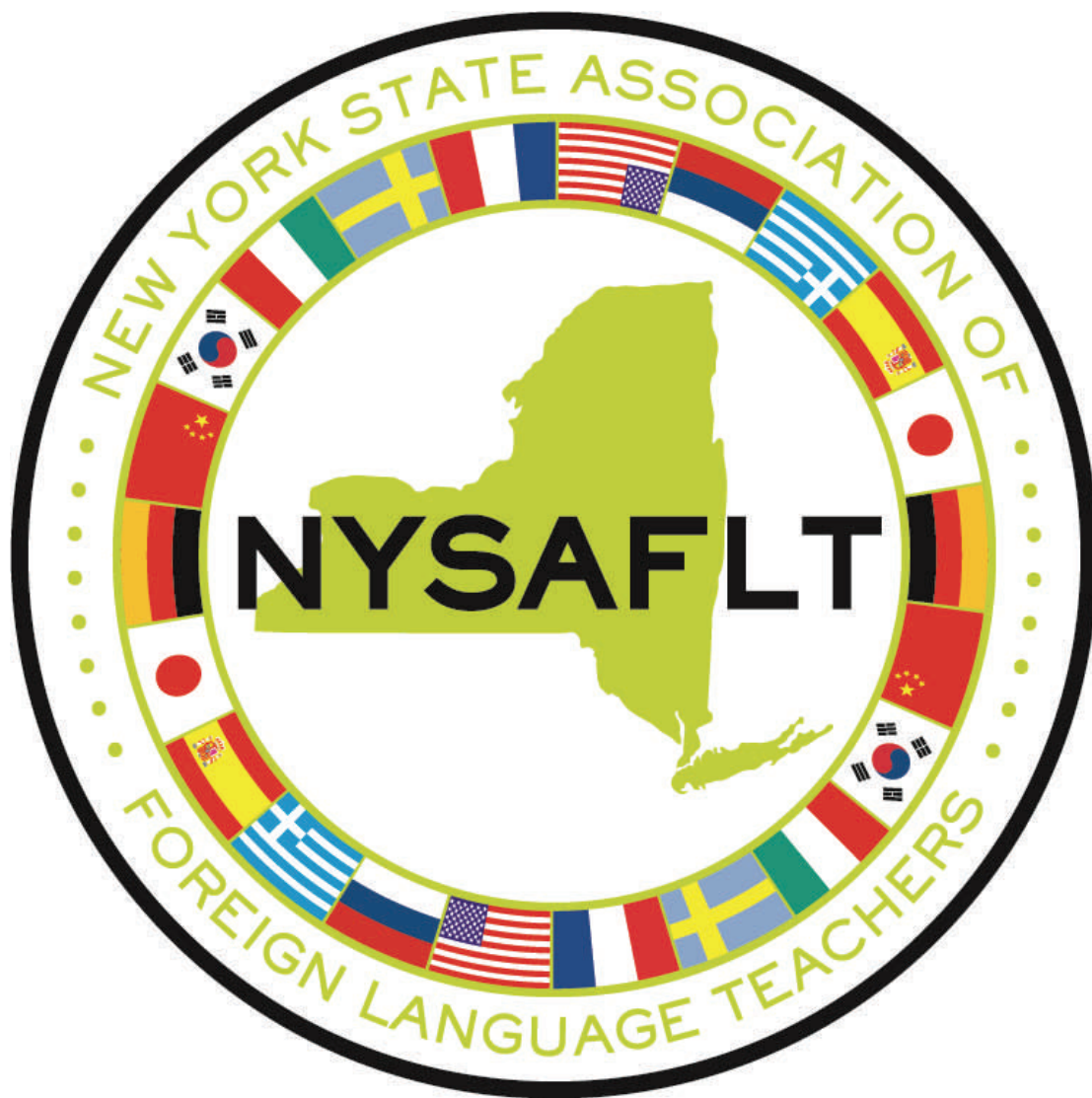
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# Announcing the 2012-2013 NYSAFLT Webinar Series!



October 25 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"Digital Portfolios for World Language Students K-16"*  
with Nathan Lutz

This era of accountability reporting, program evaluation, and debate over student achievement is the driving force behind an emerging form of student assessment. Portfolios are purposeful collections of student work representing an array of performance that can be assessed by the students themselves, their teachers, school officials, and even parents. Although this concept isn't novel by any means, the advent of digital portfolios makes it possible to include more and varied types of works. With digital portfolios, students can create dossiers that travel with them throughout their educational careers. Writing samples, photos, art, voice and video recordings are some of the items students may choose for their digital portfolios. In this presentation, teachers will learn of some of the platforms that can be used to create digital portfolios for their students' work. There will be examples of student work, rubrics for teacher evaluation, and rubrics for students' self-reflection.

This webinar will briefly detail the rationale behind the use of student portfolios. Participants will see an overview of a few platforms for digital portfolios. Portfolio entries will be in the form of writing, art, video and voice recordings. Participants will receive sample rubrics for teacher evaluation of the work as well as rubrics for students to be self-reflective of their work. There will also be handouts detailing directions for setting up the digital portfolios, some of the platforms that can be used, and hyperlinks to some of my students' digital portfolios.

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November 1 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"Designing Performance Assessments in the Communicative Modes"*  
with Jennifer Eddy, Ph.D.

This webinar guides teachers on the design of performance assessment tasks. Using the three modes of communication aligned with the NYS Syllabus topics, we will design a thematic trio of tasks that show what learners can do. Participants will learn how to develop tasks in the Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational Modes, use culturally authentic material, turnaround a task for transfer, and plan backward from performance goals. These tasks foster key behaviors indicated in the Common Core and the Framework for 21st Century Skills. See how performance assessment develops critical thinking, engages flexibility, and encourages a self-directed learner.

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December 6 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"Aligning LOTE to the Common Core Follow-Up"* with Nancy Ketz  
Nancy first addressed LOTE and the Common Core Standards in a March 2012 webinar. To continue the discussion, she will present 1) a review of the Common Core for Literacy Key Ideas, 2) a menu of potential module components, and 3) a step-by-step demonstration of the creation of a sample module for French, applicable to all languages. Participants are invited to address the Common Core Standards by creatively combining the module components.

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January 10 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"Performance Assessment"*

with Vicki Mike, Ed.D.

The focus of this webinar will be assessments that integrate listening, reading, writing, speaking, as well as some technology, in the foreign language classroom in order to better prepare students for examinations at Checkpoints B and C and for the Advanced Placement. Participants will be provided with a balance of formative and summative assessments that measure student performance in

meaningful contexts that integrate all four skills. Participants will be provided with sample assessments and rubrics.

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February 7 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"FLES and the Common Core"*

with Marissa Coulehan & Harriet Barnett

Where does FLES belong on the Common Core spectrum? How can we adjust FLES curricula to meet the new Common Core Learning Standards while still maintaining our primary communication goals? What will happen to the focus of communication? Will the new focus on reading and writing change our commitment to aural/oral communication in FLES?

These questions and more will be answered in this webinar!

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March 7 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"Advocacy: An Everyday Occurrence"*

with Francesco L. Fratto

The need for advocacy is greater now than in the past. Are teachers truly prepared to be advocates for their profession? Was there a college course that was offered that specifically dealt with this very topic? If not, join the webinar and learn how to be an advocate for your program. Tips will be shared on how best to promote the accomplishments of your department/students via a [website](#), twitter or

through the press.

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*A Bonus March Webinar!*

March 14 -- 4:00pm (1 hour) *"Literacy Strategies for the 21st Century LOTE Teacher"* with Al Martino

Literacy instruction has been propelled into the forefront of LOTE instruction in recent years. First, the Partnership for 21st Century has clearly stated the need for people with excellent literacy skills in our global society. More recently, the National Core Curriculum for ELA has indirectly pushed literacy instruction to the fore - both in terms of the demands being made on readers today and the skills

classroom teachers need to have in order to teach reading.

How do WE as LOTE teachers get the most out our reading instruction in the classroom? How much is too much? What are the best strategies? What genres should be used? And, how does all of this fit into communicative language teaching? The presenter will address these questions as well as ELA/ESL strategies that can benefit students of LOTE.

[REGISTER FOR THIS BONUS MARCH WEBINAR](#)

Past webinars are available "on demand" at <http://www.nysafilt.org>.  
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NYSAFLT is seeking a Newsletter Editor for a three-year term beginning January 2013.

Responsibilities include:

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- Preparing an electronic file copy of the Newsletter. The editor is the primary person responsible for copy-editing.

The Newsletter editor may attend the Annual Conference, some Board meetings, and other NYSAFLT events at the discretion of the President in order to report on those events.

If interested in this position, please send the following by September 30 to [hq@nysaflt.org](mailto:hq@nysaflt.org):

- An email outlining your qualifications for the job
- A current résumé
- A sample of your writing – either an article you have written or a fictitious article for the *NYSAFLT News*.

To view samples of the *NYSAFLT News*, please [click here](#).

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# Language Association Journal

A publication of the

New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers, Inc.

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(716) 836-3130 [www.nysaflt.org](http://www.nysaflt.org)

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Articles submitted for publication must follow APA guidelines, use Times New Roman font size 12, with 5-space indents, and be double-spaced throughout. Manuscripts that are not clearly formatted following the guidelines of the 6th edition of the [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association](#) will not be reviewed. There are numerous online sources to help with this formatting; e.g., <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>. Electronic submission is required. Please e-mail manuscripts as .doc or .docx file attachments to the editor at [nysafltjournal@nysaflt.org](mailto:nysafltjournal@nysaflt.org). Photographs, graphics and/or other artwork should be submitted as separate files.

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### Planned Giving

Several years ago, NYSAFLT learned that we were to be the beneficiary of a very generous contribution from a former member who recently passed away. Sally G. Hahn felt so strongly about the benefits of early language instruction that she made it possible for NYSAFLT to make annual awards of up to \$3000 to support outstanding FLES programs and teachers in New York State. All award money comes from interest earned on the Hahn bequest, which has been carefully invested by our Financial Management Committee.

If you would like more information about how you can make a planned gift to NYSAFLT and impact a cause near to your heart, please contact John Carlino, Executive Director, at NYSAFLT headquarters.



From the Editor:

Dear NYSAFLT colleagues:

This 2012-13 school year brings many changes for all of us and also for the *Language Association Journal*. After three years as editor of this journal, Dr. Elvira Sanatullova-Allison has handed over the reigns to me in order to focus on her new position as Chair of the Education Department at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York. Congratulations Elvira! She is continuing on as a member of the Journal's editorial board, for which I am extremely grateful! I also want to extend my appreciation to the other members of my editorial board: Nathan Lutz, Maria Cristina Montoya, Joanne O'Toole, and Fabien L Rivière, who eagerly gave their time and expertise to creating this "back-to-school" issue.

We hope that the articles included here inspire you with new knowledge, insight and ideas for your teaching, whether at the elementary, secondary, or post-secondary level. Perhaps they will also inspire you to submit your own manuscript for a future issue. Please refer to the Call for Papers and submission guidelines later in this issue—we'd love to hear from you.

Here's to a wonderful year for everyone!

All the best!

Carol S. Dean, Ed.D.  
Editor, *Language Association Journal*

CALL FOR PAPERS  
NYSAFLT Language Association Journal

2012 Vol. 63, No. 2

Technology in LOTE Teaching and Learning: Sharing Successes and  
Looking into the Future

Deadline for Submission: **extended to October 1, 2012**

2013 Vol. 64, No. 1

Articulating K-16 Standards: Process and Progress

Deadline for Submission: March 1, 2013

The Language Association Journal is the official peer-reviewed journal of the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT) and is published two times per year. It has a thematic approach and welcomes a spectrum of submissions ranging from scholarly articles to teacher-to-teacher exchanges regarding language learning and acquisition, instruction, curriculum, assessment, policy, advocacy, teacher education, and other areas of professional interest to language educators.

Submission Guidelines:

- the manuscript must not be previously published or considered for publication elsewhere
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- follow the guidelines, as outlined in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2001) (APA style resource: <http://www.apastyle.org>)
- use Times New Roman font size 12 double-spaced
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- send an electronic version of the manuscript to [nysafltjournal@nysaflt.org](mailto:nysafltjournal@nysaflt.org) as an e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx)
- submit photographs, graphics and/or other artwork as separate files
- in the e-mail, provide a brief biographical information, which would appear at the end of your article and should also include:
  - your name, title, affiliation, and contact information
  - your educational background
  - what languages, ages/grades, and language proficiency levels you have taught in your teaching career
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All properly submitted manuscripts receive an e-mail acknowledgement from the Editor. Submission of a manuscript does not guarantee its publication. After an initial review by the Editor, those manuscripts that meet specifications are sent to one or two members of the Editorial Board for anonymous evaluation. Each of the reviewers is asked to make one of three recommendations regarding each submission: (1) publish as is, (2) publish after revising/rewriting, or (3) do not publish. When all reviews are received, the Editor makes the final decision regarding the manuscript's publication and notifies the author about the submission's status. All manuscripts accepted for publication are subject to editing.

Dr. Carol S. Dean  
Editor, Language Association Journal  
Associate Professor, Foreign Language Education  
Secondary Education Department  
The State University of New York College at Oneonta

**Engaging Millennial Learners:  
Problem-Based Learning, Technology and LOTE**

Janet Hiller

**Introduction**

*Había aprendido sin esfuerzo el inglés, el francés, el portugués, el latín. Sospecho sin embargo, que no era muy capaz de pensar. Pensar es olvidar diferencias, es generalizar, abstraer. En el alborrotado mundo de Funes no había sino detalles, casi inmediatos...*

*Irineo Funes murió en 1889, de una congestión pulmonar. (Borges, 1956)*

[Translation: *He had learned English, French, Portuguese, and Latin effortlessly. I suspect, nevertheless that he was not very capable of thinking. To think is to forget differences; it is to generalize, to abstract. In the crammed world of Funes there were only details, almost immediate.*]

The world of students today is not unlike the world of *Funes el Memorioso*, a character in a short story of the same name by Jorge Luis Borges, who remembered and became “congested” with all of the facts and details that he was exposed to every day; however, he could not use them in any meaningful way. Like *Funes*, our students are constantly bombarded with information. They are regularly using their Smart phones, computers and social media to communicate and gather data, but what do they do with all this information and technology in our multi-lingual, multi-cultural world? We need to harness the mindset and skills of these millennial learners and guide them to learn and use language and gather knowledge to construct meaning and to practice solving the many problems they face today or that they may encounter in the future.

Problem-based learning or PBL, is defined as a teaching method using problems as the vehicle for gaining new knowledge. Scenarios that occur in the students’ real world or that may

occur in the future are presented as problems that students resolve while acquiring, reinforcing, synthesizing and applying knowledge. Each student is given a specific role and works collaboratively with other team members for a common purpose.

In this article I discuss the rationale for incorporating technology-based PBL in LOTE and suggest a framework for implementing this approach.

## **History and Rationale**

Problem-based learning was first introduced in medical education at McMaster University in Toronto in 1969. It has since spread to other institutions such as Harvard Medical School because it has proven to be a very effective method (Donner, Bickley, 1993). Medical and scientific knowledge is mastered in the same context in which it will be used. It is a student driven process in which the teacher becomes a facilitator and guide to resources. (Donner, Bickley, 1993) Since language learning is optimal when a context is provided the applicability of Problem-Based learning to the world language classroom seems obvious. Alice Omaggio Hadley (2000) advocates a proficiency-oriented approach that gives students constant opportunities to learn language in context and apply their knowledge to communicate in real-life situations as is done in PBL.

Learning a language should not be experienced as simply listening, speaking, reading, writing and culture. All of the aforementioned elements need to be experienced in ways that are meaningful for students. PBL provides opportunities for meaningful language input and output that are necessary for language learning to take place. Units can be organized so that students can learn, reinforce and build their knowledge of the linguistic forms, vocabulary and

communicative skills that are needed during the process of investigating and solving a problem (Alan & Stoller, 2005).

Life constantly presents challenges and problems, which provide learning opportunities. Students will need to be globally ready to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which means they will need to define and resolve the problems of their time. Vivien Stewart (2010) identifies five global trends that will affect their future: trends related to economics, science and technology, demographics, security and citizenship, and education.

Billions of people in China, India and Russia have moved from closed to global economies since 1990 (Stewart, 2010). Employees of multi-national corporations as well as small business who need to market products around the world will need to communicate and solve problems together. As Thomas Friedman (2005) pointed out in *The World is Flat*, today people can work and collaborate anywhere and anytime. For example, scientific research is now conducted by international teams collaborating across cultures and time zones.

The US population “mirrors” the diversity of the world (Stewart, 2010). Local communities are increasingly influenced by immigrant populations and cultures. Cross-cultural problem solving has become necessary in the workplace, health and social services, the marketplace and the classroom.

Global environmental, energy, humanitarian, and security issues within and beyond our borders require informed citizens who can identify problems, formulate solutions and act and vote on global issues using multiple languages and problem defining and solving strategies.

In *Problem-Based Learning an Inquiry Approach*, John Barell (2007) cites research that supports PBL that is also relevant to the world language classroom. He notes that the following

teaching strategies that are included in PBL result in higher student achievement: “comparing/contrasting, summarizing, non-linguistic representations, cooperative learning, generating and testing hypotheses, and questioning” (p. 4). These are also commonly used in the world language classroom. He also presents research that indicates that students must interact with knowledge in complex and multiple ways in order to learn. Students build language proficiency through engagement in the complex contexts of PBL.

Research on authentic pedagogy and the requirements of authentic working conditions support the implementation of PBL. When students are involved in the construction of knowledge and discipline-related inquiry through real-life connections outside of school, achievement results are higher for all students regardless of their race, class or gender. (Newmann & Associates, 1996). The SCANS report, (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1991) further argued that the world of work requires the higher order thinking skills and collaborative skills that PBL incorporates.

Robert Marzano (2003) provides research-based action steps for classroom curriculum design. In action Step 5, he recommends having “teachers engage students in complex tasks that require addressing content in unique ways” (p.119). He further points out that such tasks enhance comprehension and should include the act of defending and justifying conclusions, which is extremely powerful for concept formation and change. These complex tasks can and should be incorporated in PBL and world languages as shown in the model presented later in this article.

Heidi Hayes Jacobs (2010) discusses the need to upgrade curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She points out ways to replace dated curriculum and assessments and incorporate current tools and technology that dictate modern interdisciplinary teaching approaches including problem-

based learning. World language courses are ideal for building curricular connections because of their global reach and possible application to any discipline (Hiller, 1993).

Differentiation has been recognized as an effective approach for meeting the needs of all learners. Tomlinson & Imbeau (2010) suggest that students should be presented with tasks and problems that are challenging to every learner and that ensure that each student “works with a rich curriculum and has to think about and apply essential ideas and skills” (p.90.) They suggest providing more scaffolding to those who need it and tasks that require a variety of skills and intelligences so that every student can make a meaningful contribution to their group. Problem-based learning provides an excellent framework for differentiating instruction. Students who have different levels of proficiency or mastery of a target language and different strengths and intelligences can be assigned tasks that are appropriate to their level and talents while being important enough to help resolve the problem so they are all actively engaged and motivated to learn and build skills. They can use technology to build language skills and vocabulary and to gather information.

## **Standards**

The New York State *Learning Standards for Languages Other than English* (New York State Education Department, 1996) and the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006) provide guidelines for teaching and learning that can all be addressed through PBL.

The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) identifies the “5 C’s” of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning as: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities which all promote meaningful input and output of the target language. Through PBL, learners address Standard 1, Communication, when they “engage in

conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions...” (p. 42), in order to solve problems. Through the research they would be required to do they would “understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics” (p. 42), and when they present their resolutions to their problems, they “present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics” (p. 45).

Problems related to global issues would address Standard 2 because students “gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures” (p. 47). Because PBL is interdisciplinary and global it addresses Standard 3, Connections, because students “reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language” (p. 54). Moreover, in order to address global problems “students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints, that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures” (p. 56).

Because the world is interconnected, many problems have a global reach, and by investigating related issues students would “develop insight into the nature of language and culture” (p. 57) which is Standard 4. Students would have to learn to be sensitive to similarities and differences and create solutions that address them.

Students would be encouraged and even required “to use the language both within and beyond the school setting” (p. 64), which is Standard 5. Through the skills they would develop through PBL, students would “show evidence of becoming lifelong learners” enabling them to use the language not only for problem-solving, but also for their own “personal enjoyment and enrichment.” (p. 66).

The new *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects* (National Governors Association Center

for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) create national benchmarks at the elementary and secondary levels that aim to ensure that all American students would be ready for college and the workplace, and that they could compete and succeed at a global level in the new millennium. These standards establish benchmarks for reading, writing, listening and speaking and note that in order to prepare for real-life careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century students will need to practice working together to solve problems. For example in Grades 6-12, they include Standards for Listening and Speaking for Comprehension and Collaboration. By Grades 11-12, students will be expected to:

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 issues building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively;
2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media... in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data. (p. 50)

*The Common Core State Standards for Mathematics* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), address the importance of building real-life problem –solving skills. They state:

Mathematically proficient students can apply the mathematics they know to solve problems arising in everyday life, society, and the workplace... In middle grades, a student might apply proportional reasoning to plan a school event or analyze a problem in the community. By high school, a student might use geometry to solve a design problem...(p.7)

The National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS.S, 2007), which reflect the demands of our digital age, may also be addressed through PBL. They promote creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, research and information fluency, critical thinking and problem-solving and digital citizenship through the use of digital tools and resources.

### **Implementing Problem-Based Learning in LOTE**

While world language classes are often abuzz with activity and communication in the target language, a meaningful hook is needed to keep students of all abilities and levels of proficiency engaged and working to purposefully integrate and align their emerging language skills with the demands and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Problem-Based Learning can provide the hook that draws them to examine issues and create solutions collaboratively while, at the same time, motivating them to acquire the modern language knowledge and the skills that are mandatory for communication, problem-solving and future success. Teachers need to connect to their students' worlds and evoke their passions to work on the issues that face them and their peers. When students become passionate about a problem they are experiencing social and emotional stimuli that promote learning.

John Barell (2007) describes the requisite elements of PBL and major strategies for implementing this approach successfully. This approach begins with a problem statement or scenario and roles assigned to students within collaborative groups who analyze, question, and investigate the issue. They then form conclusions based on their findings. Students are expected to share what they learn through presentations to interested audiences. Finally, teachers and peers evaluate them through informal and formal authentic assessments.

Problems may be teacher generated, student generated or developed by both. They may also be generated from interdisciplinary teams as a result of curriculum mapping within a school or district (Jacobs, 2004). When students work on the same problem in different content area classes at the same time they are experiencing authentic challenges since multiple disciplines are generally utilized to solve problems in the real world. For example, high school students might be presented with the following problem scenario: You are members of a committee that must determine whether or not it is feasible to construct a nuclear power plant in an area near your community. Students could then work on this problem in their science, mathematics, social studies, technology, language arts and also foreign language classes; there are many nuclear power plants in Europe and they could do research on them in the target language. Each discipline offers different learning strategies and content specific knowledge and skills that students need as they consider this complex problem.

Problem-based learning may be implemented to introduce a unit of study as closure of a unit or as a transition to a new unit (Lambros, 2004). The PBL experience may be teacher directed, student directed or managed by both students and teachers as the problem is investigated and solutions are developed and presented. The more often students experience PBL the more independence they will be able to exercise, thus making them more self-directed and proud to take ownership of their learning.

Barell (2007) proposes two strategies to promote problem generation and inquiry regarding specific topics or issues. He identifies the first as: KWHLAQ which he bases on pre-reading strategies that activate prior knowledge. These initials represent the following questions:

**K – KNOW.** What do students already **know** about the subject or issue?

**W – WANT.** What do students **want** or need to learn about this subject?

**H – HOW.** **How** will students investigate the subject?

**L – LEARN.** What have they **learned** and what do they expect they will **learn**?

**A – APPLY.** How will they **apply** their learning and findings?

Barell continues by identifying his second strategy based on scientific inquiry as O-T-C, which stands for:

**O - Observe** objectively to gather information.

**T - Think** reflectively to analyze and connect information to prior knowledge.

**Q - Question** frequently to identify and examine problems and explore solutions. (p. 6)

In the world language classroom students must have the language skills to carry out the above strategies in the target language. Teachers need to guide students to reinforce and learn the vocabulary and grammatical forms they need to communicate, to carry out the investigations and present solutions regarding the specific problem. Cultural connotations and connections relevant to the problem and context must also be considered and explored.

### **PBL and Technology in the Digital Age**

The demands and challenges facing individual language teachers around the country and the world may be different, but the desired outcomes of instruction should be similar. Students must be able to demonstrate proficiency through communication and problem solving in the

target language in an authentic situation that reflects the demands of real-life in our multicultural digital age.

Students need to use technology to accomplish essential learning functions, which are practiced through PBL. According to Boss and Krauss (2011), while digital tools are constantly changing, the learning functions they accomplish remain stable. They describe these essential learning functions as follows:

1. Ubiquity: learning inside and outside the classroom and all the time. Examples include mobile phones and virtual desktops.
2. Deep Learning: This means helping students make sense of raw unfiltered data (instead of relying on meaning made by others) that includes primary source archives online and real-time data online
3. Making things visible and discussable: Helping students show rather than tell through digital visual representation tools such as Google Earth and digital mind-mapping tools.
4. Sharing Ideas, Building Community: Students can use blogs, social websites and webinars to express their ideas and build connections through shared interests.
5. Collaboration-Teaching and Learning with Others: Some examples of collaborative tools are: survey tools, wikis, shared applications, and virtual meetings.
6. Research: Digital research tools to help students filter information include ASK for Kids, del.icio.us bookmarking and Citation Machine.
7. Project Management: Planning and Organization. Learning management systems include Desire2Learn, Moodle, and iGoogle.

8. Reflection and iteration: Students can express ideas, get other opinions and points of view then reconsider and reshape their own thoughts through Wikispaces, Edublogs, and Blogmeister. (pp. 54-56)

Many PBL projects that are already underway are available for online collaboration through established organizations. For example, the International Education and Research Network (iEarn, [www.iearn.org](http://www.iearn.org)), supports collaborative online projects that involve thousands of students from seven continents. These teacher-developed projects provide opportunities for students to use digital tools to build critical thinking skills and cultural awareness; students may work in several languages. Some recent projects include: Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger, and The Time Machine Project.

Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE, [www.globe.gov](http://www.globe.gov)) promotes worldwide science education. Students are involved in collecting scientifically valid data and reporting it online. They collaborate with other GLOBE students and scientists around the world; they can communicate in six languages. Through Oz Projects, another online learning site ([www.ozprojects.edna.edu.au/sibling/home](http://www.ozprojects.edna.edu.au/sibling/home)), educators from around the world can find or post online collaborative projects. Teachers can join existing projects or create their own and invite collaboration. These projects provide ideas to help teachers and administrators develop their own PBL scenarios that address their curriculum and meet their students' needs.

### **A Framework for PBL in World Languages**

In the following chart I present a framework for problem-based learning in world language classrooms. It provides an outline that may be used when creating a new curriculum or

to expand and enhance the existing curriculum of world language classes in a school or district. Administrators and language teachers could use it when collaborating with content area teachers to make interdisciplinary and global connections through PBL. Once teachers have determined at which points PBL corresponds to their curriculum, and the content standards they plan to address, they can utilize the following framework to outline the necessary elements, including digital tools that support the desired learning outcomes. They can answer the questions as they pertain to their individual circumstances and goals, and may also use these questions as a stimulus for more research into ways of making PBL experiences effective and meaningful for their own students.

### **Framework for Problem-based Learning in World Languages**

Content	Which content area(s) will be explored?
Content Standards (National &/or State)	Which content standards will be addressed?
Objectives (Should build communicative proficiency, critical thinking, content area and technology knowledge and skills & media literacy)	What will students be able to do; e.g. research, apply, judge, communicate, or create?
Problem Situation	Which complex problem will students need to investigate, discuss and resolve?
Target Language Vocabulary and Expressions	What vocabulary will students need in order to inquire and communicate about the problem?
Relevant Grammatical Structures	Which grammatical structures will students need to inquire and communicate about the problem?
Cultural Considerations and Connections	Which cultural perspectives, practices or products are relevant to the problem situation? How will they be addressed?

Language Learning Strategies	How can students build vocabulary and grammar to build communicative skills for the PBL scenario?
Resources	What is needed; e.g. Internet, digital tools, interviews with peers or local and international communities, texts, data, content experts?
Problem-Solving Strategies	How will students solve the problem-KWHLAQ or OTQ (Barell, 2007), cooperative learning, journals, surveys, digital tools, online collaboration?
Authentic Assessment	How will students present and share their conclusions; e.g. oral presentations, power-point presentations, blogs, wikis, websites, webinars, debates, simulations, videos, pamphlets, art work?
Evaluation	How will students and teachers assess learning? What rubrics will be used?
Reflection	How will students consider what they discover, learn and create? How will they apply what they learned to new situations?

## **Differentiating Instruction**

After teachers utilize the framework to input specific elements, parameters, and goals, they must consider how to maximize learning for all students. PBL is not just about teaching to the problem. The teacher's role is to stimulate and coach students to be able to inquire and construct meaning through complex problems. Differentiating instruction is easily accomplished in a PBL setting. Students should all feel that their diverse talents, perspectives and backgrounds contribute to small group learning experiences and to the class. Students should be able to make

choices that reflect their individual intelligences and learning styles as they assume roles in the inquiry and resolution of the problem. Teachers can apply more scaffolding for individuals or groups of students who need it. PBL may also be used for anchor activities as part of the differentiation process. Motivation to resolve the problem and present an authentic solution to an audience will stimulate critical thinking skills and encourage all students to improve their target language and content area skills individually and collaboratively.

World language teachers need to identify the linguistic components of a PBL scenario, and then, based on their experience with the group and individual students or through quick assessments, teachers and students can decide if they want to do a quick class introduction or review of vocabulary or grammar, or individualized assignments such as flashcards on the computer or classroom cooperative learning for review and reinforcement. For example, teachers can assign grammar review of preterit or command forms on home or class computers to prepare the class or selected students for the inquiry and presentations that a particular problem requires. Blaz (2006) suggests that students be given choices of different homework assignments that will accomplish the same review to thereby effectively address learning styles and intelligences.

### **Heritage Language Speakers**

Samaniego & Pino (2000) expressed concern that many heritage language speakers become turned off from the very beginning of their language studies because they are not challenged enough. PBL provides the opportunity to address the needs of heritage language speakers who must to be challenged appropriately throughout their language studies. Complex

problem scenarios should be added to enhance the curriculum and the basic communicative activities that are often too easy for many heritage speakers.

Correa (2011) advocates for the need to make heritage language speakers “empowered students who are able to critically understand and embrace their own culture and language without prejudice” (p.311). PBL scenarios and activities should recognize the linguistic and literacy skills and cultural knowledge that these students bring to the classroom and at the same time, these scenarios and activities should help students expand their bilingual range so that they are able to communicate in other contexts beyond the home and family. PBL gives heritage learners and native speakers the opportunity to become involved in their language communities and cultures beyond the walls of the classroom.

Through PBL heritage learners can build the content area and higher order thinking skills that they need to be successful in school and in the workplace. They can use these problem-solving skills to address issues in their home communities and the global community. These students gain pride and understanding through research into their heritage and home cultures and by being able to compare where they are and where they come from. Teachers need to present problems to heritage learners that enable them to recognize the history, beauty and values inherent in their heritage culture, as described in the problem scenario that follows.

### **The PBL Experience**

PBL experiences should be complex, fascinating, meaningful, collaborative and authentic. Students should be encouraged to work with peers and their school and/or local community to identify authentic problems. When students are engaged in solving problems that are challenging and meaningful to them, when they are provided with opportunities to make

choices, take ownership of their own learning, and collaborate and express themselves in different ways on real-life topics in a target language, they are truly becoming proficient communicators who are experiencing the classroom as a stepping stone to the world. The teacher serves as a guide to help them across the threshold. A sample PBL scenario which I created follows:

While there is a diverse population with representatives of many cultures in your school and community, librarians from both your school and the local library along with community members have noted that the students and families who are immigrants or heritage language speakers are being underserved. The staff from both the school and the local libraries would like your school to survey the needs of this diverse population and come up with a plan to better serve these groups so that they are able and eager to use the libraries to meet their needs, learn about U.S. culture, and also build upon and share their individual cultures to enrich their own lives and the lives of all of the members of the community.

The aforementioned scenario could be relevant to many schools and local communities, and language groups. It requires collaboration and the use of technology for resolution. It engages heritage speakers and their families by addressing their interests and encouraging them to share their knowledge and expertise. Teachers may use the previously described Framework for Problem-based Learning in World Languages to adapt this PBL scenario for their own needs and objectives or develop their own scenarios that fit their community and learners' needs and circumstances.

## Conclusion

By implementing PBL in world language classrooms teachers will help to prepare students for college and the workplace they will enter, just as their colleagues in other disciplines are being challenged to do. They can work collaboratively with other language teachers and with their colleagues from other disciplines to develop curriculum that includes real-life problem scenarios and simulations.

Unlike *Funes el Memorioso*, who could only remember languages, facts and information, the young people in our classes today need to become multilingual critical thinkers and problem-solvers who will be able to use ever-changing technology and information to create a better world. Through PBL we can provide them with the practice and opportunities they need to succeed.

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## Challenges and opportunities in language teaching: Connecting the dots

Jean LeLoup, Ph.D.

Language teaching provides its practitioners with many challenges and opportunities simultaneously. The trials and tribulations concomitant with teaching in general are offset by prospects inherent in the subject matter we foreign language (FL) teachers know and love. We challenge our students and help them grapple with language learning. We accompany them as they increase their language proficiency and encounter new worlds of culture and communication for exploration and enjoyment. We have the opportunity to witness that language spark ignite and, if we are lucky, we see evidence of the beginnings of some life-long learners of FL. We do not, however, achieve all of this merely by teaching our subject matter on a daily basis. We educators accomplish this by making myriad connections in our professional and personal lives. This process of connecting the dots is what FL teaching and learning is all about; the topic of connections is one of great importance in the FL teaching arena. Indeed, *Connections* is the third standard of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (2006), and the concept of making connections is pervasive in our profession. Let us think about all the ways we language teachers *do* connect and *need to* connect. These connections provide us with both challenges and opportunities on a daily basis and are addressed below—though not in any hierarchical order.

### 1. Connecting with research and with researchers

When most FL teachers first enter the classroom to begin their teaching career, making a direct connection with research about second language (L2) learning is often far from their mind. Equipped with the requisite number of coursework hours in the target language (TL) but frequently relying on one generic methods course or, at best, just one tailored to FL instruction,

these beginning teachers are faced all at once with numerous demands of the classroom. For many teachers, the first priority is to establish firm and strict classroom management so that FL instruction can actually take place. They are consumed with the task of “teaching,” keeping the lesson moving, and the other peripherals of the job, such as coaching a sport, sponsoring a class or club, and really, just treading water the first year. Connecting with second language acquisition (SLA) research and exploring how best to teach a language and how people best learn other languages may not be the main concern of beginning FL teachers.

Nevertheless, knowledge of discoveries in the SLA field can offer us much to ponder as we decide how best to teach our students in order to maximize their learning. These studies can also serve as sound justification for continuation of a FL program possibly threatened by economic pressures. For example, a few references to brain-based research and what we are learning that is positive for SLA underscore the importance of connecting to the extant research base in the field. The value of brain research and its implications for L2 learning stresses the interconnectedness of the brain’s various functions (Genesee, 2000). Researchers have found a positive relationship between L2 learning and native language skill development, creativity and cognitive problem solving (Blanchard & Nelson, 2007; Taylor-Ward, 2003) as well as enhanced critical thinking skills (Bialystok, 2001). Bilingualism and additive bilingualism have been shown to benefit a child’s reading abilities (Bialystok, 1997; Bialystok, 2001; Bialystok, Craik, Klein, & Viswanathan, 2004). At the opposite end of the age spectrum, lifelong bilingualism has been shown to confer protection against or at least delay the onset of age-related losses in some cognitive processes (Bialystok, et al., 2004; Craik, Bialystok, & Freedman, 2010).

Engaging in action research is another powerful way to make connections between research and classroom practice. An investigation of order of acquisition is a prime example of

an action research project that can be easily carried out in the classroom. We recognize that language textbooks do not all have the same exact syllabus or order of presenting the language structures we teach; that order has yet to be empirically established by research. For the action research project, pick a language topic that is particularly difficult for students to assimilate; rethink how to present it, and then teach it in a different way, at a different time, or using a combination of those variables. Keep track of which approach better or best serves your students. If you get definitive positive results from a particular treatment, you have taken a big step toward improving your own classroom practice. The final step is to share that information at a conference, in an article, in a discussion forum.

## **2. Connecting with colleagues**

We should be making connections with colleagues as often as possible. We need fresh ideas, we need inspiration, we need good role models and we need to *be* good role models for preservice teachers and even inservice teachers who may be struggling. FL departments need to connect with seasoned teachers who have a solid idea of how things should happen in the language classroom. Making these connections—call it networking or whatever you wish—is very important for our own professional development and that of our colleagues. It is particularly crucial for singleton teachers in a district or department who may have four, five or even six preps and *are* the language department. How do we do this? Several ways:

- Join professional organizations at the local, state, regional, and national level. LECNY, NYSAFLT, TESOL, the AATs, ACTFL, MLA, AAAL. Join and participate by going to conferences, meeting others who do what you do and/or who do things differently from you, and learning from them.

- Participate in the online Foreign Language Teaching Forum, FLTEACH (<http://web.cortland.edu/flteach/>) There are many out there who share an interest in improving language teaching and learning; you just need to find them and then connect with them.
- Establish lunch round tables in your own department – meet once a week or bi-weekly to share ideas, activities that have proved to be wildly successful for you. Set up a lunch time as a language immersion opportunity for those who want it – hopefully your native speaker colleagues will join you!
- Finally, please take some time to connect with *your* former language teachers—they need to know that they made an impact and had a positive influence on you. As we know, those kinds of kudos do not come often enough in our profession.

### **3. Connecting with the target language in the classroom**

Here is where our English as a Second Language (ESL) colleagues have a wonderful advantage: the common denominator in their classrooms is always English. They also have an advantage vis-à-vis the second language aspect versus the “foreign language” aspect. Their students are surrounded by the TL to a much greater degree—certainly all day at school—rather than those learning a FL during 42-53 minutes a day or even every other day, as it is at the university level. This makes it even more important for L2 teachers to follow the guidance of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Position Paper, *Use of the TL in the Classroom*, published in May of 2010:

ACTFL therefore recommends that language educators and their students use the target language as exclusively as possible (90% plus) at all levels of instruction during

instructional time and, when feasible, beyond the classroom. (Available at: [http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4368 - targetlang](http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4368-targetlang))

Please note that this is everyone: teachers and students alike. We have to model this use—if we slip into our first language (L1) frequently, our students will think it is fine to do so as well. We also need to model this for our preservice teachers who may not have had instruction in the TL to this extent in their own language classes. Dr. Mark Warford (personal communication, April 23, 2011) at Buffalo State College in New York has developed an L2 Advocacy kit that includes the statements from ACTFL & NYSAFLT on TL use, as well as a bibliography on the issue and quotes from some leaders in our field. In addition, in the “So You Say” section of the November 2009 issue of the ACTFL journal, *The Language Educator*, several of our colleagues weighed in on how they keep the TL at 90% or more in the classroom. Many of their suggestions involved making connections with their students on many levels.

#### **4. Connecting with students**

One of *the* most important things we can do in our classroom is to connect with our students. These connections, once established, can endure long after the students have left the language course. Here are some examples of how other L2 teachers connect with their students.

**Ms. Kathy Shelton, Secondary French teacher, Columbus, OH:** I have them put a name card on their desk the very first day so I can call them all by name and integrate them immediately into conversations in the class. I also have them draw a picture on their name card of something they like so I can integrate that into the class. I make a name card for myself also, so I can include myself into the conversations. I find out what extra-curriculars they do so we can talk about that or I can go to their activities and then reference it in class the next day.

I always have current French music playing on my iPod when they enter the class and we talk about “Who is the singer? Do they like the music?” etc. It's amazing how many kids tell me they downloaded music from iTunes that I played in class. Or they find French songs and ask me to download them and play them for the class.

I laugh and joke a lot in French with them, even in French 1. I act excited to see them every day. I try to keep current on stars, so I can reference current singers or actors and we can discuss/compare our opinions of them.

We talk about what they did over the weekends, what movies they watched, did they go shopping etc., to let them know I'm interested in what they do. Probably the biggest thing is that I get a kick out of speaking French and they pick up on that the first day and most become enthusiastic about it. (K. D. Shelton, personal communication, July 23, 2011)

**Dr. Mark Warford, Associate Professor, SUNY Buffalo:** A good conversation is not just about producing the right form(s); it's about learning to express real opinions, intentions, joys, frustrations, enthusiasms, as best one can, given the overall level of proficiency of the student...that means asking questions that center on both the medium and the message.

Two metaphors have helped remind me of the importance of connecting to students through the L2: the architect and the counselor. With regard to the former, we need to think about the language that we use and the extent to which it scaffolds acquisition and opens spaces to shine some light on what the students are learning. The counselor sets a comfortable, humane atmosphere of unconditional acceptance. For me, being a good architect and counselor in the LOTE classroom is quite a challenge when filtered through the L2, but it is the only way to really connect with students. (M. K. Warford, personal communication, July 20, 2011)

**Dr. Barbara Schmidt-Rinehart, Professor of Spanish, Ashland University, Ashland, OH.** I tell pre-service teachers to think of the teachers that influenced them the most and figure out/analyze “why”. Then—emulate them. A list of characteristics that I’ve taken away from my best teachers are: be approachable, be available, be accessible, make students feel important, show them respect, make them believe that they can learn and that you want them to, give them your time and attention, be friendly, interject humor whenever possible, be human, make mistakes (show them you are not perfect), let them make mistakes (show them you don’t expect them to be), be patient and kind. Most importantly, love what you are doing – it’s contagious! (B. Schmidt-Rinehart, personal communication, July 20, 2011)

**Dr. Jerry Evensky, Professor of Economics, Meredith Professor (to recognize and reward outstanding teaching), Syracuse University, New York.** 1) I make it clear in lots of ways that I really do care about them and their education and I’ll do my very best to give them an experience that will add value to their lives...I have organized the course so that with significant effort one can get an excellent education ... and they can see that in the care I put into the development of the ideas I’m trying to communicate. 2) I make it clear that I find what I’m talking about fascinating ... which I do... I tell them the first day: “This class is like a journey. It’s not an easy trip. There are lots of brambles and bushes, and some steep climbs and difficulty passages ... BUT ... every so often we get to vistas from which you can see the world in fascinating ways. You don’t get to the vistas and can’t appreciate the views if you don’t make the trip. Trust me, I’ve been over this path many times. I still find the views amazing. You do your job and I will show you a fascinating perspective on the world.” (J. Evensky, personal communication, August 3, 2011)

**Ms. Anne Scott, Lecturer of Spanish, Ohio University, Athens, OH.** I try to set up on the very first day the tenor of how they and I are building a relationship in this class and that they have as much to offer me as I to them. We are there together to co-construct our understanding of linguistics or language or whatever.

To that end, I try hard to look at every assignment and each lecture as a conversation. I think about this idea of conversation as I plan lessons, because a good question can become a memorable class that provides endless examples of the points being studied.

Finally, I think the last thing I try to share with students is that I am still a learner too. I have a LOT to learn about Spanish and English and linguistics (and life!) and that the joy in the study or pursuit of your interests is that there is always something to learn. There is no “finished.” And that hopefully they will love this language more for having been in this class too. (A. Scott, personal communication, August 26, 2011)

**Ms. Therese Sullivan Caccavale, K-12 Foreign Language Specialist, Holliston, MA Public Schools.** In my 36 years in education, I have found many things to be true, but the truest of these truths is that students in every grade level have an inherent need to connect with their teacher on more than an academic/professional level. If teachers are to be true role models for students, then teachers must teach children about more than a certain subject, and become life coaches through the discipline they have chosen to teach.

My teaching incorporates stories from life: stories I have experienced, and stories I have made up, just to communicate a point to my students. I invent stories about my family, embellishing here and there, and let my students get to know me as a person without asking them to open up to me. I open the door to the relationship, and one by one, even the most recalcitrant

eventually passes through. Once inside this relationship consisting of coaching, confidence-building and proficiency-oriented communication, they make themselves at home and settle down to the task of learning. Without ever speaking English, I am able to build a relationship of trust and encouragement that takes them far further down the road of life than would any aspect of French taught outside of this trusting relationship.

My stories become the context of my teaching, and through my stories, my students relate to me as a person and come to eagerly share stories of their own. Without ever, ever entering into the details of their personal lives, I let them know that I am there and will continue to be there for them through college and life, if they feel they need me. (T. Caccavale, personal communication, August 23, 2011)

**Mr. Barry Alcock, English to HS juniors and seniors; Southwestern City Schools/Southwestern Career Academy, Columbus, OH.** I spend a lot of time one on one with them – I eat with them, etc. The first day of class, I take data: “Tell me something I need to know about you that I will need to teach you well but that I wouldn’t find out under normal circumstances.” I have kids tell me amazing things that really do help me connect with them. I have them write a letter of application/apply for a job in my class— they have to tell me their good qualities and tell me about themselves. In high school, I have them write to an employer...they are all in career labs w/occupational goals. Also write their three goals: occupational, personal, and civic or in ten years, tell me about your life.

I ask for a narration of who they are as people, hold individual writers’ conferences, and then springboard from their information in the conferences. I ask them all kinds of questions and they usually answer with amazing stuff. (B. T. Alcock, personal communication, September 3, 2011)

## 5. Connecting with our own language learning experience

Because many of these colleagues' reflections on how they connect to their students are related to how this did or did not happen with them when they were language students, the next connection is to our own language learning experience. Think back for a moment to your initial and subsequent experiences as second language learners. Were these positive experiences? Negative ones? Mixed? Did they make you want to become a language teacher . . . or did you say to yourself, "I will *never* do that in *my* classroom..." In other words, does it matter what happened to us when we were learning a L2?

How each and every one of us learned our L2 *does* influence how we make connections to our own classrooms, our students, our teaching. Teachers *do* draw on their personal language learning experiences for practical knowledge on how to teach in their own classrooms (O'Toole, 2010). In other words, thinking about how we ourselves learned a language will have an influence on how we connect with our students and think about teaching them. A longitudinal study of preservice and, subsequently, inservice L2 teachers, aimed to identify what most influenced their thinking about language teaching and learning (LeLoup, 2005). Some of the questions participants had to answer in the study required them to think about their own language learning experiences, to identify the positives and the negatives, and then later to see if they were following through on how they thought *they* would teach (same, differently, etc.). Much research shows that we teach as we were taught (Britzman, 1991; Lortie, 1975). Is it possible to break this pattern? Findings indicated that the more these subjects reflected on just how they believed students learned language best, the more they were willing to be creative, to take the initiative to try new instructional techniques, and the less they were satisfied with just doing what they had always seen done in *their* classes when *they* were language students. These results offer some

justification for making that connection with your own language learning experience to the end of adapting classroom practice accordingly.

## **6. Connecting with the real world**

We need to connect the language we are teaching and learning to the world around us and our students. We must show them the relevance of learning this language. Why is this important to our students . . . and to us? Surely many FL teachers have had the proverbial question raised in class of “why do we need to know this?” Learning a L2 must be as compelling as learning any other subject in school. How can learning language X help students in their life, their job, their future? Our students want to know the practical application of the knowledge we teachers are asking them to absorb, and in today’s world those are legitimate questions. Perhaps in ESL classrooms the students are better able to see the relevance of learning English on a daily basis. Living and functioning optimally in the L2 culture is a wonderful motivator to learn the language and internalize the culture as much and as quickly as possible. As O’Toole (2009) argues, demonstrating to our students the relevance of the TL is key:

Relevance can be viewed in a variety of ways. Learners may wonder how Spanish relates to their own lives. Especially when they live in communities where they don't see or hear the language around them. You want to constantly seek out examples to share that might help them see that the world is larger than the town they live in. What about stories of graduates from their school that use the language? What about reading classified ads in local newspapers that seek bilingual employees? What about having them read an article in a newspaper from Spain that addresses the same topic addressed in their local newspaper? Show them how things they're learning in their Spanish class can support their learning in other classes (vocabulary, history, metric system, etc.).

Clearly, FL teachers must consider their particular circumstances and environment and then determine how best to make TL learning relevant to their own students.

## **7. Connecting with other cultures**

One major way to show the relevance of the FL we are teaching is to demonstrate how knowing this language facilitates connections to other cultures. Learning a L2 and studying the concomitant cultures related to it is a basic skill in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Connecting to other cultures in this global economy and world is necessary for a variety of reasons: e.g., people can travel all around the world with relative ease; people can work in the U.S. but connect to countries all over the globe in their job; linguists are needed by the government for myriad purposes. Thus it behooves us to embrace a polyglot status and abandon the monolingual stance of much of the United States population. It truly *is* a necessity. John Carlino, Executive Director of NYSAFLT, made this point well in his interview on June 7, 2011 with radio station WXXI (Crichton, 2011):

If you really want to be able to have a conversation with somebody, to understand their culture, to know where they're coming from, to be able to *connect* with them on their level, it's important to be able to speak their language and know something about their culture.

## **8. Connecting through the 5Cs**

Connecting through the 5Cs is advocated by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (2006). The first part of the Connections Standard stresses connecting to other disciplines. Knowing a L2 opens up all sorts of possibilities that are simply unavailable to monolinguals. One's access to information is exponentially greater the more language and/or languages one knows and can use.

The second part of the Connections Standard underscores a connection to viewpoints unavailable to us here in the U.S. if we do not know another language. If you want to know what people in Uruguay think of a particular event in the US, then you need to read about it in *El Observador* de Montevideo and not in your local newspaper or even the *New York Times*. If you want the French perspective on the scandal of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, you need to be able to read articles about this topic in *Le Monde* and/or watch *TVI* on the Internet. Often our students are amazed to discover that the rest of the world does not think like they do . . . or does not consider us in the same light as we see ourselves. Giving our students access to viewpoints in the TL cultures they are studying can be a real eye-opener and can greatly expand their horizons.

### **9. Connecting to the 3Ps: products, practices, and perspectives of the TL culture.**

Language study devoid of a concomitant exploration of the TL culture is simply incomplete. Many FL teachers have had the following experience: you are reading something in the TL, or listening to a TL conversation, and you understand every single word, but you have absolutely NO idea what is going on. This happens due to a lack of cultural knowledge and base for total comprehension. That cultural knowledge must include an examination of the 3Ps: TL products (or tangible items), TL practices (or behaviors), and perspectives that provide an insight into the *why* behind the first 2Ps.

In addition, we need to make connections whenever possible between L1 culture (C1) and L2 culture (C2) for and with students. If we concentrate on highlighting those connections that show similarities, rather than stark differences, then our students can better understand the perspectives behind a C2 product or practice.

### **Conclusion**

We have explored nine different kinds of connections that enrich our professional lives, our knowledge, our foundations of teaching, our relationships with students, and our grounding in the target languages we teach. These connections moderate the challenges and amplify the opportunities present in our language classes. Making these connections—connecting the dots—is a vital process we need to engage in on a regular basis in order to optimize our teaching and maximize our students’ learning.

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## Theatrically-Inspired Activities for the L2 Classroom

Christy Frembes Boise

As foreign language teachers, we realize the importance of using a multitude of strategies to engage our students, incorporating all of Gardner's (2006) multiple intelligences in classroom activities thereby allowing us to accommodate various learning styles. Thanks to a scholarship awarded to me in July 2011 by the French Embassy for the *Stage de Courte Durée* in Strasbourg, France, along with a travel grant from NYSAFLT, I have added a new strategy to engage my French students: theatrical activities.

My favorite workshop during my *stage* in Strasbourg was called *Activités théâtrales pour la classe de FLE*, conducted by Christian Olivier (his book of these activities will be published in the near future). In addition to his specialization in the learning of foreign languages, Olivier is an actor, librettist and director. For this workshop he transformed several theatrical techniques used by actors into practical ideas for the foreign language classroom—they are surprisingly simple to incorporate into everyday introductory language lessons. Since the inspiration for these activities came from exercises that actors' use to warm-up, they naturally engage students who have a tendency toward the kinesthetic, verbal and visual intelligences, adding interest and diversity to basic everyday activities, and they are well-suited to the full-immersion classroom.

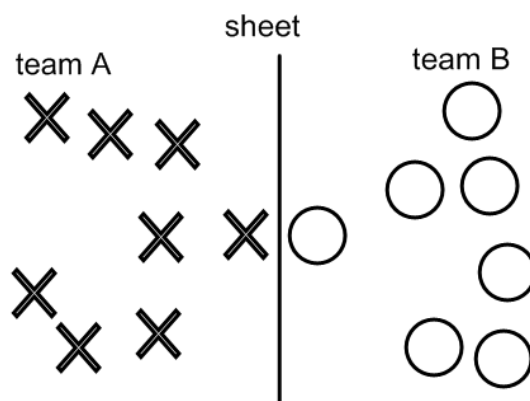
### Memory game

This activity is applicable during the very first hours of instruction. Have the students stand in a circle. Students take turns introducing themselves by their first name and saying something they like. The teacher models the instructions in the target language. For example: « *Je m'appelle Christy et j'aime la crème caramel. » The next student in the circle introduces*

the first student, and then himself or herself: « *Elle s'appelle Christy et elle aime la crème caramel. Je m'appelle Billy et j'aime les bananes. » If students do not pick up on the pattern of using the initial sound of their names to choose something they like, allow them to continue rather than pointing out their oversight, which might discourage them from participating in the future. You may wish to allow students to refer to their notes or other resources before beginning in order for them to find something they like that begins with the same sound as their names. The game is complete when the first person is able to name all the other students and what they like. This game is appealing to students with strong interpersonal and verbal skills. Try it during the first days of class while you and the students are getting to know each another.*

### Peek-a-boo game

This activity, ideal for the first days of class, is a review of “*C’est* (It’s) + name”. Students form two groups. Each team sits on the floor on opposite sides of a large sheet or blanket, held vertically by two volunteers. Each team should be completely concealed from the other team. Each team picks one actor to secretly move to the front of the group, this person remains crouched down directly behind the sheet. The situation looks like this:



The volunteers lower the sheet and the two opponents race to identify the other. The first person to correctly name the opponent (“*C’est Sarah*”) wins the round. The losing player then must join the other team. Play continues in this fashion until there is only one team remaining. This game is highly kinesthetic. It also incorporates verbal, visual and interpersonal aspects.

### **Teamwork!**

This activity provides students with practice counting in the target language. The goal of this game is to count to 21. Sounds easy, right? Read on! Students stand in a circle, and then one member of the group begins counting in the target language by stating “1.” Another student says “2,” and so on. Students may participate as many times as they wish, but they may not say two numbers in a row, and when more than one student speaks at a time, the game restarts at 1. Students may not use movements of any kind to communicate who will speak next. Before you know it, the class has repeated lower numbers a dozen times. This activity is such fun; students don’t even realize how hard they are practicing their numbers! This also fosters the development of interpersonal skills. To successfully complete the game, students must become keen observers of non-verbal aspects of communication, such as facial expressions, aiding students to gain a sense of the appropriate time to speak and to let others speak. A simple adaptation of this game could be reciting the alphabet or naming the months of the year.

### **Rapid-fire Questioning**

For practice asking and answering questions, try this. In groups of four, one student must answer all questions asked by three other group members. Two of the group members ask simple personal questions such as « *Comment t’appelles-tu? Quel âge as-tu? Où habites-tu? Quelle est ta couleur préférée?* » The final group member asks simple mathematical questions using only numbers from 1 to 9 and simple operations such as 2+2, etc. All three questioners in

the group ask their questions at the same time, repeating their questions until the other student answers them. When their original question is answered, they then ask a different question. The player who is bombarded with questions must try to remain calm and concentrate on one question at a time, answering as quickly as possible before moving on to another question. This activity favors students with strong kinesthetic, interpersonal, mathematical/logical and verbal intelligences. It also gives them practice in maintaining composure despite multiple demands for their attention. This activity is uproariously fun and each member gets plenty of practice.

### **Telephone game**

This imaginary telephone game played in groups of five offers another avenue for practice asking and answering questions. Student A stands in the center with the other four students forming a square around Student A. Student B makes a ringing sound pretending to call Student A. The conversation proceeds as follows:

Student A answers the phone: « *Allô.* » Student B responds and asks Student A a simple question; e.g., « *Bonjour, c'est Jimmy. Quel âge as-tu?* » Before Student A has the opportunity to answer, Student C interrupts and asks Student A another simple question; e.g., « *Bonjour, c'est Melissa. Quelle est la date de ton anniversaire?* » Before Student A can answer, Student D does the same as Students B and C, asking Student A yet another simple question, and then, before Student A can answer, Student E does the same as B, C, and D, asking Student A a fourth simple question. Before Student A answers Student E's question, Student B calls back Student A and says, « *Alors?* ». Student A must then answer Student B's original question. Student C then calls back Student A and says, « *Alors?* ». This continues until Student A has answered (or tried to answer) all the questions.

The element of challenge in this activity comes when Student A must try to remember all the questions asked by the other group members and the order in which they were asked. The element of chaos in this game helps to create an exciting challenge while repeating basic questions.

Each of these theatrical activities presents students with a great amount of repetition, leading them toward proficiency with the target language in simple yet meaningful and relevant contexts, and they can easily be adapted for higher-level classes. The inspiration for these activities came from exercises that actors use to warm-up; they naturally provide opportunities for students to move around, improve their social skills, and practice speaking and listening in the target language. Children learn through play—these games allow students to be completely immersed in the language while having fun with their classmates. These activities are kid-tested to help you create a lively place for stimulating, real-life interactions in the target language. My own students beg to play them over and over again!

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### **Additional Resources**

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To see videos of some of these activities in practice, go to: <http://theatre-fle.blogspot.com/>

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## **Lifelong Learning...For Real!**

Roseann D. Lorefice

As teachers, when we teach our classes and share our love of language with our students, we continually hope that we are imbuing them with a lifelong love of the language, of the people who speak it, and of their respective cultures. Recently I had the opportunity to put this philosophy into practice in the most pleasant and rewarding of experiences.

I have been involved in a variety of language-related experiences since retiring, one of the most notable and rewarding being facilitating an adult conversation group that meets monthly at our local library in Manlius, N.Y. It is an informal evening get-together, varying in attendance from six to ten persons. I cannot praise these adults enough for their dedication in faithfully coming to our little group and speaking French. Despite a range of abilities from beginner to advanced, there is no denying that they have maintained their interest in speaking the language since first being introduced to it during their high school and college years. Some of them travel, some enjoy a French heritage, and some were potential French majors as college students. Let us add to this an interesting spark of coincidence. One of the group members had a niece studying French in a neighboring school district at Marcellus High. She thought it would be fun to plan a joint activity with her and her fellow students, and so we embarked on a cross-generational adventure!

After much preparation and coordination with Robin Brown and Jessica Cuello, the French teachers at Marcellus High, our idea became a reality. Students and adults were asked for input and willingly participated, offering valuable suggestions throughout the organizational phase.

We planned well in advance. Our theme revolved around *la cuisine* and, with the Christmas holidays approaching, we blended that theme with festive desserts to celebrate the season. In monthly scheduled meetings before our *rendezvous* with the students, the adult group studiously reviewed food vocabulary and commands to be able to communicate and interact with the students—since we actually intended to bake together. Likewise, the Marcellus teachers conscientiously reviewed similar topics with their students. In an attempt to make the event less intimidating and more familiar, several of the adults and some of the students “met” each other via Skype prior to the big day.

The event took place a few weeks before Christmas in the kitchen of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Marcellus, N.Y. This church was willing to open its doors—and ovens!—to ten adults and twelve students intent on having fun, making desserts, sampling them, exchanging gifts and singing Christmas carols, all while speaking French. The students had chosen the recipes: *gâteau au chocolat*, *crêpes*, and *Madeleines*. All recipes were written in French and the two groups familiarized themselves with both the language and the recipes.

Needless to say, the evening celebration was a rousing success. Mixed teams of adults and students read recipes, obtained and measured ingredients and baked their respective dessert. While waiting, the singing and giggles over gift exchanges could be loudly heard, all in French. The final sampling of desserts proved to be the *coup de grâce*! At the conclusion of all the planned activities, both groups were reluctant to leave the premises, having made friends across the generations. Unspoken, but in the minds of all as we departed, was the thought, “We must do this again.”

In retrospect, I can't help feeling that this was one of the most memorable experiences of my teaching career. It was lifelong learning clearly defined. What great role models these adults were for the students who saw firsthand that both learning and using another language do not stop at the classroom door or at a certain age. Everyone was able to observe effortlessly the use of the language for real communication outside of the confines of the classroom walls, in their own community.

For the teachers, it was a seamless way to address ACTFL standards, and in particular, the C of Communities. This activity allowed the students to use the language both within and beyond the school setting as well as show evidence of becoming life-long learners while using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

The little Madeleine cakes, those renowned confections of Proustian fame, best exemplify our event. When Proust (1992) dipped his *Madeleine* into a steaming cup of tea, the *Madeleine* evoked fond childhood memories long forgotten. Perhaps the little *Madeleine* cakes will similarly evoke for all our participants memories of a pleasantly shared, multigenerational and linguistic event, a tangible memory of a truly wonderful evening for all.

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In the kitchen of St. John's Episcopal Church in Marcellus, N.Y., French students from Marcellus High School and adults from a Manlius, N.Y. French conversational group work together to bake holiday desserts.



While waiting for their desserts to bake, both adults and students joined in the singing of French Christmas carols.



Left: Mary Jane BeVard, Sarah Francesconi and Heather Hanlon discuss the recipes with Marcellus French teacher, Robin Brown.



The multi-generational finale! After sampling desserts, singing carols and exchanging gifts, the adults and students posed to mark the occasion.

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Roseann D. Lorefice is a veteran of foreign language teaching, having taught in middle school, high school and college settings. Currently an adjunct at SUNY Cortland, she supervises student teachers and continues to be an advocate on the local and state levels for foreign language learning. A former assistant director of NYSAFLT, a regional director, a chair of numerous NYSAFLT committees, a recipient of the President's Service Award, and a presenter at conferences, she avows that language is, and continues to play, an important role in her life.

## **Matching Assessment with Our Expectations: A Summary of the 2012 NYSAFLT Colloquium**

Michael Mitchell

The NYSAFLT Spring Colloquium took place from Friday, April 27 through Sunday, April 29, 2011 at the Riverwalk Hotel and Conference Center in Binghamton, NY. This annual event was kicked off this year on Thursday the 26th with an event at Ithaca High School presented in collaboration with the Cornell University Language Resource Center. Paul Sandrock, Associate Director of Professional Development at ACTFL and keynote speaker for this year's Colloquium, lead a discussion there entitled, *Clarifying Our Expectations for Language Learning: Looking through the Lens of Performance Assessment*. On Friday, in Binghamton, Mr. Sandrock offered a pre-conference workshop on how we can reflect our expectations for language learning in our classroom assessment. He then officially commenced the 2012 NYSAFLT Spring Colloquium with his keynote address, *Are We on the Same Page? Matching Assessment with Our Expectations*.

The conference continued on Saturday with a panel discussion centered on our conference theme, *Expectations for Language Learning: Looking through the Lens of Assessment*. Our invited guests and experts, Jennifer Eddy, Ph.D. (Queens College – CUNY), Abbe Guillet (C. W. Baker High School), Albert Martino (College of St. Rose), and Paul Sandrock (ACTFL), shared their various perspectives on assessment and got us thinking about how recent trends in education, such as the Common Core and New York State's newly adopted Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), impact our expectations for language learning and assessment. The conference participants were split into three groups. Led by our panelists, three sub-topics were discussed regarding the status of assessment in New York State,

the articulation of performance-based assessment, and the impact of the Common Core on assessment. A summary and highlights of the three discussions follow.

### **Discussion Group #1**

**What is the status of Performance-Based Assessment in NYS?** Our first group examined three areas regarding performance-based assessment in NYS. First, they discussed the status of the method of assessment. Then they pondered whether or not there had been an impact as a result of the elimination of the Second Language Proficiency (SLP) and Comprehensive Regents Exams in LOTE. Finally, they drafted solutions to meet these challenges while maintaining strong performance-based assessments.

While discussing how school districts are replacing the SLP and Regents, the participants in Group #1 indicated that schools were taking a variety of approaches to administer LOTE exams for Checkpoints A and B. Consortia have been established across the state which facilitate the creation of exams that mirror the original SLP and Regents. This includes the Foreign Language Association of Chairpersons and Supervisors (FLACS) which grew to more than eighty (80) participating school districts across Long Island as well as other parts of New York State. Participants also gave examples of school districts using FLACS for their Checkpoint B exam, while using a previous Checkpoint A exam. There have also been areas where teachers were starting from scratch and writing new exams all on their own. This last example raised concern, as the integrity of the exams could be in question. One case was noted where a school offered only two speaking situations on their Checkpoint A exam as opposed to four.

Another challenge pertaining to assessment that was discussed was how to effectively inform parents about changes to LOTE assessment in New York State. Since the State is no longer printing exams for LOTE, some parents believe that there are no such exams or they are

not necessary. Solutions to these issues included getting parents involved and into our classrooms, posting information on district, department, and class websites, creating parent support groups, and holding student performances to highlight the work we do.

Finally, many in the first discussion group expressed a concern that they were not trained test writers and, without proper field testing, risked creating exams that were not valid and reliable. It was stated that the use of old test items could make the exam uninteresting and less culturally current. There was concern that the data demands of the State may lead to creating tests that are less performance-based.

The group concluded by outlining several areas critical in keeping LOTE assessment solid. They emphasized the use of proficiency- and performance-based assessments. They discussed working with their departments to develop more interpersonal and presentational tasks. They highlighted the importance of having their concerns heard across the State. All were in agreement regarding the importance of encouraging our fellow teachers to join NYSAFLT.

## **Discussion Group #2**

**How can we articulate Performance-Based Assessment K-16?** Most of the discussion in the second discussion group centered around the Collaborative Articulation and Assessment Project (CAAP). This project was initiated in 1992 by the Ohio State University, Columbus State Community College, and Columbus Public Schools, with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. The purpose of this project was to seamlessly move high school foreign language students to college while placing them into the appropriate level. This four-level program made use of assessment that gave the instructor and students valid information regarding their level of performance. More information regarding this project is available in the Colloquium section of the NYSAFLT website.

The participants examined the current concern that comes with inconsistent exams at Checkpoints A and B. There was a question as to whether or not colleges would look at our exams in the same manner when considering the college level placement of a language student. The group members weighed in on whether or not high schools should be collaborating with colleges in a manner similar to that of CAAP to establish trust and better articulation regarding a student's level of proficiency.

It was suggested that NYSAFLT collaborate with ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) to help inform non-LOTE administrators of the benefits of language learning.

### **Discussion Group #3**

**What might be the impact of the Common Core Standards to the LOTE curriculum and to Performance-Based-Assessment?** The third group examined whether or not the implementation of the Common Core standards had impacted LOTE curriculum and assessment as well as how it might have an impact in the future. As was common with all three of the groups, dissemination of information and guidance about the present and future of the Common Core had been inconsistent. Members expressed that the only sound guidance had been provided by NYSAFLT.

Recently, school districts were told by NYSED that teachers should create one lesson this year that made use of the Common Core standards. Based on the input from this group's participants, creation of these lessons has been very inconsistent: some in the group had created lessons, some had not, some were told of the task and others never knew that they were to create such a lesson. For those who had received information about the Common Core, it was still unclear as to how one is to align lessons to the standards for ELA. Others were confused as to

why LOTE was categorized under “Technical Subjects.” School administrators are attempting to start the process of aligning LOTE with the Common Core, yet they are still lacking appropriate guidance from NYSED.

When all of this uncertainty is combined with the requirements of APPR, teachers are fearful of losing their jobs. Some feel, when reading the Common Core standards for ELA, that LOTE fits well with those standards; however, as information is being disseminated regarding the creation of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), it is unclear if Common Core standards are compatible with these objectives. With administrators being equally concerned about their job stability, they have been proactive in the implementation of the Common Core. Their haste to accommodate the State might be at the expense of a quality implementation. It is up to us to help the administrators. As we see how LOTE fits with the Common Core, we are then in the best position to explain this connection to our administrators to guide them and support LOTE.

Throughout all discussion during the Colloquium, the need for teacher participation in key areas of decision-making became critically apparent. We need to toot our own horns at a grassroots level. Instead of being victims, it is time to take the bull by the horns and show others how LOTE assessment needs to look. We know change never works when coming from above. Teachers need to be informed in order to advocate for themselves.

NYSAFLT has the collective knowledge, wisdom, and ability to articulate the appropriate message regarding how teacher and student performance is best assessed. In this point of transition, our strength can keep us focused as we continue to deliver expedient information to the people we serve. Our membership needs to grow. We need more of you at these round table discussions to weigh in and advocate. Encourage your colleagues to join or remain as members of NYSAFLT.

As the groups were reporting back to the Colloquium participants, one thing became clear. It is not the education department, nor the government of the state of New York that is devising solutions for how to meet the standards of the Common Core, while also being accountable to APPR. It is members of NYSAFLT, volunteering their time away from home and family, who need to continue sending the message to those crafting policy and articulating appropriate performance-based assessment in New York State. It is, and will continue to be, members of NYSAFLT advocating for what we have believed all along: LOTE is Core!

Please visit the NYSAFLT website Colloquium page (<http://www.nysaflt.org/conferences/colloquium>) where you will find the following “Key Follow-up Documents”:

- iTunes videos of both the keynote presentation and the panel presentation
- PDF of the keynote presentation
- PDF of assessment workshop
- PDF of keynote presentation handout
- PDF of pre-conference handout
- Details on the Cooperative Articulation and Assessment Project (CAAP)
- Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning. This project provides wonderful details for teacher effectiveness and guiding documents for administrators evaluating language teachers.

**See you at next year’s Colloquium!**

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Mike Mitchell is a Spanish teacher at Bethlehem High School in Delmar, a suburb of Albany. In addition to teaching Spanish, Mike is a public education advocate.

Mike began his teaching career in 2002 at Islip Middle School on Long Island. He moved to the Albany, NY area in 2004 and now teaches Spanish in the Bethlehem Central Lab School. He has also taught Spanish to undergraduate students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Outside of the classroom, Mike is a past president of Capital Organization of Language Teachers (COLT) and served on the board of directors for NYSAFLT. In both of these capacities, he advocates for the study of world languages as a core subject at all levels including the elementary and college levels.

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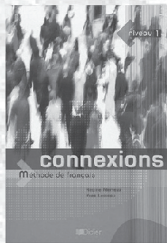
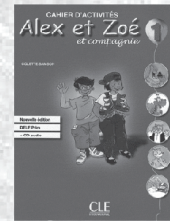
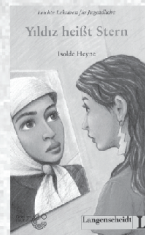
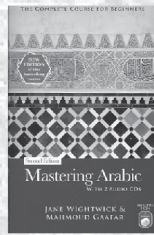
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