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Letter from the Editors

Dear Colleagues,

We are truly honored to be your Co-editors of the Language Association Journal and would like you to join us in celebrating the end of the 2022 year with a spectacular new issue of the Journal. We have truly enjoyed learning about the ever evolving experiences you each have had as world language educators and thank you for sharing your stories and experiences with us in consideration of being accepted into this year’s fall issue.

We continued to receive a large number of article submissions for this issue. Some of these submissions appear in this issue, while others will appear in our spring issue. There is still time to submit an article for the spring issue for anyone interested in contributing to the Journal.

We have worked diligently with our Editorial Board and authors to create this Fall issue which consists of 8 articles. These include teacher-to-teacher articles, reports and scholarly articles. We would like to thank the Editorial Board for volunteering their time and sharing their knowledge and feedback throughout the revision process. We would also like to thank everyone who submitted an article for consideration as well as the authors for striving to give back to the world language community and help us all grow as educators by writing and researching effective and engaging instructional methods that can be applied across the proficiency levels within both modern and classical languages.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Executive Committee and Staff as well as the Board of Directors for entrusting this publication to us. We will continue to work diligently on this publication so that we can provide support for educators and advocate for world language education. We wish you all a very happy and healthy new year!

Thank you,
TinaMarie and Sarah
TinaMarie Friscia earned her BA in French Language and Literature and MAT in French, both from SUNY Stony Brook. She holds certifications in teaching French and Italian both at the secondary and elementary levels. She is the Secretary on the Executive Board of LILT and is also a member of NYSAFLT, AATF, AATI, ACTFL and NECTFL. She currently teaches French in Three Village CSD. Tina is also a member of the NYSED Leadership Council and was a member of the NYS World Language Standards Review Committee for the Long Island region.

Dr. Sarah Jourdain is Director of World Language Teacher Preparation and Chair of the Department of Languages & Cultural Studies at Stony Brook University. She has been involved in World Language Teaching and World Language Teacher Preparation for over three decades. She has served in numerous organizations including ACTFL, NECTFL, AATF, LILT and NYSAFLT and has published articles in Foreign Language Annals, The French Review, The Modern Language Journal, and NECTFL Review, among others.
Call for Papers

The Language Association Journal is the official peer-reviewed journal of the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers (NYSAFLT). The audience for this journal includes world language educators at all levels, teacher educators, administrators, and others who are interested in world language education. To address the diverse interests, focuses, and needs of this audience, each issue of the Language Association Journal allows for three submission types—scholarly articles, reports, and teacher-to-teacher articles—across multiple categories that are organized by key words, including, but not limited to: advocacy, assessment, culture, curriculum, FLES, instruction, issues in the profession, language development, literacy development, methods, policy, professional development, teacher preparation, technology. While previously the journal was thematic, we now welcome submissions from a range of topics for each edition. The Language Association Journal is published two times per year.

Submission Guidelines

● Publication Status
  o Your manuscript must not be previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere.

● Language
  o Write your manuscript in English.
  o You may include examples written in languages other than English. Italicize these and include the English translation.

● Content
  o Your manuscript may be a scholarly article, a report, or a teacher-to-teacher article.
  o Graphic content such as tables, charts, and photographs, should enhance your written content.
  o Keyword categories: advocacy, assessment, culture, curriculum, FLES, instruction, issues in the profession, language development, literacy development, methods, policy, professional development, teacher preparation, technology.
  o Present content that is appropriate for the audience of the Language Association Journal; that is accurate, timely and relevant; that extends or deepens what is currently known on the topic; that represents innovation or new ways of thinking; and that bridges theory and practice.

● Length
  o Limit scholarly articles to no more than 8,000 words.
  o Limit reports to no more than 5,000 words.
  o Limit teacher-to-teacher articles to no more than 3,000 words.

● Writing and Style
  o Write in an active voice and with language that can be understood by all audiences of this journal. Define terms that may be unfamiliar to readers.
Include only and all works cited in the reference section.

- Replace all references that would reveal your identity in the manuscript with generic terms such as *Author X* or *School X*.
- Proof-read your manuscript to ensure that it is error free.

**Technical Considerations**

- Prepare the manuscript in a word document (.doc or .docx) using Times New Roman font size 12, double-spaced.
- Assure that any external links included or hyperlinked in the manuscript are active at the time of submission.
- Indicate the placement of any graphics (e.g., charts, tables, illustrations, student work) or photographs, within the word document. (You will submit these in separate files.)
- Remove any evidence of tracked changes that were used in the writing of the manuscript.

**Permissions**

- Photographs
  - Your photographs must have high resolution and in a standard file format (e.g., .jpeg) and be the property of the author.
  - Obtain written consent for publication from anyone recognizable in your photographs. (You will submit this in a separate file.)
- Graphics
  - Obtain written consent for any graphics (e.g., charts, tables, illustrations, student work) that are not your own or that are not copyright free. (You will submit this in a separate file.)

**Manuscript Submission Guidelines**

- Submit your manuscript and any additional files (e.g., graphics, photographs, consent forms) that have been prepared according to the above guidelines through the submission form on the NYSAFLT webpage.
- In your manuscript submission, provide a brief biography to include at the end of your article or report if it is published.
- Upon receipt of your manuscript submission, the Editor will send you an acknowledgement email and an approximate timeline for review of your submission.

**Manuscript Review**

- After the Editor has received your manuscript and completed on-line information form, he or she will do an initial review to assure that your submission abides by the stated guidelines.
- If the submission abides by the guidelines, the Editor will forward the manuscripts to one or two members of the Editorial Board for anonymous evaluation and publishing recommendation. If the submission does not abide by the guidelines, the Editor will communicate this information to you.
- When all reviews are returned to the Editor from the Editorial Board, the Editor will make the final decision regarding the manuscript’s publication and will notify you about the submission’s status.
- All manuscripts accepted for publication are subject to editing.
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Welcome from the Executive Director of NYSAFLT
Michael T. Mitchell

Hello NYSAFLT! I’m honored to write this introduction as I am approaching six months on the job as your Executive Director. I’m still finding my way and trying to fill John Carlino’s very big shoes. However, I’m very thankful for his dedication, organizational skills and love for NYSAFLT as he has left us in very good hands. Will Anderson, Dominic Stanz and the Executive Committee are to be commended for taking the reins back in January to keep the ship afloat. As “just” a member of NYSAFLT from January through June, it felt like NYSAFLT had not missed a beat. John would be so proud.

In addition to being a full time Spanish Teacher at Bethlehem Central High School and active leader in my local and state Union, I have been a member of NYSAFLT for just over 20 years. Had my methods instructor, Elaine Margarita, not suggested that I immediately get involved in LILT and NYSAFLT, the connection to my NYSA-fam, my access to high quality professional development and use of my voice to advocate for our profession would have started much later in my career.

As I look at NYSAFLT from this new vantage point, I realize that, together, we have lots to do. We have revised standards. I’m thankful for our partnership with NYSED OBEWL and our collaborative work to educate our members and begin to roll things out. At the same time, we are hearing of reduced World Language offerings in schools as well as a shortage of World Language educators entering the profession. This is why we need your help on our Public Advocacy Committee to continue to remind folks of the importance of World Languages and Cultures. In addition, there are voices that are not being heard and potential leaders that have not been tapped. If you have not seen the efforts of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, I encourage you to do so and get involved.

Just as someone tapped me on the shoulder years ago and suggested that I join NYSAFLT, you can do the same. Data tells us that when our students are connected to their school, involved in music, sports or other extracurricular activities, they have more interest in their school and perform better academically. The same is true for educators. NYSAFLT is a means of connecting you, involving you and giving you a voice in your profession. I can’t tell you how pleased I am to be in this leadership role.

I can’t wait to see what NYSAFLT does next!
Moving the World Language Department Toward Proficiency

Elcie Douce, Ed.D.

Abstract: Adopting the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages has compelled World Language departments throughout New York State to delve into their curriculum and practices and shift from a traditional way of teaching to a proficiency-based approach. That shift, even with all the support from the State, can sometimes be a challenge for many reasons. In addition, the help needed to implement the change may be nonexistent due to district constraints. It is also essential to add the need to educate administrators, parents, students, and the entire school community about these significant changes. This article offers World Language Department Heads/Chairs/Directors a step-by-step approach to support and lead the department into the implementation of the new standards. It also explores ways to encourage teachers to help students communicate effectively in all three modes and move forward on the proficiency ladder.

Keywords: World language standards, proficiency-based teaching, curriculum alignment

In the past two years, we have faced many unexpected changes, such as moving overnight from face-to-face to online or hybrid teaching and adjusting our teaching practices to meet our learners' virtual learning needs. Nevertheless, we needed to find a way to improve our program and align it to the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages while constantly adjusting to our new teaching environment. Even with all the support provided by the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL), that shift remains a daunting task for many districts. The adopted NYS Learning Standards for World Languages (2021), which aligns with the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning, will be implemented in September 2023 according to the State timeline (Figure 1). Consequently, the adoption of the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages compels us to delve into our program, our curriculum, and practices to plan for the implementation and support our teachers in meeting the needs of our diverse language learners. The revised standards also urge language teachers to expose students to the best learning experience possible and prepare them for the future while fulfilling the State requirements. The focus is on helping language learners build language proficiency in the three modes of communication (Interpretive, Interpersonal and Presentational) and gaining a deep understanding of the target language Cultures, which will help those learners develop their intercultural competence. We, as language leaders, play a critical role in moving our department forward to implement the revised standards and help teachers move from a traditional teaching method to a proficiency-based approach. This process can be challenging, and many may need assistance deciding where to start the implementation process. This article provides a step-by-step procedure for language leaders on how to go about making the shift and facilitating the journey for themselves.
and their teams.

*Figure 1: Implementation Timeline for the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages. ACTFL High-leverage Teaching Practices*

The implementation of the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages is divided into three phases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I - Raising Awareness and Building Capacity Adoption – Aug. 2023</td>
<td>Roll-out and building awareness of the revised standards and timeline for implementation; professional learning opportunities to prepare schools to transition to the revised standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II – Gradual Implementation and Building Capacity Sept. 2023 – Aug. 2028</td>
<td>Focus on curriculum development, resource acquisition, professional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III – Full Implementation and Sustainability Sept. 2028 and on</td>
<td>All P-12 World Language courses will be aligned with NYS Learning Standards for World Languages (as renamed from LOTE); New York State Seal of Biliteracy programs will be aligned with the revised standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implementation Timeline**

Districts with secondary (middle and high school) world language programs may implement the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages (2021) *as early as they would like*, however, all districts must implement these revised standards by no later than indicated by the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation of the revised standards (course curricula, instruction, and assessments aligned to the revise standards) must occur by no later than:</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 2023</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 2024</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 2025</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 2026</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 2027</td>
<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1, 2028</td>
<td>12th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Retrieved from: [http://www.nysed.gov/world-languages/standards-and-guidelines](http://www.nysed.gov/world-languages/standards-and-guidelines)*
There are seven essential steps in moving the World Language department toward proficiency. As language leaders, these seven steps can help us make the shift and start the implementation of the standards. This is an iterative process to be assessed and adjusted according to the department's needs as we move forward.

1) Educate yourself

In 2021, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages, aligned with the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages. To facilitate the implementation in September 2023, the OBEWL has been working diligently to support World Language leaders and teachers throughout the State. The OBEWL has developed a lot of webinars and workshops, which are available on its website. They created many resources using apps such as Wakelet and social media such as Facebook. It is essential for language leaders and department heads to take the time to:

a) Learn about the shift in language teaching.
b) Understand the underlying difference between Proficiency and Performance and what it entails to teach for proficiency.
c) Learn about the Language Functions, the Performance Indicators, and the Can-Do Statements at each proficiency level.
d) Learn how to create a Thematic Unit with the end goal in mind and design a lesson using authentic resources.
e) Attend conferences and workshops regularly to develop a solid understanding of these theories, skills, and practices.

The NYS World Language office has posted its past workshops on its website and a facilitation guide (Interpretive Mode Facilitation Guide) for almost all the workshops which can be watched and processed individually and as a department to facilitate the transition. It is vital to take time from our busy schedules to attend and educate ourselves and take advantage of the workshops and resources available. As a language liaison, department head, chair, supervisor, or director, our department relies on us to provide ongoing support and Professional Learning sessions. Therefore, educate yourself to support them in making the shift.

2) Understand the change process

Change is always a perplexing process. Change often presents many challenges to leaders who try to meet program goals. Especially after focusing language instruction on topical vocabulary lists and forms for so long, shifting to a proficiency-based
approach can lead the team through a series of emotions to manage the change, such as shock, denial, frustration, and depression, as described by Kubler-Ross in the change process curve (Figure 2). As Kubler-Ross explained, the change process is not linear, which means only some people are processing the change the same way in the department. However, as language leaders, we must put ourselves in our teachers’ shoes and be ready to lead them through the different stages of change. We do so by using clear communication and a realistic action plan to avoid frustration. Currently, most teachers are past the shock stage if they stay abreast of what is happening in the field and are involved with a professional language organization.

Figure 2: The Kubler-Ross Change Curve

![The Kübler-Ross change curve](https://blog.commlabindia.com/elearning-design/convert-ilt-elearning-manage-change)

Nevertheless, some might still be in the denial stage, which requires you to inform them that the shift is fundamental and the deadline to implement the Standards is almost upon them. Some might be at the frustration stage because they need help to understand all the jargon associated with the shift and to know how to process it. They need a leader who understands where they currently are and can provide the appropriate support to process and understand the underpinnings of proficiency-based instruction. Some teachers might still be reluctant to shift their practices and resist the shift for many other reasons. Be patient, and keep emphasizing the importance of moving toward a proficiency-based approach to teaching, and the significance of equipping students with the language skills they need to function in the 21st century.

First, help them understand the essential characteristics of 21st-century language learners and how they learn and process information (Figure 3). Students must use the language, not just memorize vocabulary and grammar rules. Consequently, our programs should reflect the
characteristics of today's classroom based on the [ACTFL 21st Century Skills Map](Figure 4). It is an approach based on real-world tasks that enable students to use the language in authentic situations. It emphasizes what learners can do with the language, not just what they can memorize ([World-Readiness Standards Overview](World-Readiness Standards Overview)). Remind those teachers that the shift will soon be a state requirement. Help them experiment with some proficiency-based strategies ([High-Leverage teaching Practices](High-Leverage teaching Practices)), and support and encourage them through the process to build their confidence. Also, be ready to share your knowledge and motivate them to move to the decision and integration stage.

Figure 3: Characteristics of a 21st-century learner

![The 21st C Learner is . . .](image-url)

3) Buy into the Change

The best way to get teachers to buy into the change is to ensure they understand the “Why” for the shift, the reason for the move toward proficiency. It is easy to explain because we have newly revised standards in effect soon. Therefore, the department needs to understand why proficiency teaching is a must. How many times have we met people who said they had studied language during their whole secondary school years, but all they know is "Bonjour," "Buenos días," or "Buongiorno"? Why is that? Why can't they begin or maintain a basic conversation in the language they have spent years studying? We have spent so much time planning those lessons and have worked hard to teach those topics, and students get good grades; why can't they still produce the language after so many years? That is a worthwhile discussion that all world language department heads should have with their team. Teachers need help shifting their practice to create an environment where students can use the language in context and in real-world situations, as they will do in their daily lives to build proficiency. They need to understand how Second Language Acquisition works and what it means to teach for Communication (VanPatten, 2017). Once teachers understand the purpose of this work, they will be more inclined to take the necessary steps toward change. With all the changes happening in the State to help the world language department make the shift, it should be easier now to get your school leaders and board members to buy into the change.

a) Share the OBEWL Resources for Administrators with your principal and curriculum supervisor (Part 1 and Part 2) to get their support in transitioning to the revised Standards.
b) Post updates on your school's bulletin boards, and share information with the community to help them understand the need to teach and help students move up the proficiency ladder (Standard 1; Standard 2; Standard 3 at a glance).

Once the administrators and the community are informed and understand the "why" of the
shift, they will be more prone to support you and provide funds for you and your teachers to attend conferences and Professional Development.

4) Create and Share the Vision

In the "Model for Managing Complex Change," Tim Knoster outlined five essential elements to effectively manage change in any organization and achieve success (The Knoster Model, 2016). Vision, Skills, Incentives, Resources, and Action Plan (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Model for Managing Complex Change

![Model for Managing Complex Change](http://www.laurabain.com.au/blog/the-knoster-model)

Based on Knoster's model, the absence or removal of any of these elements leads to various adverse outcomes. Therefore, the best way to reach success or the intended positive outcome is to start from the essential step, which is to create a shared vision and mission statements that will guide the change process and give a purpose for the work ahead. The world language department could sit down as a team and develop a vision and a mission statement for the department (Figures 6 and 7).
The vision statement helps set a common goal for the department and builds autonomy and cohesion. It should answer the following questions: Why are we doing this? What do we want our students to be able to do by the time they graduate? The mission statement should outline what each department member will do regularly to achieve the department’s long-term goal as outlined in our vision. They know the standards and the goal set for language teaching, and now they need to decide what they will do to achieve that goal.
Once developed, the vision and the mission statements will serve as a guide for everything that will be done in the department to make the shift a reality. The Vision and Mission statements will give the team a focus and help them create realistic goals in terms of what they want to see in their language learners by the time they graduate (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Nyack World Language Department Goals

As a department, set guiding principles to help teachers guide their teaching and improve their practices (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Nyack World Language Department Guiding Principles
For example, use:

a) the ACTFL High-leverage Teaching Practices as an instructional guide on how to teach language in the department (Figure 10).

Figure 10: ACTFL High-leverage Teaching Practices

![Core Practices](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/resources/Core%20practices.pdf)

Figure 10: Retrieved from: [https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/resources/Core%20practices.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/resources/Core%20practices.pdf)

b) the State Proficiency Ranges to help determine the proficiency level for each language level in the district (Figure 11). They should serve as a guide for teachers to set proficiency goals for instruction and help students set language goals for themselves.
Figure 11: Nyack World Language Department Proficiency Levels and Expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By the end of</th>
<th>Expected Proficiency Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 (6th – 8th Grade)</td>
<td>Novice High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 (9th Grade)</td>
<td>Intermediate Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 (10th Grade)</td>
<td>Intermediate Mid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 (11th Grade)</td>
<td>Intermediate High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5/AP (12th Grade)</td>
<td>Intermediate High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Build Skills

Now that the department has a goal, there is a need to equip the teachers with the skills they need to make that vision a reality. The department head can conduct a needs assessment for the team: Where are they? What type of support would they need to achieve their goal? Use the Strategic Planning Process to determine "Where You Are," "Where You Want to Be," and "How to Get There" (Ritz, 2020). The underlying principle is not to start from scratch but to tap into the resources available in the department first. For example, identify teachers who can help others understand the standards, the other underpinning proficiency-based theories, and the high-leverage teaching practices. Some teachers might have already adopted practices such as using authentic resources, providing comprehensible input, using the target language, and teaching grammar in context. It would be helpful for the language department head to ask those teachers to share their knowledge and ask others to observe their classroom and learn from them. It is crucial to create an environment where everybody feels the need to be lifelong learners by:

a) Ensuring that all teachers belong to at least one of the professional language organizations.
b) Inquiring about conferences and workshops and sharing them with the department.
c) Allocating money for teachers to pay for memberships and attend conferences.

As said previously, be ready to be a resource for the department. If you need to learn something, reach out to someone who knows or to your language organization.

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6) Provide ongoing support

Allocating time for teachers to work together, sharing resources and strategies, learning from each other, reflecting, and collaborating are paramount. As a department head, try your best to advocate for the team and support them as much as possible. In addition, you should:

a) Create a resource page or a shared drive where teachers can share materials and support each other.

b) Provide them with articles and books to help them learn more about proficiency teaching and stay abreast of current research.

c) Revise your website to mirror the change by adding all the necessary resources to make the shift transparent and seamless for the community. (Nyack World Language Department Webpage)

d) Create presentations to educate the community and share them with teachers so they can use them during back-to-school nights. (Proficiency for parents)

e) Ensure that teachers understand and communicate the proficiency targets with students. (Proficiency for students)

7) Stay connected

In addition to staying abreast of the latest research in the world language field, the department head must stay connected to the language organizations (LILT, NYSAWLA, NADSFL, NYSAFLT, NECTFL, ACTFL) and attend local and state collegial circles to get support and resources. Also, it is encouraged to reach out to colleagues for support when needed because they are going through the same process and probably experiencing similar issues. Remember that we are all in this together and are working on shifting to proficiency-based teaching. What you do not know, someone else does. Consequently, rely on each other as we are all going through the change process.

Moving the world language department toward proficiency and starting the process of implementing the revised World Language Standards can be a challenging task. However, it could be a learning experience that will enable the whole team to move toward a more comprehensive way of teaching and learning languages. The aforementioned steps can be examined and applied to help in the process. Always remember, "Any change, even a change for the better, is accompanied by discomfort" (Arnold Bennett). Therefore, learn to look at change with different perspectives because "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes" (Marcel Proust). This mindset will help us see reality in a whole new way.
References


Elcie Douce, Ed.D, has been a World Language teacher for eighteen years. She teaches French from FLES to College Level, Spanish and ENL. She has a Bachelor's degree in French Education, two Masters degrees in French and in Liberal Arts as well as two Advanced Graduate Certificates in Educational Computing and School Leadership from SUNY Stony Brook. She also has a Doctoral degree in Instructional Leadership from St. John's University. She has been working with the New York State Education Department in reviewing Teacher Certification exams and the LOTE Standards. She is the World Language Department Chair at the Nyack Public Schools and a French adjunct professor at Empire State College and Nassau Community College and a technology adjunct professor at SUNY Stony Brook. She is an active member of LILT, AATF, AATSP, NYSAWLA, NYSAFLT, NECTFL, NADSFL and ACTFL.
Addressing Equity and Career Demands Through World Language Programs

Marie J. Campanaro and Barbara Patterson

Abstract: World language (WL) study must begin earlier than and continue beyond New York State’s minimum WL graduation requirement in order to produce graduates with the levels of language and cultural proficiency needed for college and career. Overwhelming research exists which supports the positive benefits of WL study for the development of critical thinking, interpersonal skills, employability and academic achievement, to name a few. There is a critical need for a multilingual workforce to meet the social, economic and security demands of the US. Despite these findings, few students are continuing WL studies beyond the minimum requirement even though options for more advanced study, such as the State Seal of Biliteracy and the WL 4+1 Pathway to Graduation, are offered in NYS. Our Black/African American, English as a New Language (ENL), and male students are greatly underrepresented. The authors examine up-to-date research on the benefits of early and sustained WL study, on the critical shortage of a multilingual workforce, and offer concrete action steps to resolve this issue.

THE ISSUES

Black/African American and male students are underserved in New York world language (WL) programs and WL options for English as a New Language (ENL) students are often untapped. New York's school districts must incorporate equitable WL opportunities which promote diversity and high levels of proficiency for all students.

The US Commission on Language Learning reported in 2017 that the US needs more people to speak languages other than English. There is a critical need for graduates proficient in languages other than English with intercultural communication skills to meet our nation's social, economic and security needs within our borders as well as internationally. The WL requirement for all NYS students (New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages [NYSED OBEWL], 2011), unless exempted in their IEP, is to earn at least one unit of credit at the Novice High level for Modern Languages or at the Novice Mid level for Classical Languages based on the NYS Proficiency Ranges (NYSED OBEWL, 2021). According to the Oral Proficiency Levels in the Work World, (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL], 2015) the required level of oral proficiency for jobs ranges from the Intermediate Low to Distinguished level. Therefore, the minimum graduation requirement does not provide the early and continued WL study needed for students to develop levels of proficiency that will serve their needs for college and career.

NY offers a State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) (NYSED OBEWL, 2020) which recognizes graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in one or more languages and in English. It identifies biliteracy skills for potential employers and university admission. NY also offers a
WL 4+1 Pathway to Graduation (NYSED, n.d.), in which students must complete Checkpoint B coursework and pass a department-approved Pathway Assessment in WL. In addition, they are required to take and pass four required Regents exams (or department-approved alternative assessments).

Statistics from the NYS Department of Education’s NYS Seal of Biliteracy 2020-2021 Annual Report, suggest that NYS schools are not promoting these programs to all students. The report states “a clear pattern of gender disparity appears” and that “Black or African American students were significantly under-represented among Seal earners in 2020-21 relative to their overall 12th grade enrollment.”

**THE PROBLEMS**

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages’ 2020-2021 Annual Report revealed that Black/African American students are not continuing their WL course of study and only 4% earn the Seal. In 2020-21, only 31% of males (of any race or ethnicity) earned the NYSSB and 69% of all Seal earners were female.


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Edna Sims, in her article, *Why Blacks Should Study Foreign Languages* (2014), calls the discouragement of WL study a crisis. Ms. Sims states that most Black/African American students do not have equal access to WL study, WL exposure or travel. WL proficiency is essential for “success in obtaining grants and fellowships, for passing bar, board or professional examinations”. She argues that the claim that students should focus on the mastery of the English language instead of studying a WL is erroneous. It is through the study of other languages that a student improves skills in their first language and gains unique linguistic and cultural perspectives.

According to the New York State Graduation Pathways Data 2021, of the 179,195 students who completed a 4+1 Pathway to graduation, only 836 took the WL option. The number is so low that the report states 0% of students opted for the Languages Other Than English (now World Languages) pathway. More females followed this path in 2021 (470) than males (366). 67%, which is the majority of students pursuing this pathway, are Hispanics or Latinos. 1% of WL pathway graduates were Black/African American. White students represented only 18% of WL Pathway graduates.

Enrollment in WL classes has been declining in the US in recent years (Mouradian, 2021), with an enrollment of about 20% of K-12 students, compared to 92% of students enrolled in WL programs in Europe as reported in *The Michigan Daily*. The US has no national mandate for WL study, and requirements vary greatly from state to state. The result is fewer graduates with WL skills to meet the increasing demand for bilingual employees in the workforce, as well as fewer graduates pursuing WL teaching degrees.

**WHY IT MATTERS**

Fox, Corretjer and Webb (2019) analyzed 100 published research studies from 2012 to 2019 on the benefits of WL learning. Results reported multiple cognitive benefits, including higher cognitive reserve in advanced age. Early and sustained language learning was shown to positively affect employability and academic achievement. Research shows that learning another language benefits basic skill development in the first language (Loveless, n.d.), results in higher scores on standardized tests and improves college prospects, regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status (SES) (Hu, 2018). Early and sustained WL study narrows achievement gaps among minority and low SES groups and is critical for the achievement of an advanced level of proficiency.

In addition, the process of learning other languages develops many other desirable skills, including those identified in the Employability Skills Framework for Career and Technical Education (ACTFL, n.d.): Interpersonal Skills, Personal Qualities, Technology Use, Systems Thinking, Communications Skills, Information Use, Resource Management, Critical Thinking Skills, and Applied Academic Skills. A 2022 report by Language Testing International found that the demand for bilingual workers more than doubled between 2010 and 2015, with an increase of 30% for remote bilingual workers since the beginning of the COVID pandemic.
Employers find that hiring bilingual workers saves money and increases productivity because they can translate documents, engage in conversations with customers and business partners and assist with drafting and/or proofreading marketing or sales copy in the targeted language without the need to hire outside translators or interpreters. Bilingual workers also form greater connections with non-English speaking customers, both domestically and internationally, because they understand and interpret cultural details and nuances that influence customer decisions.

The “hard skill” of speaking other languages is an obvious plus, but bilingual workers demonstrate increased “soft skills” as well. Sofia Laurell, in 3 Reasons Why Bilingual Skills Are Entrepreneurial Differentiators (2022), described these soft skills as more creative and abstract thinking, the ability to recognize and embrace different perspectives, an increased sense of empathy, and the ability to reflect on different cultures and environments through speech.

**FOR NYS AND THE NATION**

NY ranks #2 in exports of services and one out of every five jobs is related to international trade. In addition, 30% of New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home, as reported in Asia Society’s Mapping the Nation, Global New York (2007). Therefore, NY businesses are diversifying and globalizing their operations, requiring language and cultural skills to access global markets and serving the NY multilingual population. A critical need exists in many job sectors, especially in healthcare, construction, tourism, social services, and national security.

Language Testing International (2015) has listed professions seeking multilingual employees and identifies the WL proficiency level required for each. According to a 2021 article by Resolve Recruit, the person with the knowledge of a world language has a significant advantage in the competitive job market. The Global Seal of Biliteracy (n.d.) reports that language pay differentials are common in federal US agencies, especially those dealing with law enforcement and national security. They also state that bilingual employees in the medical and business fields can earn 5% - 20% more than their monolingual counterparts. Employers are often willing to pay more (Kostiuk, 2022) to workers with bilingual skills (2015) and compensate their bilingual employees (Colón, 2019) by offering them more job security and promotion opportunities. Bilingual workers enrich the professional field in many ways, as mentioned previously, and provide much needed services which are important for customer satisfaction and retention. Multilingualism opens up more career opportunities.

Everyone needs medical care at some time in their lives, and with 65 million US residents speaking a language other than English (Namahoe, 2021), it's no wonder that there is a huge demand for bilingual healthcare professionals. In fact, in an analysis led by Script (n.d.), it was discovered that NYS leads the nation in searches for doctors that speak a second language. Simmons University reports (2022) that patients with limited English speaking abilities have more difficulty understanding prescription labels and medical instructions, are more likely to be readmitted to hospital care, have longer hospital stays and are at a greater risk of infections and surgical delays. The Medical Press (2022) reported that parents with limited English abilities are less likely to question physicians regarding their children’s hospital care.
Companies across the US are seeking a WL proficient workforce to meet needs within our borders. 9 out of 10 businesses rely on workers with language skills other than English according to a 2018 survey of 1,200 upper level managers and human resource professionals by Ipsos Public Affairs for the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The study found that only 11% of the companies’ WL needs were mostly or completely international. The majority of WL needs lie within the country, and covers a wide range of demands, from translation to health and safety concerns for employees.

A 2019 report by Construction Dive states that the construction industry in our nation ranks first in the critical need for world language proficient workers and employers. The demand for a multilingual workforce in this sector is expected to rise. Communication with customers and employees regarding health and safety procedures is the key component to a well-informed workplace. Communication about a potential jobsite hazard needs to happen in the moment and a language barrier prevents that quick exchange of information. WL education and time are keys to fixing communication issues that could lead to accidents. As many as 42% of construction industry employers depend on a multilingual workforce, according to a 2019 report by ACTFL. This has led translation and software companies to collaborate with the construction industry to combat their biggest concerns including, “increasing productivity, safety, and efficiency at the jobsite, while supporting upskilling of the labor force with learning in the flow of work.” In addition to reducing risk and increasing safety, Foresite Technology Solutions, LLC (2022), sees eliminating the language barrier as a way of empowering employees.

Globalization and localization of technology products and software, as well as international digital security concerns, have resulted in rapidly increasing demand for language skills, according to Georgia State University Job Landscape (n.d.). In 2020, Investopedia reported that the gaming industry generated $155 billion in revenue, therefore, careers in the development and marketing of video games are on the rise. When a game crosses international borders, it has to be ready to appeal to its new audience. The USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism (n.d.) noted that gaming companies need translators who understand not only the languages but also the cultures where they’re spoken. Video game translators translate video game content into different languages and then play them to check that the content is correct. Once the game is developed, marketers, bloggers, testers and other gaming professionals with language and cross-cultural skills are needed.

In the business field, candidates who display strong global skills and language proficiency have an employment advantage with international and US companies. Dr. Angela Jackson, Managing Partner at New Profit and founder of the Global Language Project, stated that learning a second language is to “acquire a skill that is highly coveted in the private sector,” in her keynote address at the Global Languages Leadership Meeting in 2021. Opportunities will open for students who are globally aware, culturally competent and proficient in multiple languages.

There is a critical demand for language instructors in the US and a multicultural student population means every area of education seeks bilingual individuals. The US Department of Defense is the largest employer of language professionals, according to Language Testing International in Using Languages in National Security (2015). In this article, Margaret Gulotta,
chief of the Language Services Section for the FBI, states that “When hiring special agents, the FBI considers foreign language proficiency a critical skill, just like accounting, computer science, engineering, and intelligence.” Candidates with language skills can earn internships, scholarships, and bonuses. In order to foster positive international relations and advance the interests of the US globally, diplomacy requires the ability to learn a language. Candidates with proficiency in one or more languages, coupled with intercultural competence, will have an advantage.

Public safety agencies seek people who can handle stressful, difficult and dangerous situations in multicultural areas, according to Language Testing International (2022). Speakers of high-need languages are sought as EMTs, paramedics, 911 operators, firefighters, and police officers. Multilingual workers in these positions enable non-English speaking individuals to access essential information and services, but they also build trust and strengthen the relationships with the communities they serve.

In ACTFL’s *Oral Proficiency Levels in the Workplace* (2015), the range of careers seeking WL proficient workers is wide and encompasses many levels of proficiency. ACTFL's intermediate—mid to high levels of proficiency (2012) suffice to serve most receptionist, cashier, auto inspector and aviation positions, to name a few. Proficiency in another language is a critical skill for 21st century jobs, as well as for positions yet to be created in our ever-expanding global community. As proficiency in another language increases, so do opportunities for additional and new vocations.

**SOLUTIONS**

There are many concrete action steps that we can take to lead the way to building early and sustained quality WL programs.

First, we need to urge our legislators to support these and other WL bills. In its 2017 report, *America’s Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century*, the bi-partisan Commission on Language Learning "recommends a national strategy to improve access to as many languages as possible for people of every region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background—that is, to value language education as a persistent national need similar to education in math or English, and to ensure that a useful level of proficiency is within every student’s reach." They go on to state the importance of early and continued WL study in order for students to fully develop their WL potential. The federal government has long appreciated and supported the need for a multilingual workforce and has invested in many grants, bills and programs to further WL study. The World Language Advancement and Readiness Grant Program (WLARA) (US 116th Congress, 2019) has allotted $15 million yearly since 2019 to support WL programs in Department of Defense Education Activity schools (those with 10% or greater military-connected student enrollment) and/or schools with JROTC programs. WLARA intends to produce graduates with multilingual and cultural skills to address critical national security needs. The Biliteracy Education Seal and Teaching Act (BEST Act) (US 116th Congress, 2019) offers every student in America the opportunity to achieve a Seal of Biliteracy.
49 states have a state Seal of Biliteracy, therefore the focus of the BEST Act is to have all Seal programs implemented at scale and are equitable. Grant funds are to be used for the administrative costs of establishing or improving, and carrying out a Seal of Biliteracy program; as well as for public outreach and education about the Seal program.

Second, we must inspire our students to continue WL study beyond NYS minimum WL graduation requirements. The successful completion of Checkpoint C courses provides students with the language and cultural skills needed for many career paths, demonstrates the Intermediate High level of proficiency, as well as offers the opportunity to achieve higher levels of proficiency as they continue their WL study at the post-secondary level. “These additional pathway assessments are an excellent way to promote the kinds of knowledge and skills that students need for success in the global economy,” former NYS Commissioner Elia (2018) said. “We hope and expect that this will encourage school districts to invest in high-quality world language programs.” Students who continue WL studies to Checkpoints B and C should be directed toward completing a 4+1 Pathway in WL as well as the Seal of Biliteracy. Districts need to be aware that Pathway exams are available in ASL, Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Korean and Spanish. The range of languages represented are meant to encompass all WL students, including NYS’s large ENL population and those who are not ENL, but come from homes where English is not the primary language. Black/African American, white and other student populations need to be made aware of and guided to continue WL study beyond Checkpoint A.

Dr. Angela Jackson, of the Global Language Project, also stated in her keynote (2021), mentioned earlier, that we need to break the cycle of generational poverty by giving students access to job skills that are important in today’s market. We need to give these skills to children at their earliest ages so they develop a global mindset needed to acquire not only a living wage but pathways to more executive careers. Language skills are the future of work. These skills are critical to our nation’s economic and physical health, safety and well-being.

In NY, it’s vital that we encourage all students to continue WL study beyond the basic requirements. Language skills need to be reinforced in other classes and interwoven in other disciplines' curricula. There exists a language skills gap between schools that begin world languages in the early grades versus the later traditional middle school start. All students deserve increased WL opportunities to improve their marketability and earning power and to meet the critical need for a multilingual workforce. Dr. Angela Jackson (2021) urges educators to hook Black/African American and male students into enjoying language learning by tapping into their interests. Show students the number of ways in which language skills are important, in demand and are used in college and career. The applications of multilingual students will become more desirable when seeking college admission as they reveal a variety of unique talents and skills. These students will be more competitive in domestic and international sectors than their monolingual peers.

Third, promote participation in the NYS Seal of Biliteracy in your district. Refer to the NYSSB Guidance Toolkit (n.d.) to implement or expand a program. Focus on encouraging the NYSSB to Black/African American students and all male students. The NYSSB enables ELLs and students whose primary home language is other than English to earn the Seal in their home language(s) as well as in English. In 2020-2021, there were 240,035 multilingual Learner/English Language
Learners (ELLs) in NYS, according to NYSED’s report on ELL enrollment in public schools. That number jumps to 321,690 with the inclusion of former ELL students. The data from the 2020-2021 NYSSB Annual report indicates that greater efforts need to be made to provide our ELL students with the support they need to achieve the NYSSB. The ELL groups identified by the NYSED OBEWL made up 12% of all Seal earners in 2020-2021.

Contact your school counselors for students who speak another language at home but are not in an Early Language Learning (ELL) program. Include your English as a New Language (ENL) colleagues and school counselors in your NYSSB outreach. The recognition of these skills on transcripts and diplomas not only attracts college and career prospects, but affords recipients and their families a way to demonstrate pride in their heritage and display their multilingualism.
Natalya Mytareva, Executive Director of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters, addressed the importance of State Seals of Biliteracy in the health profession in her breakout session, *Language and Healthcare*, during the 2022 Joint National Committee for Languages and National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) Language Advocacy Days. She stated that when we support state seal of biliteracy programs, we are supporting the possibility for individuals to obtain well-paid jobs. She went on to say that having a state seal of biliteracy on a high school diploma is accepted as an initial part of the application process for healthcare workers in many states, especially for entry level positions.

Four, implement, support and/or expand a World Language in the Elementary Schools (WLES, formerly FLES) (n.d.) program so students can achieve the proficiency levels and cultural awareness needed to succeed in our globalized world through a continuous and sustained WL program. The importance of beginning language study early is so well documented that the National Parent Teachers’ Association has issued a *Resolution on World Language Instruction K-12* (2021). They resolved that “[t]he] National PTA and its constituent associations support development of a K-12 world language instructional sequence that provides students with exposure to one or more languages and cultures beginning in elementary school that makes use of age and developmentally appropriate curriculum, instructional activities and materials; and allows students to not only sustain but to progress toward fluency…” The resolution bases its support on many factors, including the fact that WL study results in higher academic performance and critical thinking skills. The ability to communicate in another language is “essential to attract business, engage in world trade, participate in scientific research, foster diplomacy, and respond to global humanitarian emergencies.” They also acknowledge the large number of US residents who do not speak English at home as well as the shortage of qualified K-12 WL teachers as further reasons for the need for early and sustained WL study.

Five, devote time to educate parents on the language and cultural skills that are in demand for 21st century jobs. The knowledge of the importance of these skills will help them to support their children in their world language classes and in their future endeavors. They will also prove to be essential in shaping school board decisions regarding WL programs. When our parents make their voices heard, they hold boards of education accountable to provide strong, continuous and sustained WL programs.

Finally, and, perhaps most importantly, share this data and information with your school administrators, counselors, boards of education, parents and students. They will prove to be the driving force in creating, maintaining and enhancing your school's WL programs.
Marie Campanaro graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in Secondary Spanish and English Education from the SUNY at Brockport, where she later completed her M.A. in Elementary Education with a concentration in Bilingual Multicultural Education. Now retired, she taught English Language Arts and Spanish for 38 years. She has National Board Certification in World Languages Other Than English. She is the recipient of the Lifetime Enrichment Grant: Nurturing Creativity in the Classroom; NYSAFLT/Embassy of Spain Scholarship to Salamanca, NYSAFLT’s President Award and the Ferdinand DiBartolo Distinguished NYS Leadership Award. A past president of NYSAFLT, she remains involved as the organization’s Public Advocacy Co-chair.

Barbara Patterson holds a B.S. in Secondary Education Spanish, M.A. in Spanish and a C.A.S. degree. Barbara has taught Spanish for 31 years with experience in suburban, city and rural school districts. She is the committee chair of the NYS United Teacher's World Language Subject Area Committee and is the Co-chair of the NYS Association for Language Teacher's (NYSAFLT) Public Advocacy Committee. As a Project Support Specialist at SUNY Oswego, Barbara works in conjunction with The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages at NYS Education Department. She is the recipient of NYSAFLT’s President Award.

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Wanted: World Language and ENL Teacher Recruitment and Retention Specialists

Dr. Elvira Morse

During the Spring 2022 semester, one of my university colleagues forwarded me the following message:

Good morning,

I am a retiring French teacher and at present, we have no one to take my place. It is very disheartening. I am hoping you may know of some graduating seniors who would like to have an awesome opportunity to teach French.

Please let me know as soon as you can or have them email me directly. Thank you so much. Our program is so strong and it breaks my heart to retire without having a wonderful person to maintain what my colleague and I have cultivated over these last 20 years.

Your reaction to this heartfelt plea for qualified candidates might very well be one of consternation and sadness. In some cases, it might trigger contemplative reflection about your own career and your school workplace. Perhaps it sparks thoughts about the quality of future educational experiences for children in your family or your friends’ children.

In my current role as Adjunct Professor and Field Supervisor for Student Teachers, my conversations with cooperating teachers and their Directors, Chairpersons, Assistant Principals, and/or District Office administrators often involve both lamentation and frustration. Fortunately, these emotions quickly give rise to brainstorming and the sharing of ideas about what we can do together to attract, recruit, and retain enthusiastic, linguistically-talented, creative, caring, and committed candidates to fill currently available and future positions.

I feel both fortunate and happy to mention that almost every student teacher I have supervised in the past five years who has earned NYS World Language and/or TESOL teacher certification is gainfully employed. However, the fact that fewer students are choosing to pursue teaching as a career has given me angst. The dreaded words “teacher shortage” weigh heavily on my mind on a regular basis. These words have been a staple element of national, state, and local headlines generated by education agencies, news outlets, professional organizations, and social media sites.

While perusing OLAS Long Island (https://www.olas.org) job postings this past spring, I unsurprisingly counted almost 25 World Language and ENL openings for the 2022-23 school year. In November 2019 (pre-pandemic), the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) published a fact sheet that indicated the need for “approximately 180,000 new teachers over the next decade—or up to 18,000 new teachers annually.” The report cited the following reasons for the demand: (1)
trends in teacher retirements; (2) anticipated increases in P-12 enrollments; (3) fewer individuals entering the profession as evidenced by decreasing enrollments in NYS teacher education programs, and (4) rates of teacher attrition. In addition, we are all well aware of the disruptions and challenges created in teaching and learning during the past two and a half years by the COVID-19 pandemic. Geopolitical, economic, and environmental turbulence and social-emotional upheaval, have all combined to exacerbate the shortage of qualified teacher candidates in many teaching areas. World Languages, English as a New Language, and Bilingual Education have not been immune from this crisis.

It behooves ALL educators to seek and analyze practical, research-based, and experienced-based strategies for meeting the challenge. These efforts have begun as evidenced by the New York State Department of Education’s Office of Teaching Initiatives recent changes to reduce the complexities for obtaining teacher certification (https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/). However, it is my strong belief that in order to reinvigorate the profession it will require current educators at ALL levels to become the “agents of change.” Who else is better equipped to inspire, recruit, and retain future educators? It is incumbent upon us to continue our daily modeling of conveying enthusiasm, creative collaboration, and culturally responsive teaching and learning.

Several organizations have developed and implemented programs that encourage students to continue learning languages and to assist teachers in exposing their students to the possibilities that teaching a language can bring. These programs include: (1) The American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) “Lead with Languages” campaign (https://www.leadwithlanguages.org/) and its “Educators Rising” initiative (https://www.actfl.org/advocacy/educators-rising); (2) the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) program that recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in English and one or more world languages. According to the NYSSB webpage (http://www.nysed.gov/world-languages/new-york-state-seal-biliteracy-nyssb), the goals of the NYSSB are “to encourage the study of languages, to identify high school graduates with language and biliteracy skills for employers, to provide universities with additional information about applicants seeking admission and placement, to prepare students with 21st century skills, to recognize the value of language instruction, and to affirm the value of diversity in a multilingual society.”; (3) The Asia Society’s series of articles entitled “Language Education for a New Generation: Eight Ideas to Spark a Learning Revolution” with practical and doable approaches to motivate learners and educators (e.g., encourage participation in interdisciplinary programs like Model United Nations, elevate the status of language by referring to students as “linguists” and “diplomats”); (4) The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) “Grow Your Own” initiative for local teacher unions to design school-based programs for middle and high school students to help create an awareness of what teaching entails and to nurture aspiring educators, and (5) local

“Who else is better equipped to inspire, recruit, and retain future educators?”

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partnership agreements between K-12 school districts and higher education institutions that assure student teacher placements and internship opportunities.

The 2021 adoption of the revised New York State World Language Learning Standards and the comprehensive professional development plan, time frame, and collection of authentic resources for their implementation is the direct result of the genuine commitment and tireless efforts of the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages Instructional Associate, Candace Black, the World Languages Content and Advisory Panel, and the hundreds of stakeholders throughout New York State who participated in Regional Committees and attended meetings and webinars. I can think of no better time than the present to promote new and creative ways for learning a world language in real-life cultural contexts AND foster an interest in teaching. The plethora of available technology, increased knowledge and application of language acquisition theory, brain-based and active learning strategies, project-based learning, the integration of content (i.e., interdisciplinary connections), and intentional planning to tap students’ assets (i.e., cultural and linguistic backgrounds, academic interests, and multi-modal talents) can only enhance the teaching and learning experiences of our students.

We cannot and we must not underestimate our roles as “advocate-mentors.” In an article I wrote that was published in the NYSAFLT Fall 1998 Language Association Bulletin (yes-24 years ago!), I stated that an “advocate-mentor assumes responsibility for motivating those individuals with whom we have daily contact to present a focused vision and positive future outlook.” Students, their families, teaching colleagues, support staff, and administrators are those individuals with whom we need to articulate this vision, actively engage, celebrate “successes”, and above all, provide appropriately-timed praise and feedback. We must be intentional in our thoughts and actions to promote and share our passion for languages and teaching.

Language teachers have always had to advocate, encourage participation, and demonstrate support for our subject area. Many World Language and ENL programs have successfully incorporated activities such as: international breakfasts and dinners; celebration of World Language Week; participation in regional poster, poetry, and essay contests; special guest speaker series; annual or semi-annual trips abroad; participation in exchange programs; and membership in international/multicultural clubs, and honor societies to promote world language and cross-cultural awareness/appreciation.

Language teachers have also reached out to colleagues in other disciplines to develop interdisciplinary units and project-based activities to match the new learning standards and benchmarks. There are numerous and varied ways to collaborate with colleagues while simultaneously creating connections between language, academic content, cultural context, AND teaching. Perhaps a rotating team of teachers can serve as advisors to a “Future Educators Club” or make a simple request to have colleagues wear badges indicating a heritage language they know or a language they studied during World Language Week? There is no better way than the “team approach” to initiate conversations to attract and inspire students to language teaching.

The constraints brought about by the pandemic should be viewed as a temporary setback in our efforts. The implementation of the newly revised World Language Standards will facilitate opportunities to collaborate and plan curricula and lesson activities in which students can actually
engage in teaching (presentational mode) and/or in helping situations (interpersonal mode) both within and out of the classroom setting. It is important to remain optimistic and committed to our chosen field. If we are to combat the shortage of qualified language educators head-on, it is imperative that ALL educators commit the time and effort NOW to be “advocate-mentors.” We must possess a “Carpe diem” (“Seize the day”) mentality and make a conscientious effort to regularly converse about the joys of learning a language and teaching. More importantly, as Stephen M. Covey expressed in his latest book Trust & Inspire: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others, we must believe that people of all ages are creative, collaborative, and full of potential. When we observe a student having success, we need to offer “praise + 1 reason why” to capitalize on their performance. Positive reinforcement is the key to laying a strong foundation for a potential language educator.

As we begin to revise our curricula and lesson planning activities for the implementation of the revised World Language Learning Standards, we must continue to recognize and prioritize the intersection of modeling, trusting, and inspiring. It is crucial that high school educational leaders forge close relationships with local colleges and universities, and with professional organizations. It is critical that school districts maintain and intensify their outreach with local public libraries and community organizations. It is imperative that pathways be constructed and/or strengthened at all levels of education. These pathways are vital in nurturing and inspiring interest in language and the numerous rewards offered by pursuing a career in language education. Exposing students and future teachers to the full spectrum of benefits offered by a world language education has become a vital element in helping to ensure our nation’s social, economic, political, and intellectual well-being.

Are you ready, willing, and able to answer the call to be a world language and ENL teacher recruitment and retention specialist this school year?

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Language Advocacy -- Strongly Rooted in Values and Growing in Impact

Kathleen Stein-Smith

**Abstract:** While it is always necessary to advocate for our core values, advocacy has become even more important since the global COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated both learning and financial challenges everywhere. Framed by our beliefs and core values in the importance of language learning and multilingualism both globally and locally, advocacy is for all language educators, supporters, and stakeholders – utilizing best theory and practices in classroom teaching and adapting theory and practice from relevant disciplines in order to effect positive change, linking languages and language learning to personal, professional, and societal benefits, and based on learner empowerment and lifelong learning. Accessibility and affordability are key issues, as is the role of online learning in both. The significance of motivation, and the importance of immersion and heritage language programs are also discussed.

**Keyword:** Advocacy

**Introduction**

Advocacy, grounded in our core values and operationalized in our classrooms and through our professional engagement, can be even more effective when driven by data, theory and best practices from relevant disciplines and social media, and our own willingness to engage at all levels.

The importance of language skills and multilingualism in a globalized and interconnected world, as well as in our increasingly multilingual society can hardly be overstated. Not only do the United Nations and European Union embrace multilingualism and language policies, the United States does not have an official language (UN, n.d.; European Parliament, 2021; Wikipedia, 2022; WorldAtlas, 2021). In addition, 70M speak a language other than English in the home (Zeigler & Camarota, 2019). Within this seemingly multilingual context however, relatively few Americans speak a language other than English (McComb, 2001). In addition, relatively few US students have the opportunity to learn additional languages (AMACAD, 2017).

The primary goals of advocacy are to foster and encourage interest in language learning, to ensure that language programs are available, affordable, and accessible, and to develop awareness of the
process of language learning in order to empower students as independent self-directed lifelong language learners in the classroom and beyond.

In New York, New York City is home to more than 800 languages, and in New York State, 27.21% of K-12 students study an additional language, above the national average of 19.66% (Lubin, 2017; American Councils, 2017). In terms of advocacy, the NYSAFLT website offers an Advocacy Center, including information on taking action, contacting elected officials, federal and state legislative updates, advocating nationally, parents as language partners, a Public Advocacy Committee, and much more (NYSAFLT, n.d.). In addition, in the US Congress, New York is represented in the America’s Languages Caucus (JNCL, 2020).

The following examples taken from French are just a few of the many that demonstrate the presence of a multiplicity of languages in NY. The New York chapter of the French American Chamber of Commerce, with over 1,000 members, is just one example of the presence of languages in NY (FACCNY, n.d.). In 2020, New York State alone exported over $27B in goods to France (Census, n.d.). More than 80,000 Francophones reside in the NYC area (Sicot, 2019). There has been education in French in New York for over 200 years (Ross, 2020). In 2017, French President Macron launched the dual-language education fund at the CUNY (City University of New York Graduate Center (French Morning, 2017).

Beyond the personal and cultural advantages of multilingualism, language skills and cultural knowledge provide advantages in the workplace and in the globalized world. Yet again, the demand for language skills US businesses, government, and organizations exceeds the supply (ACTFL, 2019; NAE, 2017, AMACAD. 2020).

While the need for multilingualism is clear, the pathway to language learning is problematic, programs available to a relatively small – and decreasing – number of US students, especially at the elementary school level that offers the greatest opportunity for continued language learning beginning at an early age (AMACAD, 2017).

The COVID pandemic has exacerbated both learning and budgetary challenges, and advocacy is needed both to defend existing language programs and to promote language learning and use in the classroom and beyond (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2021). Concurrently, advocacy is needed to keep language learners motivated through curriculum and experiential learning experiences beyond the classroom.

**The Rationale for Advocacy – Strongly Rooted in Core Values**

Values have been defined as “the principles we believe in and consider to be the most important” (Rai, 2020). In addition to the importance they have in the decisions and actions of individuals, they also play a significant role within our institutions (Silva, 2021). As educators, our actions are guided by our values, as are those of our institutions.

The rationale for advocacy is the belief that language learning and use bring benefits to individuals, communities, and our society. At the global level, the United Nations embraces multilingualism, and the European Union has multilingualism as a core value. In the US, there is no official language, and most US students do not learn another language, often due to lack of opportunity.
As language educators and stakeholders, we believe in the value of multilingualism for the individual, the community, our society, and our world. The question resides in the selection of strategies and methods.

**Strategies and Methods of Advocacy**

Advocacy is always challenging in that there is always work to be done, either in making known the benefits of languages and language learning and in promoting both, and also in supporting and working to strengthen at-risk and potentially endangered programs. Advocacy is also an opportunity in that there is always room for many voices. We can all be language advocates, working as individuals advocating for the aspects of languages and language learning that are most important to us, as well as working within our professional associations at the local, state, regional, and national levels.

Advocacy has been defined as “persuading people who matter to care about your issue,” and involves “getting listened to, being at the table when decisions are made, and being heard by people who make decisions.” It may include “facing and overcoming resistance,” and “about speaking and writing in compelling ways that make decision makers want to adopt your ideas” (Daly, 2011).

Advocacy strategies aim to increase the presence of languages and language learning in the public conversation while, at the same time, supporting programs in need. Strategies include all the available individual and group strategies using all the available means – in person, online, social media, etc. Language advocacy can also benefit by adapting theory and best practices from relevant disciplines, including change and change management, leadership, social marketing, and psychology, and others, as well as lobbying and advocacy itself (Kotter, 2008; Northouse, 2013; Lee & Kotler, 2019; Cialdini, 2021; Milkman & Duckworth, 2021; Satell & Popovic, 2017; Daly, 2011).

Language advocacy is for everyone, with room for many voices – language educators, supporters, along with parents and communities can all play a role. Language educators can certainly participate in advocacy initiatives launched by professional organizations at the local, state, regional, and national levels – with NYSAFLT, NECTFL, ACTFL, and JNCL just a few examples. Educators can also advocate through specific language associations like AATF, AATSP, etc., and many more.

We can also advocate in our classrooms through our teaching, and in our interactions with students, prospective students, parents, school administrators, and members of our local or campus community. Effective advocacy can begin with a simple cup of coffee and informal conversation or with an “elevator pitch” during a chance encounter. In addition, we can advocate through social media, through our research, writing, and professional engagement, and through social action.
ranging from signing an online petition to becoming a candidate for school board or faculty senate, etc. The most important step is the first step – to take action, according to our own available time, our skills, and our values. While organizational, social, and individual change are processes, as is the psychology of influence, they all include leaders and influencers. In addition to an understanding of the processes, it is important to recognize the impact of social media influencers, especially those in areas related to languages and language learning, one example being “Frenchfluencers” (Meltzer, 2020).

**Current Trends and Future Directions – Advocacy Growing in Impact**

It is clear that effective advocacy calls for leadership. Leadership has been defined as a “process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2013). This represents an opportunity for language educators and other stakeholders to develop leadership skills and to grow as leaders in advocacy.

The question arises as to the nature of leadership which, at time, goes beyond education to enter politics through grassroots movements, lobbying and social movements, which have been defined in reference to their ability of small groups through shared purpose to bring about social change (Satell & Popovic, 2017).

Immersion and heritage languages are key trends with great potential for the present and future of language learning, and while interest is growing in these areas, many may yet remain relatively unaware of the effectiveness of immersion as a language learning methodology and of heritage languages as benefit to both the individual and to the nation. Immersion and heritage language programs are both priorities of advocacy.

More than 70M speak a language other than English in the home in the US. While the United States has always been home to many languages, both languages brought to this country by immigrants and indigenous languages, and knowledge and use of additional languages has many benefits, language loss has always been a challenge (AMACAD, 2017). Language educators and supporters can play a vital role in ensuring that these languages are not lost to our society, our communities, and to individuals and families.

A heritage language has been described as any language “other than the predominant language (or languages) in a given social context,” a heritage language learner is one who has “proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language,” and a heritage language program is “any language development program that is designed or tailored to address the needs of heritage language learners,” including community-based programs as well as those in both K-12 and higher education (Kelleher, 2010, 2010a, 2010b).

The advantages of heritage language learning are numerous, including personal, educational, and professional benefits, intercultural communication skills, and – perhaps most importantly – increased self-esteem (ACTFL, n.d.).

While there may at times be discussion as to how to teach culture or language, the distinction between the two is at best only useful in the earliest planning or organizational stages, as language
and culture are linked, with language offering the best window for learning about another culture. Learning about another culture through the ability to communicate and understand directly is the overall objective of language learning. “To interact with a language means to do so with the culture which is its reference point. We could not understand a culture without having direct access to its language because of their intimate connection” (Guesshabi, n.d.).

The advantages of immersion programs include academic and educational benefits, the development of biliteracy, and economic and cultural benefits. (Fortune, 2008). There are many examples of immersion programs, including total, partial, and dual-language immersion across the country. Dual-language immersion programs bring benefits to those who are mother-tongue speakers of both languages, including better intercultural understanding and communication, biliteracy and brain benefits, while building on the relative ease of language learning among young children and improving the educational outcomes of the English-language learners (Warner, 2022). Highlighting the linkage between language and culture, immersion programs provide “a gateway to understanding the multicultural, multi-perspective world” (Long, 2019).

Among the many examples of immersion programs, the bilingual revolution, in New York City and beyond, and the French language immersion schools in Louisiana offer true hope for the future. The bilingual revolution, based on the core concept that the “cognitive, emotional, and social advantages of being bilingual, biliterate, and multicultural should simply not be limited to private schools and those who can afford them” and that dual-language education is a universal good that ought to be developed everywhere, as it can positively transform a child, a family, a school, a community, and even a country” (Jaumont, 2017). In Louisiana, the French immersion initiative has been led by CODOFIL, Conseil pour le Developpement du francais en Louisiane, created in 1968, at a time when “French was no longer taught in Louisiana’s elementary schools and rarely in the high schools.” At present, “almost 100,000 students across Louisiana study French, and there are 26 French immersion schools in eight parishes” (CODOFIL, 2022). Both programs are characterized by their emphasis on opportunity, through their public school setting, and on the linkages between language and culture.

**Challenges – Access, Affordability, Online Learning**

Access and affordability are among the challenges facing foreign language learning and advocacy. Fewer than 20% of K-12 students in the US study an additional language and the number of foreign language programs in US public elementary has declined in recent years (AMACAD, 2017).

It is not unheard of for a program to be cut or eliminated because a teacher cannot be found to fill a vacant position. The shortage of qualified foreign language teachers reflects another aspect of the lack of access to language learning (ACTFL, n.d.), and recruitment and retention of future foreign language teachers is a priority for advocacy.

Lack of online options at all levels can also be an advocacy challenge in that a variety of reasons can prevent a current student from continuing language study or a potential learner from even beginning. Expansion of online learning needs to be another priority for advocacy. As a separate
but related area is the access of language learning for the handicapped, with online learning a way to offer more access options for learners, it is essential that online learning incorporate theory and best practices of universal design for learning (UDL).

Affordability is a complex issue due to the lack of language programs in public elementary schools which are available to all students. However, in terms of affordability, it is important to consider the additional learning opportunities, both online and on site, that are available for a fee or tuition even beyond the classroom as many after-school, weekend, and summer programs are fee-based. While advocacy generally has a public policy aspect, affordability is an area where language policy and philanthropy could play a significant role in increasing support for programs that would lower or eliminate fees and tuition, and in offering grants and scholarships for students whose families may not be able to afford them.

While children come to mind initially, learners of all ages could benefit from financial support for language learning – funding, flexibility, childcare, etc. for employee and community programs are just a few of many possibilities. For college and university students especially, the cost of textbooks and online learning platforms can be not only an affordability issue, but can also impact student success when students enrolled in a course cannot afford required/necessary learning and assessment materials including tests. A priority for advocacy would be to support the development of lower-cost and free learning materials – online educational resources (OERs), etc.

Challenges – Motivation

Motivation has long been considered a challenge for advocacy, with many Americans traditionally reluctant to learn another language erroneously believing that English is the global *lingua franca* and that is it not necessary to learn another language. As we know, the truth is that three quarters of the world population does not speak English and that half of the world population is multilingual, routinely using more than one language (British Council, 2013; Grosjean, 2010, 2020). In an increasingly globalized world and an increasingly multilingual US, where even television shows in languages other than English – for example, *Lupin* – have an increasing number of viewers, it would seem as though resistance to the use of languages other than English and reluctance to learn languages would be decreasing.

However, this may only be partially true. While there is increasing awareness of other languages and cultures, foreign language enrollments have continued to decline significantly at the college and university level, even after a period of greater stability in the era of globalization, and programs in middle and especially, elementary schools have continued to decline. It is a priority for advocacy to effectively address this decline in foreign language learning in our schools and colleges. While a contributing factor may be the shortage of foreign language teachers, caused in part by the decades-long decline in the number of foreign language majors, the linkage of interest and awareness to actual enrollment and achievement is more complex, and an examination of this relationship could lead to a better understanding of the enrollment challenge and new strategies and tactics to address it.

While many students at all levels may express an early interest in languages and cultures, even among enrolled students, it is not unusual for a beginner to switch languages or even to decide not
to continue language learning rather than continue to a more advanced level. The question has always been how to sustain interest and motivation through a relatively lengthy and time-consuming process.

Just as language advocacy is strengthened by the use of relevant concepts and best practices from other disciplines in order to advance our mission, so too are we strengthened in using relevant disciplines in the development of strategies and tactics to develop sustainable motivation and demonstrable achievement in language learning.

Framed by classic works such as *The Psychology of the Language Learner, Attitudes, Orientations, and Motivations in Language Learning: Advances in Theory, Research, and Applications*, and others by Zoltan Dornyei, *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning* by Gardner and Lambert, and articles and book chapters like “Global Competency and Intercultural Sensitivity” by Olson and Kroeger and and Gunesch’s “Multilingualism and Cosmopolitanism,” along with many other works, the contemporary conversation has focused on the benefits of language learning and the reasons why we learn languages (Dornyei, 2003, 2005; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Gunesch, 2003).

Among noteworthy examples of the importance of motivation and purpose are the Modern Language Association enrollment report (MLA, 2019), the Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) movement, the CIBERs (Centers for International Business Education and Research), LAC (Languages across Cultures) and the CLAC (Cultures and Languages across Cultures) Consortium, which highlight the many reasons, professional and beyond, why we learn languages. An example from French would be the Professional French/French for Business movement, including both academic programs, as well as professional development for French language educators, and job fairs both in-person and online (CCI Paris, n.d.; Cultural Services, n.d.).

It is especially interesting that the most recent Modern Language Association enrollment survey highlights the importance of linking foreign language learning to student interests through student personal and pre-professional interests, double majors and interdisciplinary collaborations, as well as joint programs (MLA, 2019).

Beyond the classroom, it is important to reflect on the reasons students choose to study a language, which language they choose, and why they may or may not continue language study. Courses responding to a wide range of personal interests, as well as pre-professional interests in various disciplines, are a first step. In order to respond to student needs, interests, and goals in language study, it is essential to examine the reasons for language learning, to include goals frequently in class discussions, and to be willing to adjust curriculum to respond to the purposes and goals of language learning for individual students. Language educators need to incorporate theory and best practices from relevant disciplines, into course development and delivery.

In terms of bringing the conversation to millennial learners, this can mean discussing opportunities for speaking, reading, and listening to the target language in their daily lives, in person and online.
It can also mean making time for a new language in already-busy schedules, and this can include community-based programs and experiential learning (Levene, 2021; Fogg, 2021).

Most of all, it is essential to take into account the goals and purposes of students in developing strategies for individual self-directed learning and for empowering students to take charge of their language learning, building on their initial interest, developing knowledge and skills, planning for future learning in class and beyond – especially during school breaks and after the end of the semester or even of formal language study – and then implementing their own personal plan for languages.

In alignment with the overarching role of language and languages in human life, this inclusion of a structured emphasis on learner empowerment needs to begin with a focus on the student as a person, in order to create an environment that encourages student learning. In an era where everyone has endured stress for a time due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially important to take the time to be sure that students are calm, relatively free from stress, and ready to learn. The techniques and routines will vary according to the needs of the specific class and can even include relaxation and mindfulness (Schwester, 2020). Discussion of learner goals and attitudes, the psychology of language learning, and the uses of language skills need to be re-visited on a regular basis so that the sense of purpose remains clear for each student.

In addition, conversation about the role of the learner in achieving this goal is important, as is the empowerment of the learner through discussion of the nature of language learning and motivation, as well as strategies to enhance learning in the classroom and beyond – including developing the habits of self-directed learning and self-motivation, as well as instruction in study skills. The essential is to foster and encourage sustainable motivation and to give students the opportunity to grow as independent self-directed learners.

Next Steps – Getting Started and Taking Action

While advocacy is deeply rooted in our core belief in the value of multilingualism and language learning and is grounded in theory and best practice from many disciplines, it is also essentially pragmatic in action. Among the first questions to be considered include who should be an advocate and how a new advocate can get started. The good news is that advocacy is for all of us and that our first steps as advocates can build on our goals and priorities as language educators. The question is how to translate our knowledge of why languages and language learning are important into action. Let’s take a look at some specific steps.

Advocacy is a broad umbrella, with room for many voices, with each voice having a unique and important role to play, and everyone can be an advocate. Every advocate can contribute in alignment with their own interests and priorities, and in accordance with their abilities, skills, and schedule. That being said, the question remains as to how best to get started and the answer begins with professional engagement with our professional associations at the local, state, regional, and national levels. Professional associations of language educators generally support advocacy, with initiatives prominently featured on their websites. Examples include but are not limited to ACTFL, JNCL, AATSP, AATF*, CSCTFL, NYSAFLT, and FLAVA, which has conducted several
successful advocacy campaigns against proposed legislation that could negatively impact language learning.

Again, the answer varies according to the individual and according to the situation. Generally, language advocacy responds to two types of situations – “emergency” advocacy, or situations where a program is at risk or in danger; and “everyday” advocacy, or all the situations where it is possible to make better known the advantages and benefits of language learning and language skills (Stein-Smith, 2021).

In cases of “emergency” advocacy, when a program is at risk, response, in coordination with the local chapters of professional language educators and local stakeholder groups, and action steps generally range from writing a letter or signing a petition to attending a public meeting. The challenge of “emergency” advocacy often stems from its very nature, that a program is already threatened, and that cutbacks and elimination may already be in the conversation or even on the table, with a reversal of the decision difficult or challenging to achieve.

In the case of “everyday” advocacy, advocates have the possibility of choosing an area of interest – a particular language or languages, a level (or grade, a methodology, etc. In addition, “everyday” advocacy is characterized by a multiplicity of approaches, ranging from an informal conversation with a student, a parent, an educational decision-maker in the local institution or community, to online and social media methods including websites, blogs, social media. etc.

In “emergency” advocacy situations, a rapid targeted response is necessary, while “everyday” advocacy is a long-term process. Nonetheless, while “everyday” advocacy may take place in informal conversations and settings, the language advocate needs the same skills set in medium- and long-term campaigns – framed by marketing, change management, psychology of persuasion, social movements, negotiation, lobbying, and more – are data-driven and consistently rooted in our core belief in the value of languages and language learning.

In making the case for languages, it is always necessary to have relevant data ready to be used judiciously according to the setting and the persons involved, and research, writing, and speaking are also advocacy activities. However, although data and statistics may be universally understood as important, the story that we tell illustrating the data is equally important.

The truth is that -- despite our best efforts, and language educators and our professional associations have made dedicated efforts in the area of advocacy for many years – language advocacy will be most effective when done in partnership with parents, communities, language stakeholders in business and government, and even external stakeholders and private philanthropy.

Parents are essential to advocacy, and their support can make the difference between success and failure in an initiative to launch a new program, to enhance an existing program, or to save a program from cutbacks or even elimination. There are many examples of the significance of parent involvement, in both heritage and world language learning, but the “bilingual revolution,” which includes the establishment of dual-language immersion programs in public schools in New York.

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City and beyond is a highly visible example of the positive role that parents can play in the educational process (Jaumont, 2017).

An example of the role of external stakeholders and private philanthropy would be the FACE (French American Cultural Exchange) Foundation which, in addition to many cultural programs and festivals, also supports a number of educational programs in K-12 and higher education, including the French Dual Language Fund, the French Heritage Language Program and others (FACE, n.d.). In July 2022, Secretary of Education Cardona renewed the US agreement with Spain to promote the study of Spanish language and cultures in the US and has referred to bilingualism as a “superpower” (Detail Zero, 2022). In addition, French Cultural Services have worked in coordination with US higher education institutions to support French language Job Fairs to demonstrate the practical value of language skills and cultural knowledge in the workplace (Cultural Services, 2021).

Most importantly, we can all advocate every day for languages in our classrooms and in our communities. Through our teaching and in our classrooms, we can highlight the benefits of language learning in our personal and professional lives, and the joy of multilingualism in empowering connections with other cultures. As motivation and purpose are predictors of successful language learning outcome, we can also help each student to stay in contact with their individual and personal reason for studying language and/or a specific language and to stay motivated through the lengthy and sometimes tedious process of language learning. The Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) approach is an example of linking learner purpose and successful learning outcome (Gunnarsson, 1997). The MLA report is often referred as a source of enrollment data, but it illustrates the significance of student interests and purposes in the development of sustainable language programs (MLA, 2019). In addition, programs in professional language studies like those in Language, Business, and Culture at Montclair State University (NJ), in Professional French Studies at the University of Wisconsin, and many others create a sustainable linkage between student goals and purposes and the language learning curriculum.

In conclusion, for the best of reasons - for our children as multilingual global citizens -- we can all be language advocates, individually in our classrooms and community, through our professional engagement, and through participation in advocacy initiatives and campaigns. Regardless of our advocacy skills or available time and funding, we can all be advocates. The last question concerns when to start, and the time is now.

Conclusions – Advocacy in the Classroom and Beyond – Accessibility, Affordability, Online Learning, Immersion, Heritage Languages, and Learner Empowerment

As we know, the primary goals of advocacy are to foster and encourage interest in language learning, to develop and strengthen language programs that respond to student needs and interests, to ensure that language programs are available, affordable, and accessible, and to develop awareness of the process of language learning in order to empower students as independent self-directed and lifelong language learners in the classroom and beyond.
Language advocacy takes place every day in the classrooms, through the dedicated professionalism of language educators. It also takes place in encounters everywhere, ranging from chance encounters to public meetings and high stakes conversations. It also takes place in emergency conditions – when a program is at risk or in danger. In all the variations of these conditions, it is essential that the language advocate – educator, parent, student, or other language stakeholder – be willing and prepared to engage in conversation, with “talking points” broad enough to individualize to the specific encounter.

Interdisciplinary approaches to language learning at all levels, involving team teaching, course modules, readings, and learning activities in an additional language can support sustainable motivation in linking language learning and student interests and needs. At the college and university levels, double majors and joint programs are additional possibilities.

In the classroom, language educators may wish to discuss individual student goals and purposes in language learning, provide instruction in independent self-directed learning especially useful during school breaks. Beyond the classroom, these same themes are relevant for the adult learner and the independent self-directed learner and can be discussed at the end of a semester or term of study. Theory and best practices from relevant disciplines can and should be incorporated into a holistic approach.

Affordability and accessibility remain major challenges, and online learning may provide pathways to language learning that offer both to many underserved groups. Motivation is another challenge, and language educators, advocates, and stakeholders need to make every effort to engage and retain student motivation and interest in the classroom, the community, and in the independent self-directed lifelong learner.

With 70M in the US who speak a language other than English in the home, but relatively few US students enrolled in foreign language courses, heritage language education can provide not only benefits to heritage language speakers and communities wishing to retain or re-acquire their heritage language, but also a significant resource in building foreign language skills in the US. Immersion programs have multiple benefits in term of language and cultural learning, as well as benefits to our society and beyond (Williams, 2019; Jaumont, 2017).

Advocacy, grounded in our belief in the value of multilingualism and operationalized in our classrooms and professional engagement, can be even more effective when driven by data, theory and best practices from relevant disciplines and social media, and our own willingness to engage at all levels with our “talking points” for each stakeholder group.

In essence, it is all about learner empowerment. Based on a shared core value of belief in global citizenship and the significance of multilingualism in creating a better world, we can all work together to empower students and learners of all ages to effectively embrace language learning (AMACAD, 2020).

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Note: This article was inspired by the author’s session at the 2021 NYSAFLT Annual Conference.

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Using the 5 E's to Investigate and Reflect on Culture with a Little “c”

Victoria Gilbert

Abstract: This article introduces a new way to teach culture with a little “c” using the lens of the scientific approach known as the 5 E’s (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, evaluation) in the target language. Examples from elementary and secondary Spanish language are presented and explained with relation to the lesson structure and linguistic functions. A framework for how to integrate little “c” culture concludes this teacher-to teacher article, drawing upon the author’s experience in teaching FLES classes for students with novice- to intermediate-level proficiency as well as graduate methods courses.

Keywords: Culture, Curriculum, Instruction, Methodology, Professional Development

As teachers of language, we often think of the forms and functions of language, but how often do we consider what language actually is? If language is the incarnation of thought, then the mere words of others can give us access to their thinking. Through that access, students can develop the capacity to understand the perspectives of others, which are at the root of the target culture. Thus, as students peel back the layers of language, they can begin to identify cultural perspectives that underlie cultural practices and products, and perhaps even adopt them. Scaffolded activities can enable students to borrow perspectives as they examine and interact with gestures, realia or authentic texts. Using the lens of the science approach known as the 5 E’s (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, evaluation), even novice students can interact with products and draw conclusions about practices and perspectives. Though these students may need to discuss their thoughts in their first language rather than the target language, teachers can still ask them to reflect and assess student understanding. This is essential to building intercultural competency.

Many teachers are familiar with ways to incorporate culture with a big “C” into their classroom practice. Culture with a big “C” includes the most visible and obvious examples of a target culture’s products and practices. Kramsch (2013) defines big “C” culture as a humanistic concept, the result of studying literature and the arts rather than an ethnographic or anthropological concept. Many representations of the culture iceberg (original by Hall, 1976) separate the visible or surface elements—including holidays, foods, arts, music, games, and dances—from more philosophical themes. But by focusing primarily on the surface, teachers may unwittingly generalize the target culture and promote stereotypes.
As language teaching has moved towards building communicative proficiency beginning in NYS in 1986, the revised NYS 2021 standards now place even more emphasis on the learner’s processing the actual cultural content for themselves, as an anthropologist would, rather than merely reading about it. This type of activity fulfills the revised New York State Learning Standards for World Languages (2021), Standards 4 & 5 in Culture.

- Standard 4: Learners use the target language to identify, describe, and explain the practices and products of the cultures studied as well as the cultural perspectives they suggest.
- Standard 5: Learners use the target language to compare the products and practices of the cultures studied and their own.

As learners use the language to identify, describe, compare, and explain the practices, products, and perspectives of the cultures studied or compare the products and practices of the target culture with their own, they have more agency in the investigation. By modeling curiosity and inquiry, teachers can help students explore little “c” culture and come to their own conclusions. This article
will support educators who want to push below the surface with their students regardless of proficiency level.

Many teachers wonder how they can teach about any culture in the target language. Even little “c” culture can mislead students into generalizing or missing the less dominant subcultures in the target language. A teacher’s classroom is a portal of sorts into the target culture. With mannerisms, collocations, idioms, and proverbs as well as realia from the target culture, educators can support students’ engagement with that culture (Kovacs 2017). By using the norms, non-verbal behaviors, realia and developmentally appropriate expressions of the target culture, as well as authentic resources or native speakers visiting the class, teachers can expose students to elements they would not otherwise encounter, especially in a textbook. Recreating the target culture makes it possible for students to experience and compare it to their own behaviors and views. Younger students may accept these new ways of doing things without question. For them, their target language teacher acts this way because that is just who they are. Older students may be more curious about the genesis of these differences and examine the practices or products used in class, whether a formal bow greeting or the choice of a formal versus informal pronoun. When students seek to explain how products and practices relate to each other, they engage with the underlying perspectives. The National Standards Collaborative Board’s 3 “Ps” framework of products, practices and perspectives helps teachers synthesize instruction of big “C” and little “c” all in one instructional approach. Lange (1999), as cited by Dema & Moeller (2012), says the 3Ps avoid “the common, overworked conflict between C and c by interweaving the formal and informal aspects of daily life, as one normally lives in the culture … It provides a systematic and contextual way to explore culture" (p.79).

Figure 2: 3Ps

While illustrating the connections between these elements in a target culture can be helpful, figuring out how to help students investigate, explain, and reflect on perspectives can still be
challenging. Often, with novice-level language, the 5Es or inquiry-based exploration can facilitate student access to perspectives. Adopting the lens of an anthropologist exploring a new culture, students can investigate authentic materials to develop their own cultural insights as they compare the target culture with their own L1 culture. When student proficiency is too low to create language that describes what they discover, the teacher can provide options so students can choose from descriptions, together generating new language expressions. Alternately, teachers can consider following the suggestions from the Intercultural Can-Do Reflection Scenarios created by NCSSFL-ACTFL (2018).

The framework for reflective activities involves:

- an introductory in-class component in the target language;
- a deeper reflection outside of class in English, or, if the learner’s proficiency level allows, in the target language; and
- a follow-up in-class target language component….the lack of sufficient language proficiency does not prevent the internalization of cultural perspectives, it only hinders the ability to communicate them in the target language. Learners internalize perspectives by reflecting on them and expressing them in their native language before they express those perspectives in the target language. p.1

Yet, the question remains, how do teachers include little “c” in their lesson plans so that even novice learners access them? Here are some of the examples that teachers shared at the annual NYSAFLT conference in the fall of 2021:

- flagging down a bus rather than expecting it to stop at a bus stop as acted out in role plays and videos
- name days (saints’ days) discovered by comparing calendars
- shutdowns due to siesta time discovered by comparing shop hours

A useful list comes from Pardede (2013) who suggests that it is inevitable that we incorporate culture in a world language classroom. This list includes:

- notions like where and when people eat; how they make a living; the attitudes they express towards friends and members of their families; which expressions they use to show approval or disapproval, educational attitudes, time and space patterns, work values, etc. (p.5)

One simple question the author of this article uses to guide her planning is, “What would a native speaking peer recognize immediately (whether practice, product or perspective) in a particular linguistic context?” This is a wonderful aid because the answers can support any age or proficiency level student. For example, asking the question on behalf of her Kindergarten class led the author to a rhyme that concludes all stories, “Colorín colorado, este cuento se ha acabado” as well as another rhyme, “Sana, sana colita de rana” used to “cure” small boo-boos. Coming up with everyday little “c” culture can also happen naturally when we consider non-verbal behaviors such as eye contact, gestures, mimicry, or distance between speakers; collocations and idiomatic expressions in daily use, references to literary characters or popular entertainment, and realia that we encounter in the target culture. With realia, one can build on students’ natural curiosity,
especially if a discrepant event occurs when presented with the authentic items. Discrepant events are those “surprises” that are often used by science teachers to provoke curiosity because an unexpected or unknown thing occurs. For example, a toy animal may emit a novel sound, or a magic box may hold something unusually textured. Allowing for natural student inquiry about the items by using the inquiry framework (originally developed for science classes by the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study) enacts a process based on the constructivist view of learning. This process, known as the 5 Es: **Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend, Evaluate**, can also be used by language teachers to facilitate students’ learning about target culture as participants in the cultural space between themselves and native speakers. All it takes is replacing the word “skill or concept” in the traditional model with “artifact” to continue our anthropologist metaphor. Kramsch (2013) refers to learners taking the “third space,” or a position where students see themselves from within and outside of themselves. The dialogue surrounding the inquiry into an artifact of little “c” allows learners to build their own identities in response to the experience. The 5 Es give students and teachers common experiences, to use and build on prior knowledge and experience, to construct meaning, and to continually assess their understanding of a concept as their understanding of it shifts with additional evaluation and sharing.

Figure 3: 5Es, from BSCS Adapted for World Languages

**FIGURE 1.**
Summary of 5Es details (based on Bybee, 2014) adapted to the World Language Classroom

**Engagement**
Short activities that promote curiosity and elicit prior knowledge through interactions with products or practices. These may relate to past and present learning experiences.

**Exploration experiences**
Provide students with a common base of activities within which current concepts are identified and change is facilitated if misconceptions are in place. Learners generate new ideas, questions and conduct investigation.

**Explanation**
During this phase, students’ attention is focused on a particular aspect of the artifact and gives them an opportunity to demonstrate understanding, skills or behavior. Explanation from the teacher may be needed to guide learner to a deeper understanding.

**Elaboration**
Teachers challenge and extend students conceptual understanding and skills through application during additional activities.

**Evaluation**
Students are encouraged to assess their understanding and reflect on their progress toward intercultural competency.

It may be useful to examine one possible inquiry experience designed for novices with their accompanying scaffolds. Imagine a teacher brings in two items to share with students without labeling or announcing anything about them at first.
In this first stage, the teacher engages the students by passing around the objects, having students connect to previous vocabulary related to actions, such as drinking, or make a list of possible liquids the objects contain. Then, they explore the two objects using the materials reference list, (Figure 5A & B) “Intercultural Analysis”. They may also view videos with the objects in actual use such as “Porron” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn8QQETZOR4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn8QQETZOR4) or “Calabazo para agua!#23” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sgn1IkR3a4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sgn1IkR3a4). Finally, students work, with the teacher’s facilitation, to explain what each object’s function is and perhaps sort some pre-made statements of advantages and disadvantages based on the cultural practices they see in the videos. Then, for homework, students would be asked to complete the Venn Diagram (Figure 6). The degree of reflection in the VENN diagram analysis is an opportunity for formative assessment of student’s developing intercultural competency.
Figure 5: Front & back of Intercultural Analysis worksheet for homework

**Intercultural Analysis:** Sometimes we encounter things that are unknown and we have to make a best guess about its use and function. Explore the object below and make some decisions based on your observations. Use the organizer to gather what you and your classmates notice about it in español. Then respond to questions on the back in English.

**Características de un Objeto Misterioso:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Forma:</th>
<th>Condición:</th>
<th>Tamaño:</th>
<th>Olor:</th>
<th>Uso/Función</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Madera</td>
<td>Irregular /orgánico</td>
<td>nueva</td>
<td>diminuto</td>
<td>Sin olor</td>
<td>inusual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Cuadrado</td>
<td>Buena (usible)</td>
<td>pequeño</td>
<td>picante</td>
<td>ceremonial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orgánico</td>
<td>Círculo / esférico</td>
<td>Mala (roto)</td>
<td>mediano</td>
<td>Aromático</td>
<td>cuotidiano</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>/ fragante</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plástico</td>
<td>Triángulo</td>
<td>Usado/gastado</td>
<td>grande</td>
<td></td>
<td>salud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidrio</td>
<td>pirámide</td>
<td>brillante</td>
<td>enorme</td>
<td></td>
<td>decorativo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otra:</td>
<td>Otra:</td>
<td>Mate</td>
<td>gigantesco</td>
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<td>entretener</td>
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<td>investigar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How does this object compare to others you know? Pick one and compare them using the VENN diagram below.
2. How would you guess this object is used in the target culture? What might be special or important about it?
3. Objects often reveal something about what the people who make them think? Can you identify something about the thoughts of the maker of the object?
The teacher then extends the task by asking students to extend or **elaborate** by comparing these objects to some in their own L1 culture. They might bring in an image they printed out for homework to complete the first chart. These might include water bottles or pouches. Upon their return to class, the teacher might **evaluate** the students’ understanding by asking them to share a question they would pose to a native speaker about the objects.

Everyday objects serve to practice the more mundane descriptions of color and shape, and can also hint at the values and perspectives of a culture- For example, the French backpack in Figure 6 does not provide a pocket for water bottles. What might that mean?

Figure 6: Find the French Backpack (original images from author)

Où est le sac à dos français?

(Where is the French backpack?)

Other examples of how students can explore cultural artifacts include sorting expressions by degree of emotion into a language ladder such as the one in Figure 7. A language ladder is a reference for a range of expressions. Students can use social media to explore and compare memes, or even emojis, specific to the target culture with their own, available at *Emojiall: Multilingual Emoji Dictionary* (https://www.emojiall.com/).
Using graphic organizers can also help focus student attention on specific aspects of cultural realia that points to its significance as a cultural item. These can allow a side-by-side comparison of the cultural artifact (Figure 8) or borrow a kaleidoscope of lenses from different fields so that students can investigate using these perspectives to examine something from every angle (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Side by Side Comparison (original author worksheet)
Finally, a new tool exists to support teacher planning based on the use of authentic resources at multiple proficiency levels. The New York State Articulated Performance Assessment Transfer Tasks Template (NYSAPAT, Eddy, 2006). The unit plans using the template provide authentic resources in a variety of languages for students to investigate cultural phenomena in the interpretive mode, analyze and explore further in the interpersonal mode and then, explain their understanding in a presentational mode task across three different contiguous levels of proficiency. The units are available in a free database at the DesignSpace (queenscollege.classroads.org) to any teacher who registers with a school email at the database. Teachers all over NY state have submitted units for consideration as exemplars into database. One exemplar is included in Figure 10.
By treating the same cultural theme at three different contiguous proficiency levels, the teacher can differentiate as needed for the variety of proficiency levels often found in language classrooms. In sharing these resources with educators, Eddy has made it possible for teachers to focus on adapting the content for their students rather than spending time reinventing the wheel. When teachers put the content of the culture at the center of their instruction, students work to satisfy their curiosity as they explore another way of thinking. As Curtain & Dahlberg (2016) remind us:

Content-related instruction supports what we know about how the brain makes connections and how learning takes place. Students are actively engaged in constructing meaning and making sense of the interesting world presented to them through the vehicle of the target language. (p.227)

Students connect to language when they explore the different ways target cultures tell stories, solve problems and give shape to their values. By facilitating encounters with little “c” culture and helping students reflect on what it means, student intercultural competency is cultivated and boosted. Using the 5Es outlined in this article, teachers will discover how engaged in little “c” culture they become too.
References


Dr. Gilbert grew up in three different countries and has taught world languages in elementary school (Spanish & French) and science for over thirty years in NYC. She received her doctorate from Teachers College in educational leadership and is a frequent presenter on authentic resources and IPA design. For ten years, she was also curriculum specialist and professional development leader for Global Language Project (GLP). Dr. Gilbert has taught FLES methodology classes and served as lead instructor in NYU’s and GLP’s StarTalk program for teachers. In 2020, she received the NYSAFLT Teacher of the Year award. Currently, Dr. Gilbert is the Chair of the Modern Language Department and coordinates the Action Research program at Saint David’s School.
As educators, we know time is precious. We try our best not to sacrifice any part of our curricula, but to no avail. Yet, it is not the material that needs to be trimmed, it is the class time spent toward its assessment. Pre-pandemic, I began to develop non-traditional assessments for some chapters. During the pandemic, I worked to create assessments for the entire curriculum and transferred materials online as well. Post-pandemic, I continue to utilize the strategies learned for e-education in the classroom.

I am a French lecturer at the university level where, during the academic year, I teach the 100 level courses. When I started as an adjunct in 2017, an extra hour of time was allotted to our schedules for the purpose of language labs. As the language labs no longer physically existed, we made use of this time for more speaking and listening opportunities in the classroom. However, more often than not, the hour would default to assessments. This is what prompted me to develop non-traditional assessments; so that time could be reclaimed and be used for which it was meant.

Of course, at this point, homework assignments were still physically completed to be handed in or to be discussed in class. Most of my assignments came from the accompanying workbook to the text. I decided one semester to check for completion while students checked their answers against a projected image of the responses (either a Word or a Smartboard file). I would then have a Q and A with them and segue into the new lesson as another way of reclaiming class time. I was not satisfied with this strategy. Conversations with colleagues led to investigating online alternatives; textbook companies offer online platforms for their texts and workbooks, but many schools remain with paper copies.

The department made the change to an online text and workbook. The extra hour originally allotted as class time for language labs was now to be work completed online by the students. The online platform of the workbook component offers plenty of listening, writing, and reading activities. There are speaking/recording ones too, but they have not always worked properly, depending on the server and device used by the students. I usually assign the audio activities as homework for the chapter. These activities have two settings: practice or graded. The ebook has interactive

“*This is what prompted me to develop non-traditional assessments; so that time could be reclaimed and be used for which it was meant.***
components for classroom use or for the students’ own review. The best parts are the immediate feedback students receive upon completion and that they can redo the activity.

I still planned listening, reading, writing, and speaking practice for class, but there was more time to be saved and spent on them if assessments became project based. I changed some of the traditional tests to some type of written assignment/project such as a pen pal letter, description of a dream house, and telling a story in the past. I gave instructions on what information to include and created rubrics. I created three: one for written assessment, one for oral assessment, and one for the final project. However, these were all physically handed in to me.

With COVID, everything had to shift. Although the classes met synchronously, everything, lessons and assessments, had to be restructured. The online component remained the same, but I could no longer use a traditional assessment for any chapter. And if it were necessary, the exam had to be completed online. First, I had to learn how to use the Learning Management System used by the university. The LMS had always been in place, but I only used it for class announcements. Until this point in time, I had never investigated all of its features.

The spring break in 2020 was extended to allow for training sessions for the transition from in-person to online teaching. The university’s bootcamp training showed me how to utilize the LMS to my advantage. I realized I could create truly worthwhile assessments. I also reviewed all the materials I used and chose the ones I thought would be the most effective online. Once I had created a file for each chapter, I scanned them. I created notes on Word to use not just during the lesson, but also to be posted as part of the chapter file/module.

Listening activities could still be planned since Zoom has the Share Sound feature. The Break-Out Rooms feature allowed for dialogues to still be possible. One obstacle popped up: once in the break-out room, students lost the shared screen which included the directions. Fortunately, a couple of tech savvy students knew how to overcome it. The students had to take a screenshot of the activity, or, depending on the device they were using, to take a photo with their phones, so they could view it as they worked on the dialogue. Another obstacle was, when switching to the break-out rooms, students could be kicked out of Zoom. This did not happen too often, but it was always a possibility due to extremely high usage during lockdown. Students could always rejoin the class. If necessary, I could also move students from one break-out room to another. Since WiFi access could be a problem, I recorded every class session. I created a shared Google file where I would upload the recordings. The LMS had limited data space, so I found this to be the best solution.

The break-out rooms in Zoom helped regain the interpersonal aspect to a live classroom setting, but it was not enough. The LMS has a discussion board so I added discussion posts as another component to course participation. The posts are more than just answering or asking questions or commenting on other posts. I post short readings or quick writing assignments that I used to do in class or as added homework assignments. I enjoyed reading their posts and how they would communicate with each other, en français!

The LMS has links to platforms like Voice Thread. Since I was new to using Voice Thread and I knew many students were likewise unfamiliar with it, I decided not to get too complicated with it
at this level. I simply created different slides with questions or discussion tasks to which the students recorded their responses. The students’ recordings can be made private (only I can hear) or public (everyone can hear). Sometimes I required their responses to be public so they would have to comment (ex. agree or disagree) on someone else’s response.

There was one early traditional assessment I could not find a way to adapt to an alternative version. The LMS allows for an exam to be uploaded by choosing the assessment link (there is assignment, assessment, Voice Thread, etc. options for graded work); time constraints can also be set. With a World Language, however, it is not optimal. Language exams tend to rely on written responses more than any other; the LMS would mark a response incorrect if it did not precisely match what the educator entered as acceptable. There is only credit or no credit. We cannot predict all possibilities, nor would we give full or no credit if, for example, accents were missing or inaccurate. So, instead of choosing the assessment link, I chose the assignment option. Choosing the assignment option allows me to make comments and grade it according to my own parameters. Comments can be made directly on the assignment or on a side column, similar to the editing feature on Google or Word. If there were any problems with any student uploading a file, they could just email it directly to me.

During the summer I teach a six-week intensive 100 level course and a six-week intensive 200 level course. Since COVID began, these courses have been a hybrid of synchronous and asynchronous parts. I set a once-a-week live session to touch base with students and to reinforce certain grammatical points. I built in reading and speaking practice as well. My lessons are pre-recorded and uploaded to a shared Google file. As mentioned earlier, uploading directly to the LMS is possible, but due to constraints on data space, they have to be deleted after a while. I prefer the shared folder so students always have access to the lessons as well as the recorded live sessions. The Voice Thread assessments are more involved with speaking, reading, listening, and/or reading components. For example, for one 200 level chapter assessment, students read an interview with Corneille, who survived the Rwandan genocide, then listen to his song *Parce qu’on vient de loin*, and finally verbally respond to a series of discussion points.

Now the big question was what could I do for a final exam for the semester and summer courses? A traditional final exam online did not seem viable. There are concerns on how to properly proctor students and to ensure integrity. I opted for a cultural project. As with any of the online assessments, I set up parameters and created a rubric. The shared file comes in handy here too; students can sign up for their topics on a spreadsheet. Google offers a spreadsheet option. I just list the topics on the left column, with the right columns set for students’ names. With editor status, they can type in their names and it is automatically saved.

Starting in August 2020, my classes were in-person. A class size of almost 30 were in an amphitheater that normally holds 100 students. They were all spread out, while I was on a stage with a microphone. The only tool I had at my disposal was the projected screen of my computer/Smartboard. The Smartboard feature on the computer itself allowed me to write directly on the computer screen. Accompanied with the interactive nature of the ebook my in-person lessons were again adjusted to match the situation, but similar to the Zoom lessons.
I still relied on the LMS for notes and hand-outs so students could manipulate them, on the computer or by hand, as they needed for their learning process. I also kept the discussion posts, online assessments, and the final cultural project. I continued to upload the pre-recorded lessons to a shared folder. These were from the summer. Absenteeism was higher at that time, so this helped students from falling behind. During the summer sessions I had created grade sheets for all assessments. This way I can easily check if students have met the requirements, how well they did so, and make note of vocabulary and grammar utilized before referring to the rubric.

By August 2021, everyone was back in a regular classroom, still masked. I kept the layout of my courses the same on the LMS. It makes the flow easier when all the notes and handouts are on a screen to manipulate as needed. Let’s not forget the trees saved by not having to print individual copies. I no longer share any recorded lectures as student attendance has normalized. If any students are absent, they have access to all materials online. I still use the discussion board. It offers the shyer students an opportunity to participate more. Plus, with more than one section, students get to communicate with others of the same level. What started as a pre-pandemic search for ways to maximize class time for more meaningful interactions by switching to project based assessments turned into a transfiguration of how I teach post-pandemic. After almost 25 years of teaching, I continue to explore, to tweak, and to improve.

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assessments turned into a transfiguration of how I teach post-pandemic. After almost 25 years of teaching, I continue to explore, to tweak, and to improve.
Relaxation for Teachers: Finding Life-Work Balance

Susan Torres

As an educator I felt overwhelmed with stress and I learned strategies to help me find life-work balance. I joined a writing class to be able to relax and my teacher, a former teacher, explained that teaching meant existing in a heightened state of emotion or a fight or flight mode most of the time. It sparked the idea that many educators could also relate and could benefit from using relaxation techniques. This article compiles strategies that teachers can use both while teaching and outside of school.

There are many workshops that promote students’ social emotional learning and mindfulness techniques to improve their academic achievement but perhaps more workshops need to be focused on helping teachers. Nonetheless, the benefits of relaxation for teachers can also extend to the students. Teachers who practice relaxation techniques may model behavior that children and adolescents can reciprocate. They are likely to be able to engage more positively with students and create a peaceful learning environment.

According to Dr. Gail Parker, psychologist and yoga teacher, “When you love yourself for who you are, not for who someone else needs you to be, you can love others the same way.” (Parker, 2020). Accepting yourself exactly as you are and showing unconditional love for yourself is essential for self-care. The phrase, “take care of yourself first and then help others” (Parker, 2020), is repeatedly used. However, the profession of education is based on serving the community and often teachers overextend themselves both at school and at home. According to Rodriguez, teachers expressed that they feel compelled to set their personal needs aside and put their students first. Her research demonstrates that teachers pay attention to their students’ social-emotional needs at the expense of their own, which tends to result in burnout. (Rodriguez et al., 2020). Chronic stress can have adverse effects on both the teachers themselves and their students. Prolonged release of cortisol, a stress hormone, impacts the brain’s executive function and memory. Educators who communicate anxiety through body language and vocal tone tend to alienate students and impact their sense of safety at school and at home in the virtual classroom. (Brackett & Cipriano, 2020).

Additionally, teachers who burnout are more likely to leave the profession. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that since 2016 more than 270,000 teachers have left the profession and they have projected this to continue at the same rate through 2026. Furthermore, over half of the teachers who have left, are doing so to work in a different field. (Torpey, 2018).

On the other hand, research reveals that teachers with the ability to recognize their own emotions, and who express and regulate them effectively, report less burnout and greater satisfaction in their jobs. It may be due to the fact that people who experience pleasant emotions
evaluate people, places and events more positively and have increased mental flexibility and creativity. The researchers also said that educators who work with administrators who have well-developed emotional skills experience more positive emotions and have better quality relationships with students. Consequently, those students are more resilient when facing difficulty and take risks when learning. They become more engaged and committed to learning. (Brackett & Cipriano, 2020). The evidence shows that relaxation and managing emotions are crucial to the well-being of both students and teachers.

**Breathe deeply**

The first strategy to achieve relaxation is breathing. It has the ability to reduce stress by focusing on exhalation. It also has the ability to invigorate by focusing on inhalation. Breathing is a balancing act since it tenses and relaxes the body with each breath. Placing the hands on the belly and chest allows the mind and body to connect and pay attention to the breath. This creates awareness of how fast, slow, deep or shallow the breath can be and it can reveal the state of mind. Fast and shallow breaths are evidence of an alert state. Slow and deep breaths indicate a calm state and consciously breathing slowly and focusing on the exhalation can promote tranquility. (Farhi, 1996).

**Drink water**

A second strategy is simply drinking water. It hydrates and relaxes you. It lets the body know that all is well because drinking water is possible. The fight or flight response of stress decreases the ability to eat or drink and the mouth gets dry because it blocks those functions to enable you to fight back or run away. However, when a person in stress drinks water then the body receives it gladly and self-regulates. It is beneficial to eat and drink mindfully as to show gratitude for nourishment (Lama et al., 2016).

**Practice mindfulness**

A third strategy is eating what makes the body feel good, lighter and less tired. It heals the body from the inside out. It involves checking mystery ingredients that may be unhealthy. It's important to remember that preparing meals is an act of self-care. Mindful eating and savoring the texture, smell and taste of the food heightens attention to the present moment. The present moment is the only thing that you can control and therefore it leads to serenity. It is taxing and fruitless to worry about the future, (which is unknown) or to complain about the past (which cannot be changed). Many teachers have witnessed how young children can be present in the moment and all they can think about is how to make that moment last longer when they’re playing games. It is helpful to strive to remember what it was like to be fully present as children. It requires becoming aware of the surrounding environment and using the five senses mindfully as much as possible throughout the day. For example, when seated on a desk, feel the chair’s support and appreciate the firmness of the desk. Notice how the feet are rooted to the ground.
when standing and how the breeze caresses your face when you walk. It is also essential to stay in the present moment and listen attentively when having a conversation. For instance, listen to the words children and adults say when they speak and hold space for their self-expression rather than anticipate how to respond.

**Have fun**

Another tip is to ask yourself what you do for fun. What are some activities that you enjoy doing? Scheduling a few minutes to do something that you love such as reading a book can bring the stress levels down. Try your best to set time aside for a “mini-vacation” where you do something fun and focus on yourself for a few minutes during the day or after school. Simply walking away from the building for a few minutes during lunch can bring you a boost of renewed energy. If that’s not feasible, then looking out the window and noticing the beauty of nature or a different environment is also helpful. Reaching out to talk to a friend is also reassuring and comforting.

**Make connections**

“The more we turn toward others, the more joy we experience, and the more joy we experience, the more we can bring joy to others” said the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. (Lama et al., 2016). Teaching has become a highly competitive field where colleagues are viewed as competitors, not team members. However, fellow teachers are often willing to share their expertise when given the chance. I have personally asked for advice from social workers, special education teachers, school psychologists, speech therapists, English as a New Language teachers and other educators to provide a more well-rounded education for our students. They have given me insights about social emotional and language learning that I have been able to incorporate into my repertoire. There is also a wealth of knowledge and materials posted online, so it isn't necessary to "reinvent the wheel." Finding resources and sharing them is a good way to make yourself feel good, but should not be done expecting something in return, because that will lead to stress.

The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu also said that the birth of empathy and compassion is this recognition that we’re all connected. (Lama et al., 2016). These wise human beings were trying to teach us that we have more in common than we realize. We need each other to survive and thrive. It is also beneficial to be aware that when we’re having difficulties understanding other people we need to look within ourselves to notice what is causing the difficulty, and often it is something that we recognize in ourselves. For example, if someone is causing you to feel angry, find the source of your anger. It is important to acknowledge that emotion and release it since you have the ability to control how you respond. There are many things that are out of our control such as how other people think or act. However, we can recognize that how they act is a learned behavior due to life circumstances but deep down they also want peace and happiness. (Parker, 2020).
Create self-awareness

There is a special meditation called Metta Meditation where compassion toward the self and all beings is practiced. It involves consciously directing loving-kindness by repeating mantras such as “May you be happy and peaceful” or “May I be happy and peaceful.” (Lama et al., 2016). It empowers you to be kind to yourself since it is difficult to have compassion for people when you are not aware of how you feel about yourself or others. It is acceptable to say I am angry or this person made me feel frustrated but I still wish them peace. This anger doesn’t need to stay with you, therefore breathing and acquiring positive thoughts help with inner peace.

The Emotional Freedom Technique is another method to delve into inner peace. It encourages practitioners to become aware of how they feel, accept themselves as they are, verbalize the situation and let go of the emotion and/or the situation. It is imperative to accept emotions and release them because if not, they resurface as stress. It involves tapping on acupressure points that correspond with meridians, which are energy pathways. The phrasing can come from already written templates or any words that arise as the participant taps along the points. It can also be done with imagining that you are tapping on the points. It can be repeated as many times as necessary to destress and it can help to create self-awareness. (Schiffman, 2022)

Soothe the body

Stress relief can begin by asking the question: where is the tension in my body? Sometimes we are not aware that our shoulders carry all the weight of the responsibilities we take on everyday. A gentle self-massage by stroking down the neck, and down the forearms are a couple of ways to diminish stress. There are also many acupressure points to review online that soothe tension.

Restorative yoga allows for the body to release the tightness that it holds. It is soothing for the mind and body because it involves accommodating the body in comfortable positions with bolsters and blankets. We may not realize that when we go to sleep we still carry that tension with us but with restorative yoga we can consciously let go of the stress that no longer serves us. Yoga is about becoming comfortable with the discomfort of our thoughts, feelings and bodies to increase resilience.

Teachers may also be able to practice Chair Yoga. Mountain pose is a powerful pose to sense your inner strength. It’s practiced by sitting up straight to lengthen the spine in order to allow energy to flow from head to toes. You can give the side of the torso a gentle stretch by leaning to the right side for a few breaths and leaning to the left side. A soft twist by sitting up straight and turning the torso to look behind the chair from both the right and left side is another good exercise to loosen up. Moving the head side to side gives the neck a subtle stretch. Then, hunching up the shoulders and releasing down slowly helps alleviate the shoulders. Rolling the wrists and wiggling the fingers after writing or typing is a good way to take care of the hands. Pointing and flexing the feet gives the calf and feet a way to decompress. Rooting the corners of the feet while standing and sitting enables you to feel grounded and strong.

Qigong and Tai chi are also optimal ways to relax and gather energy gently. One qigong practice of shaking the body like a leaf and smiling can be an effective way to feel lighter. It may look
silly but as the Dalai Lama says, it is beneficial to learn to laugh at ourselves and not take ourselves so seriously. The act of laughing, yawning and crying prevents build up of muscular tension.

**Relax the mind**

“Sometimes doing nothing is more powerful and productive than any action you can take. It teaches you to reflect, restore, and rejuvenate in order to prepare yourself for action” Dr. Gail Parker. (Parker, 2020). Teachers are expected to work before school starts and bring work home. They are required to keep their minds focused and attentive to any complication that may need to be solved. Contrary to what society has taught us, working harder or thinking constantly about a problem does not necessarily solve the issue. Dr. Parker recommends taking a few minutes for self-care and self-compassion. It is essential for emotional, physical and psychological well-being. It means mindfully taking a step back to allow the brain to revitalize in a peaceful space.

It is possible to create a peaceful space by opting to select where our attention goes. We can allow things to be as they are and try not to manufacture an opinion or give in to judgment. Labeling noise as just noise gives us the freedom to discontinue thinking and overthinking about our displeasure of the sound. We can let it be as it is and focus on our breath or simply be in the present moment. This strategy can be helpful when we’re trying to find peace in the daytime or at night when we’re trying to get some sleep.

The ability to observe our thoughts, let them go, and just be present is often practiced in meditation. It has gained popularity because of its many benefits for overall health and mental stamina. There are many ways to meditate. It is not just sitting still. Exercising, doing cardio enables you to clear your mind which can be a form of meditation. In addition, giving yourself time after a workout to feel the muscles release tension is also a quick and effective way to relax your body and your mind. Meditation and self-care involve actions that bring you joy, such as gardening, dancing, reading, writing and walking. It is also essential to make a conscious effort to include activities that embrace the mind and body’s natural state of relaxation. It is necessary to strive for balance between the activities that cause stress and the activities that promote contentment instead of the extreme way of working hard and playing hard.

There is also sound meditation, listening to singing bowls and allowing the vibration of the sound to resonate with the body since it is mainly composed of water, or simply listening to music. It is often practiced alongside reiki. Reiki is a relaxation technique that brings tranquility and can sometimes require a practitioner’s guidance. There are many public libraries that provide free meditation classes, sound meditation and reiki.

It is vital to recognize that stress is just an alarm clock to alert you to react and protect yourself. The key to relaxation is to be cognizant of emotions and frustrations and allow yourself the freedom to let them go. Self-awareness, observing thoughts, remaining present in the moment, collaborating and taking care of the mind and body lead to inner peace and self-compassion (McGonigal, 2015).

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Relaxation strategies are indispensable for teachers inside and outside of school. There are many professional development workshops that enforce social-emotional learning for students, but few that support our teachers. Research shows that teachers give so much of themselves to care for their students' social-emotional needs that they neglect to care for their own health. (Rodriguez et al., 2020). However, there are studies that convey that educators and administrators with developed emotional skills influence students to be more resilient and engaged in learning. Educators and children benefit from validating themselves, their emotions and expanding their capacity to return to their own natural state of calmness. (Brackett & Cipriano, 2020).

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Susan Torres has certifications in yoga and reiki, as well as New York state professional certificates in ESOL k-12, Spanish 7-12 and Childhood Education 1-6. She has experience teaching English as a New Language, interpreting and translating Spanish-English for Long Island public schools. Ms. Torres presented “Relaxation for Teachers” for LILT and she was invited by NYSAFLT to format the presentation into this article.
Lessons Learned: Pandemic Strategies for Teaching Language

Adelia Williams and Geraldine O’Neill

Abstract: The abrupt transition to the remote educational environment in spring 2020 owing to the pandemic forced many of us to improvise and experiment with new digital technologies. In teaching elementary language (Italian and French), we developed innovative pedagogical techniques in the remote classroom that continue to enhance language learning. In this article, we offer successful teaching strategies that incorporate remote modalities to enrich and support students, and that remain useful beyond the pandemic.

Keywords: Instruction, Professional Development, Technology

The abrupt transition to the remote educational environment in spring 2020 owing to the pandemic forced many of us to improvise and experiment with new digital technologies. In teaching elementary world languages (Italian and French), we developed innovative pedagogical techniques in the remote classroom that continue to enhance language learning. In this article, we will offer successful teaching strategies that incorporate remote modalities to enrich and support students, and that remain useful beyond the pandemic.

While earlier in the pandemic the expectation was that we would return to a “normal” environment, there is still much uncertainty around the long-term impact of COVID-19 on teaching methodologies. Students and teachers will be sick or quarantined. Our approach must allow students, even when they are unable to attend class, to progress and succeed, with timely grading and testing policies, curriculum, and course modalities. The classroom is not the same as it was pre-pandemic; it has expanded to a wall-less space, sometimes surrounded by a white box, sometimes locked into ear buds, sometimes a “room with a view” provided by a screen, either in front of or in the hands of students. Technology has become a significant means to improving educational outcomes. Most significantly, technology offers the teacher innumerable, meaningful, and beneficial ways to access information and to involve students in the learning process. As teachers, we have become the gateway to an infinite variety of information sources and scholastic activities that do not require a physical reality.

“The classroom is not the same as it was pre-pandemic; it has expanded to a wall-less space, sometimes surrounded by a white box, sometimes locked into ear buds, sometimes a “room with a view” provided by a screen, either in front of or in the hands of students.”

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What lessons have we learned that we can carry into the future? We must greatly improve our understanding of technology and ability to use all of the resources available to us. We must recognize that our work as educators goes well beyond instruction and into compassion.

In this article, we will focus on two modalities: a HyFlex model that combines in-class learning with Zoom, and a fully online model that is both synchronous and asynchronous. The two modalities share some features: we leave very little to chance and are prepared to pivot at a moment’s notice. Our courses are structured with respect to content, yet flexible enough to adapt to disruptions. For example, our students know that, in case of a technical problem, we will have a backup activity or exercise on the online course shell for them to complete independently. It will then be reviewed at the next class.

Because it may take students more time to grasp concepts in the Zoom environment, we allowed unscheduled time throughout the term to reinforce topics. It’s also a good idea to prioritize course or chapter contents so that topics scheduled at the end can be abridged or eliminated altogether in favor of more important content.

Both modalities share challenges that must be addressed. For example, not all students have accessible, reliable internet, or quiet spaces in which to work. Others might be hearing or visually challenged. Both modalities share advantages, such as connecting students with native language speakers, and offering students and teachers a degree of flexibility not possible in a brick and mortar environment. And, of course, both modalities rely on best practices in foreign language teaching and learning that we already employ, for example: creating community; ensuring that students are following and understanding; mixing it up with large group, small group, and individual work; enhancing curriculum with video, film, and interactive exercises, and planning an effective wrap up activity.

**HYFLEX - Instructor A**

In academic year 2020-2021, I taught Elementary Italian as a HyFlex class. In a HyFlex course, the instructor teaches in parallel to two distinct groups of students: one in-class group, and one where students participate remotely on a monitor or monitors. According to Beatty (2019), who conceptualized the HyFlex model, four values have guided the HyFlex design effort since its beginning in 2006:

1. **Learner Choice:** Provide meaningful alternative participation modes and enable students to choose between participation modes daily, weekly, or topically.
2. **Equivalency:** Provide learning activities in all participation modes which lead to equivalent learning outcomes.
3. **Reusability:** Utilize artifacts from learning activities in each participation mode as “learning objects’ for all students.
4. **Accessibility:** Equip students with technology skills and equitable access to all participation modes.

Activities across the two participation modes might overlap, and they may not always be the same. Instructor materials are far ranging, and might include video, audio, PowerPoint, as well as
traditional pedagogies, such as lecture, recitation, memorization, translation, and grammar presentations. While relatively easy to learn, HyFlex presents unique challenges and limitations, and can be intimidating and frustrating. For example, there is a great deal of experimentation in an effort to identify successful strategies and approaches. Additionally, it is difficult, if not impossible, for in-person students to communicate directly with remote students. In these cases, I assigned extra-curricular asynchronous activities to allow both sets of students to work together. There can be a lack of consistency when students change their mode of participation, with students switching from on-site to remote engagement. While in-person students take active part in the learning, remote students might observe passively.

In order to foster belonging and connection, I incorporated low-tech activities into my interactions with them. These include: setting aside time before, after, and even in the middle of class for students to informally interact with me, and each other, and by arranging one-one-one conferences, both remote and in person; introducing myself on the online discussion board before the term begins, and asking students to do the same. Students post basic information, as well as their hobbies, activities, and one interesting thing about themselves. This can later serve as a fun, in-class ice-breaker.

These are some of the digital tools that I will use beyond pandemic teaching: recording classes for students to review at any time, especially when they miss class; showing short grammar and conversation lessons and cultural videos (YouTube has an extensive variety of videos); narrating PowerPoint slides; captioning video lectures; making slides and notes available online; pivoting to remote learning in cases of inclement weather, illness, and emergencies; streaming films; and offering some exercises, assignments, activities, and testing over Zoom, especially oral testing for faculty-student interviews and student-to-student interactions, both of which can be recorded for later evaluation. With regard to written testing, a Zoom proctor feature exists, however it is not always necessary. We have opted for multiple and varied short, low-stakes assessments, along with open-book and open-note testing, and open-ended questions that require individualized responses. Multiple choice questions are not advised in this format.

It is essential that all cameras are trained on the student, and that the teacher is visible, undistracted and alert. Test-taking rules should be shared in written reminders and a slide before the exam begins. All participants should be on mute. When a student has a question, it can be asked and answered over the written Chat function so as not to disturb others. We have also found Open Educational Resources (OER); VoiceThread; and Kahoot! to be valuable resources.

OER are no-cost online educational materials (textbooks, exercises, assignments, worksheets, etc.) developed by professionals in a plethora of fields. A list of some of the preeminent OER sites for language learning appear at the end of this article under Resources.

VoiceThread is a mobile app used for interactive conversation, with both audio and visual accessibility features. A basic version is available without cost, while advanced features and upgrades are available for purchase. Recordings of webinars on using VoiceThread for teaching
languages are found at: https://voicethread.com/workshops/teaching-languages-with-voicethread-9/

Kahoot! is a free, online student-response, game-based eLearning tool that can be used both synchronously and asynchronously for assessments, assignments, group projects, homework, and polls. Kahoot! makes the learning process motivating and engaging by giving students a way to actively participate in friendly and fun competition. Students will find Kahoot! to be simple and intuitive, and you can teach yourself to use it, as I did, with YouTube tutorials, and videos on the Kahoot.com site.

Importantly, Kahoot! offers a safe learning environment for students with reading and visual impairments, and for those who are shy, introverted or hesitant to participate in the classroom. This is because students respond anonymously and are given ample time to complete the games. Students can ponder questions in an unhurried, private fashion, and will not be put on the spot or embarrassed if they answer incorrectly. The best part about Kahoot! is that you don’t have to reinvent the wheel. It is easy to begin with a shared Kahoot! before editing and customizing your own. There are over 400,000 results in Italian, over 1.7 million results in French, and over 1.8 million results in Spanish.

What have I learned from the experience?

- Actively seek out and experiment with new learning platforms and technologies.
- Have a Plan B and C for unexpected adjustments.
- Store as much material and activities online as possible.
- Be kind and understanding – to your students and to yourself!

REMOTE SYNCHRONOUS: Instructor B

As many second-language teachers learned very quickly as the pandemic progressed, they could no longer count on face-to-face interactions to develop oral skills. Current textbook series offer on-line resources to enhance both grammar and pronunciation competence, but nothing can truly replicate the ability to respond appropriately (and hopefully correctly) to unrehearsed, interactive speech. For beginning second-language students, this is especially important because it is in the first years of learning a second language that students develop the skills and habits which they will carry with them throughout their second-language learning experience.

With an assignment to teach Elementary French when the pandemic was closing campuses throughout the country, I was challenged to identify technologies which would allow interpersonal interaction. Fortunately, there was such a technology available “Zoom”! Our institution had been using the Zoom format for several years, so both the infrastructure and the technological help were readily available. For the most part, students were quite familiar with this technology but, unfortunately, I was not. While the “expert-in-the room” in French, I was a novice Zoom user, and this made for some unexpected adventures in second language teaching.

At our institution, we use the Vista Higher Learning textbook series which for French is Promenades à travers le monde francophone. This series is programmed for an intensive on-line
experience for learners. Lessons are developed around a series of two-page presentations: new vocabulary with corresponding images on the first pages; questions or discussion topics related to the new vocabulary; new or enhanced grammar points; short exercises which develop the new grammar points; reading selections relating to the new vocabulary topic. This format makes it easy for the Zoom instructor as posting and sharing these pages on the screen allows everyone to see the presentation as well as to hear it, either from the professor or from recorded sources.

Vista also has an intensive set of on-line resources for each lesson. These include, but are not limited to drills, fill-in-the-blank, and sentence completion. The exercises are automatically corrected so that there is immediate feedback. Students can always request a re-take so that they can revisit the topic and redo work for a better grade, hopefully also for improving understanding of the concept for correct usage in the future.

“Madame, you are not sharing your screen” became a fairly regular comment from some of the students, forcing me to adapt to the “share screen” feature rather quickly. The comment usually came with a positive vibe, and I acknowledged that I also had something to learn from my students who were themselves struggling with the complications of French grammar and (especially) pronunciation. The screen sharing aspect of Zoom was invaluable in many ways as I could prepare materials ahead of time, save them to a Word or PowerPoint format, and have them readily available at the click of a mouse, without having to fiddle with the classroom monitor and/or screen. The feature was also a very useful tool for student presentations as students could share their screen with their classmates as easily as I did.

In my second semester French course, one of the topics covered was a unit on the house/home. This included vocabulary relating to the house, furniture, location, direction—all typical components of this unit for both secondary and university courses. As a project for this unit, I gave the assignment to create “La Maison de mes rêves” (The House of my Dreams). The presentation had to include both a visual and aural component, to be presented via the “share screen” Zoom feature. The student had to both prepare the visual and narrate the presentation (en français, bien sûr!) at a scheduled time. Being able to share the screen and describe it in “real time” was, for some students, rather challenging. They had to describe what they were presenting as well as respond extemporaneously to questions from classmates, demonstrating both their technological competence as well as their linguistic expertise first-hand. Because all Zoom class meetings are recorded and kept for a 12-month period, I was able to review the presentations at a later time, giving me the opportunity to carefully evaluate both the aural and visual aspects appropriately.

Another valuable resource of the Zoom format is the “break-out” feature. In the face-to-face classroom, the professor may divide the class into small groups and send each to a corner of the room to work on a group of exercises or a common project. This can be time-consuming, especially if the instructor has to move from group to group to stimulate activity. With the Zoom break-out rooms, dividing the class into groups is almost immediate, and Zoom does the work of keeping record of the time schedule. The professor can easily move from group to group, solving problems or answering questions expeditiously. Reconvening the groups is equally fast, allowing the class to reassemble and resume activity.

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Students in a Zoom classroom may be apart from their teacher, but they are not anonymous, not at all! Students quickly develop an on-line personality, which may not be the same personality which they would present in a face-to-face class, but they tend to sustain it over the course of the semester. It did not take me long to realize that students in a Zoom class would also develop a Zoom persona which they tended to assume for each class session. I too had to create a Zoom persona which would remain stable throughout the semester so that the students would know what to expect in the variety of different situations they would encounter as class progressed.

Signing into the Zoom classroom at the assigned time, remaining available in that white box on the screen and staying through to the end of class proved to be somewhat challenging for those students who were accustomed to a fairly loose classroom environment. Late-arrivers, early leave takers, even slackers were very easy to spot and call into account. I did not hesitate to do so whenever necessary.

By the end of two semesters’ worth of Zoom classes, I felt comfortable using the technology but not as comfortable with the results. The Zoom room depends on reliable Internet access, and not all students had that. One young man always arrived sitting outside of a 7/11 shop, even in the rain, so I had to assume that he could only log-on at that location. Other students had camera problems (or said they had camera problems) so that I could not always see them. Talking to a black screen somehow defeats the personal connection aspect of the lesson, and I did not always know if the person to whom I was speaking was the actual enrolled student. There could be unexpected interruptions such as a telephone ringing, a dog barking (even my own at times), or a roommate strolling by and making comments. These were, of course, not unique to my courses, but they are distractions not found in the face-to-face classroom, and often require understanding and flexibility from the teacher.

There was also a very positive side to the Zoom experience. I felt I got to know each of my students much better than I would have in a face-to-face setting. Somehow the Zoom interface gave me the feeling that I was interacting directly with each student and could thus personalize my relationship with that student. It became immediately clear when a student had difficulty understanding a concept, and I was able to focus on the problem more quickly than I would have in the traditional classroom setting. Students who were timid about asking questions could use the “chat” feature, sending a personal comment asking for clarification without the whole class becoming involved. When working on pronunciation I was able to hear students clearly when they responded, and this gave me a chance to focus on specific problems rather than on generalizations. I liked being able to ask students to meet with me individually via a Zoom call at their convenience rather than holding general office hours, which may not have been at convenient times for them.

What have I learned from the experience?

- Technology can augment the classroom experience when used appropriately.
- Students can and will adapt quickly to new experiences
- Class time should be spent on developing aural skills.
- No new technology is perfect!
The lessons I have learned through my one-year Zoom experience will surely improve my courses in the future. I now feel more competent, though certainly not expert, in using this technology and I hope to return to the Zoom classroom in the future.

Conclusions

We have concluded that teaching will never be the same, that tried and true methods may no longer work, that there is no going back to “normal.” The notion of the “classroom” has been permanently transformed. Indeed, it seems to us that the assumption that the physical classroom is the ideal space for learning is no longer valid. We now await the impact of the metaverse, still in its infancy, on the educational enterprise, when student and teacher avatars meet and interact in virtual spaces. Quality and learning do not have to be compromised in a digital environment, and, in fact, can be enhanced and reimagined.

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https://blog.pearsoninternationalschools.com/7-tips-for-teaching-languages-remotely/

https://carla.umn.edu/technology/tlo/index.html


https://cls.yale.edu/faculty/resources/online-teaching-tools-and-resources

http://designingforlearning.info/writing/ten-best-practices-for-teaching-online/


https://www.wisconsin.edu/collaborative-language-program/workshops/preparing-to-teach-online/

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf

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Open Educational Resources for Language Learning

University of Kansas: The Open Language Resource Center: https://olrc.ku.edu

University of Massachusetts: https://openbooks.library.umass.edu

University of Texas Center of Open Educational Resources and Language Learning: https://www.coerll.utexas.edu

Professional Organizations

American Association of Teachers of French: https://frenchteachers.org
American Association of Teachers of German: https://www.aatg.org
American Association of Teachers of Italian: https://aati.uark.edu
American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese: https://www.aatsp.org
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: https://www.actfl.org
National Foreign Language Resource Center: https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/
Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: https://www.nectfl.org (Annual conference held every February in New York City)

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