Connections

A Journal for Foreign Language Educators

Volume 10 – Fall 2022

About us

Editors' Note and Acknowledgements

Connections. A journal for Foreign Language Educators, volume 10, brings language educators seven articles and two book reviews. The articles cover a broad spectrum of topics in relation to the teaching and learning of languages, whether in a virtual or a face-to-face format. From relevant research on study abroad and intercultural reflection, to gaming and escape rooms, social justice and the graphic essay, service-learning and study abroad, the teaching of literature in the L2 classroom, strengthening the relationship between teacher candidates and cooperating teachers (especially during and after the pandemic), building self-reflection to improve practices and strategies, and an uplifting note reminding us of some crucial tips to promote and encourage students' success. Moreover, the book review section focuses on two very recent publications on second language acquisition and research-based teaching techniques.

Preparing this volume of *Connections* as we have been coming out of the pandemic was a special challenge. We deeply thank our contributors for their commitment to the profession: Faculty from California, Cincinnati, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Rhode Island, and Utah, have kindly shared their research, philosophies, and best practices, so as to seize the moment and bring fresh perspectives to our language classrooms. Relaunching the journal in its online format, we look forward to *Connections* continuing evolving as it provides meaningful research and outcomes as well as current pedagogical trends in teaching and learning to world language educators.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of our Editorial Board and reviewers for their contribution in the editorial process as they have been instrumental at maintaining high standards within our publication. Our special gratitude to Dr. Branka Sarac, who carefully revised the last version of each manuscript before publication. We deeply appreciate her support and dedication.

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Main Editors' Biographical Notes

Gaye Walton-Price is a highly motivated and talented university professor, with extensive experience teaching Arabic and English as a Second Language, as well as an effective administrator and executive. Dr. Walton-Price earned her PhD in Arabic language and linguistics at Georgetown University; and she is currently the Arabic instructor at University of San Francisco. Since the pandemic, she has gained invaluable experience designing and conducting Arabic classes of various levels online via Zoom, including private tutoring sessions with advanced-level Arabic students. She has lived and worked in Tunis, Tunisia, and in Cairo, Egypt, for extended periods of time, and has conducted study tours for Californian undergraduate students to Egypt. After more than 20 years' college and university-level teaching experience, she knows and demonstrates that her passion is the Arabic language, both teaching it, doing research with it and in it, conversing in Arabic, as well as enjoying the great variety of Arab cultures. Along the way, she has also gained experience and expertise in teaching university-level humanities and philosophy courses. Dr. Walton-Price has been an active member of the FLANC board for over eight years and is currently serving as the treasurer of FLANC's board of advisors and co-editor of the FLANC Journal, *Connections*.

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Celebrating its 70th anniversary serving the language teaching community

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Book reviews

Creating a Virtual Escape Room

to Promote Learner Engagement in a Gamified Context

■

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Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, educators in every field have sought new ways to engage their students in a rapidly changing virtual environment. Foreign language educators have been using digital tools for many years, both as an alternative to face-to-face courses and as a supplement to teaching in the classroom. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a dynamic, interdisciplinary field that is constantly changing to meet the needs of the language teaching and learning community. This project, creating a virtual escape room for students studying introductory Spanish at a large, midwestern public university, is an example of how we can leverage technology to make language learning more interesting

and engaging for students. Our goal in developing this virtual escape room was to break up the monotony of Zoom classes by giving students a challenging and unique language learning experience.

In recent years, escape room activities have become increasingly popular as a creative way to use the target language in a gamified setting. These activities are immersive experiences, which encourage students to be active participants in their own learning (Domingues Ferreira da Cruz, 2019). Escape rooms encourage students to work collaboratively as they solve problems and think outside the normal "box" of language learning. They are a creative and exciting way for students to work collaboratively with their peers and "play" with the target language, hopefully leading to greater motivation and engagement in the virtual classroom. Our goal was to adapt this type of activity to an online setting, creating an immersive online experience for our students.

Background

Although escape rooms have been used for many years in language classes, when we decided to create this activity, research on virtual escape rooms in language classes was very limited. Therefore, we began our project by looking at what instructors in other fields had done. Instructors have been successful in leveraging Google Forms (Alonso & Schroeder, 2020; Vergne et al., 2020), Moodle (Yllana Prieto et al., 2021) and a variety of digital tools such as FlipGrid, Google collaboration tools and Camtasia (Stephens de Jonge & Labrador, 2020) to create virtual escape rooms for their students.

For our escape room, we chose to use Google Forms due to its ease of use, access, and flexibility. While this tool is typically used to create surveys and other forms, by turning each section of the form into a "room" (Vergne, et al., 2020), it easily becomes a virtual escape room

experience. Within each room, the student is presented with a problem or puzzle that they must solve in order to move on to the next portion of the activity. Through response validation, the Google Form can be programmed to only allow the student to move on if they provide the correct answer. Hints can be provided if the student provides an incorrect answer, helping them to successfully complete the task. Images, videos, links, and other resources can be included in the Google Form to enhance the activity (Vergne, et al., 2020). Students can complete the activity collaboratively via a videoconferencing tool such as Zoom or WebEx. In a synchronous online course, the instructor can put students in breakout rooms to complete the activity, instructing one student to share their screen and the other group members to follow along and contribute.

The virtual escape room that we designed was for a second semester intensive course, for both synchronous and asynchronous online formats. This intensive five-credit course covers the third and fourth semesters of Spanish at the college level. The courses are primarily taught by graduate teaching assistants, adjunct instructors, and some full-time instructors. At this institution, we use the digital textbook *Contraseña* (Lord & Rossomondo, 2018), and the specific theme for the escape room was focused on the topic of a textbook unit. We used the escape room to replace one of the unit-final projects.

Activity Development

When we began this project in the fall of 2020, our students had already adapted to virtual learning through Zoom-based classes and a fully digital language program, *Contraseña* (Lord & Rossomondo, 2018). Before creating the virtual escape room, we first had to choose a unit on which to base it. The unit that we chose is titled "¿Cómo hemos reinterpretado la historia?" or "How have we reinterpreted history?" (Lord & Rossomondo, 2018). Our purpose for choosing this specific unit was two-fold. First, the topic of the unit, understanding literature

and literary works and using historical context to further comprehension, is quite complex, as is the summative assessment included in the textbook. Second, this unit would take place near the end of the semester, so the escape room would also serve as a fun and engaging way for students to reset and recharge as the semester's end approached. After selecting the unit, we worked backwards to align the objectives of the escape room with the unit objectives. In this unit, students read and interpret *El eclipse* by Augusto Monterroso and identify main ideas in the text. They also recreate the shortest story in Spanish, identify common literary terms, and describe actions that have or had happened in the past. To guide our activity development, we also created a storyline for the escape room that included humorous commentary to lead the students through the activity.

Lastly, we named our escape room "Escape from the Mayan Temple." It consisted of seven activities, ranging from listening comprehension to vocabulary and grammar recognition and production. Most students completed the escape room activity in pairs or small groups. After reading introductory information that explained that they ended up in the temple after falling through the stone when they climbed a pyramid they were not supposed to climb, students were ready to begin the challenges. Each challenge included a visual element, such as an image of a wall with a clue on it. For the first challenge, students were asked to select the lies from three two-truths-and-a-lie groupings of statements. This aligned with a style of activity they often completed in class. Then, they had to decode Mayan hieroglyphs to find the word "Tikal," which is the name of the temple they needed to escape.

Next, students were asked to match literary terms from the unit with their respective definitions. Afterwards, they had to put the storyline of *El eclipse* in chronological order. Then, students had to recreate the microcuento *El dinosaurio* by Augusto Monterroso, using clues in an

image we provided. Next, they were asked to decode the dates of the next solar and lunar eclipses using symbols from the Mayan numbering system. Finally, they had to fill out a crossword puzzle with the past participle of irregular verbs that were included in a riddle. After completing the crossword, they could see some letters were highlighted in blue within the puzzle. Students had to unscramble the letters to form the word "eclipse," which was then used as the password for a "final mission," or post-test activity in Canvas, our course management system, at the conclusion of the escape room.

For their "final mission," students were asked to write a paragraph responding to the question of what they *had done* to escape the temple, using the present perfect in Spanish. The completion of a paragraph at the end of the escape room added a task that involved higher-order thinking. While the challenges within the escape room certainly addressed unit goals, many challenges focused on lower-order thinking skills, and we wanted students to create with the language as well since this was a unit-final activity. For the same reason, we also wanted students to submit the "final mission" assignment individually. We opted for a short post-test with a written paragraph since students were familiar with paragraph-length writing assignments by this point, and the prompt allowed us to assess their use of the grammar and vocabulary from the relevant unit.

Implementation & Feedback

Before implementing the escape room, we sent it to several friends and family members for feedback. Friend and family feedback was helpful, as our testers were not familiar with the content of the unit addressed by the escape room, and their Spanish-language abilities varied. Using their feedback, we were able to assess the extent to which our activities required specific knowledge from the unit, and whether the different puzzles could or could not be solved without

using target language skills from class. We then sent a draft of the escape room for testing and feedback from instructors in our program. Their feedback helped us determine potential pitfalls and opportunities for advanced mitigation of challenges as the escape room was implemented with students. Based on instructor feedback, we created an instructor tip sheet with common challenges students might encounter, and tips to best support them in those challenges to ensure that students were able to focus on content from the unit rather than get stuck in a needlessly difficult puzzle sequence.

Additionally, we received helpful feedback from students who completed the escape room. Overall, their responses were very positive. Students mentioned that they liked the teamwork aspect of the activity and the fact that it was like a puzzle, with many positive comments about the crossword challenge in particular. Several students recommended changing the word scrambles or adding more hints in those challenges. Some students even compared their experience in our virtual escape room to their prior experiences playing mystery games on their computers or completing in-person escape rooms with friends before the pandemic. Finally, we were happy to see that on their regular end-of-unit reflection regarding their ability to complete unit objectives, most students selected the responses "Yes, I can do this well," and "I can do it with a few mistakes."

After reflecting upon our experience and future possibilities, we know that we want to continue to do escape room activities with our students in the future. While this particular iteration was a fun way to break the monotony and drive engagement in an online classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic, we would also like to introduce escape rooms in future face-to-face contexts. We are currently brainstorming ways to increase instructor involvement in an in-person classroom: perhaps the instructor could provide certain clues or passwords to move

forward, or act as a guiding voice and provide instructions before beginning the activity. Teamwork also seemed to be an important factor in success in this activity. Students noted that they enjoyed working in groups, and students who worked alone seemed to experience more difficulty with specific challenges such as the word scrambles. In future classes, we may present group work as required, rather than optional.

Conclusion

Virtual escape rooms provide a unique and engaging way for students to interact with the target language. Unlike escape rooms used in face-to-face contexts, which require a variety of materials, virtual escape rooms are free to make and to implement and can be completed during a synchronous class or as an asynchronous assignment. As previous studies and our own experience have found, these activities do require a lot of effort and preparation beforehand; however, that effort brings great benefits. In our experience, a virtual escape room was not only enjoyable and beneficial to students, but it also provided students with an opportunity to use the language in a new and creative way through gamification and led to increased motivation and engagement.

The escape room activity we have described has been in use for four semesters, with continual modification to incorporate student and instructor feedback, including adding hints to word scrambles and updating or removing activities that become out of date, such as the activity where students decoded the dates of upcoming lunar and solar eclipses. We have also created another, simpler virtual escape room to use with our first-semester students. We plan to continue to use these and other virtual escape rooms in future classes as an engaging CALL resource that students will enjoy, and that will challenge them to use the language in new and different ways.

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Studying Abroad, is it Relevant if Students Don't Know or Can't Articulate What They've Learned?

■

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Abstract

Studying abroad provides the opportunity to develop relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes, yet if students fail to articulate what they learned from their experience, it may be reduced to a line on a résumé. This study focuses on the final exams of post-study abroad students who had enrolled in a three-credit course based on intercultural communication and competence, and an online survey completed by students who had returned from studying abroad who had not enrolled in such a course. A frequency analysis uncovered that the word "culture" was the most regularly used word by both groups. The intercultural reflection rubric (Williams, 2017) was used to assess levels of learning in student work and sociocultural theory clarified how course students used concepts in intercultural communication to mediate and communicate their experiences, while those who had not enrolled in the course described their learning in vague, everyday concepts.

Keywords: study abroad, reentry, articulation, intercultural competence, sociocultural theory

The skills students can acquire abroad are relevant not only for employability but also in our increasingly diverse communities. While studying abroad can be a catalyst for learning a range of skills, the reality of student learning outcomes in study abroad programs is not a given (cf. Vande Berg, 2012). Montrose (2002) wrote, "… it is not the activity of leaving one's homeland that creates learning, but the subsequent analysis of that activity where the real learning begins" (p. 6-7). If higher education wishes to promote study abroad to acquire the skills required of an internationalized workforce and diverse communities, it must be held accountable for the quality of learning. While it is important to prepare students for studying abroad and to support them abroad with well-designed programming, it is equally important to help them unpack their experiences in a systematic, organized manner upon return. This study examines how two groups of post-study abroad students articulated what they had learned abroad; one enrolled in a three-credit course focused on intercultural competence and the other group did not.

Literature Review

Studying abroad can be the catalyst for a host of learning opportunities, including intercultural competence (ICC). Deardorff (2006) attempted to define the difficult-to-pinpoint nature of ICC finding that the top definition with 80-100% agreement among intercultural experts was an "[a]bility to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 239). ICC is not necessarily context- or culture-specific but, rather, is a skill that is relevant across various disciplinary applications, the workplace, and society at large.

While studying abroad holds much potential, it cannot be seen as an osmosis experience that guarantees students will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes demanded of them. Incredible diversity in student background and program variables present an experience that is

"unique and dynamic, shaped through myriad personal backgrounds, opportunities and choices" (Wilkinson, 2000). A continually growing body of research has focused on supporting various student learning outcomes before, during, and after study abroad through intervention strategies (cf. Anderson, 2005; Brewer & Cunningham, 2009; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Sanz & Morales-Front, 2018; Vande Berg, 2012). However, fewer studies have specifically focused on the re-entry phase.

A course offered at Kalamazoo College concluded that post-study abroad students didn't need an additional intercultural experience, "…they need a different kind of course – one that is more focused on processing and extracting the learning from the experience they just had" (Anderson & Cunningham, 2009, p. 80-81). Root and Ngampornchai (2012) examined 18 reflective papers from students who had returned from studying abroad concluding that, "…we are also concerned that many of the participants' accounts reflect only superficial levels of intercultural understanding" (p. 12). Kortegast & Boisfontaine (2015) found that students' post-processing was limited by relying on family and friends which didn't provide opportunities for in-depth reflection. Their reflections utilized catchphrases and remained descriptive, "rather than negotiating the meaning of the knowledge, skills, and competencies students developed during their experience" (p. 817). Students could, "identify, label, and name particular learning outcomes commonly associated with study abroad. However, when pushed to discuss what learning outcomes such as 'experiencing culture' or 'being more independent' meant to them, they at times struggled to provide descriptions" (p. 822). The authors concluded that "more attention needs to be paid to assisting students in developing, negotiating, and understanding what they learned while living and studying abroad" (p. 823).

Paras et al. (2019) echoed this sentiment, noting that pre-departure intercultural training provided students with "a bigger toolbox of concepts that students used to understand and interpret their experiences abroad" (p. 41). While this toolbox of concepts is fundamental to the findings of this paper, Kruse & Brubaker (2007) remind us that if studying abroad is a process and not just a stand-alone occurrence, it is not just the pre-departure and abroad phases that garner meaning, but that students "should be supported after their return" (p. 147). Peterson (2002) noted that an experience can be transformative yet, "[i]t can reinforce stereotypes, exacerbate prejudices, or lend itself to hypotheses that are never subjected to systematic reflection" and perhaps experiences can only be "the best teacher" when combined with critical analysis and reflection on the part of the learner (p. 167). The return phase allows for a particularly nuanced angle of reflection.

While it is imperative to prepare students going abroad to make the most out of their experiences, in the absence of a cultural mentor (Vande Berg, 2009), they may come to conclusions that are not critically reflected upon (Peterson, 2002) or are limited to sharing their experiences in superficial ways upon return with friends or family who, "did not necessarily have the cultural or educational backgrounds to know what questions to ask or how to relate to the experience of traveling and living abroad" (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015, p. 824). Myer-Lee (2005) noted that reentry courses have the capability to serve as scaffolding deeper intercultural reflection and integration of the experience abroad into the home curriculum. Lee (2018) used a telecollaboration project with returnees to exchange cultural perspectives with L1 Spanish speakers to develop their learning abroad and found that "students became more aware of their own beliefs and attitudes toward their own and others' cultures as they took part in the course" (p. 151). It is important to recognize that each stage can provide additional benefit in the process

of becoming interculturally competent. The return phase has not received as much attention as the preparatory or in-program intervention strategies, yet it can be tremendously important as students can use them as the basis of critical intercultural inquiry. The guiding question in this study was: *How are post-study abroad students, who enroll in a course designed to foster the development of intercultural competence, and post-study abroad students, who did not enroll in such a course, articulating what they learned?*

Intercultural Reflection Rubric and Sociocultural Theory

An intercultural reflection rubric (Williams, 2017) and sociocultural theory were best-suited to examine post-study abroad students' reflections on how they were conceptualizing and articulating cultural learning. Williams' (2017) intercultural reflection rubric allows a succinct assessment of intercultural learning based on description, and contextual and critical reflection. Drawing from various models from experiential and intercultural learning, and reflection-based writing, "[t]his [five-stage] rubric identifies and validates the steps in between and provides some explanation of the variance between each. As such, we can better describe and identify reflective work that demonstrates development in intercultural competence" (p. 23). The author notes that simply "putting thoughts into words does not necessarily mean that students are learning," but rather that it is the element of reflection that "leads to meaningful connections, new schemas, or models, and thoughtful critiques" (p. 20). This rubric was selected as an echo of the research above that it is neither the experience nor reflection alone but construing meaning as a result of critical reflection that fosters intercultural learning.

Sociocultural theory encapsulates how students can take knowledge and concepts learned to facilitate new ways of seeing the world around them. This study focused on the use of signs and tools in sociocultural theory. Describing Vygotsky's view of the human mind, Lantolf (2000)

wrote that humans do not simply "act directly on the physical world" but, instead, use symbolic tools and signs to "mediate and regulate [their] relationships with others and with [themselves] and thus change the nature of these relationships" (p. 1). In the same volume, Kramsch (2000) noted that "tools serve to master nature; signs serve to influence others, then to master oneself" (p. 137). This translates succinctly to a course based on ICC. A student may learn about a new concept, e.g. conflict styles, and in the process of completing an assignment about an intercultural conflict that the student has experienced, they may use a specific conflict style to describe their reaction in the midst of the conflict. The student is using this conflict style as a tool to complete the assignment and as a sign to convey meaning to the reader. In the process, however, they may internalize this concept to the degree that they may even alter the way they view the world or their behavior in future conflicts. Kramsch (2000) noted that, "[m]aking students conscious of their motivated semiotic choices is precisely what, according to Vygotsky, leads learners to higher forms of mental development" (p. 141). The academic setting can introduce students to concepts of ICC which serve as tools to help them mediate their experiences, which are then available to them as a communicative sign to articulate what they have learned.

Method

This study analyzed data from two groups of post-study abroad students; one who enrolled in a three-credit course designed to foster ICC and one group who did not enroll in such a course. Data was examined with the intercultural reflection rubric and probed through the lens of sociocultural theory.

Intercultural Communication Course

The course, "Becoming Transcultural: Maximizing Study Abroad," which followed the textbook *Experiencing Intercultural Communication* (Martin & Nakayama, 2011) was intended to prepare students for studying abroad by familiarizing them with the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of intercultural communication to foster intercultural competence. However, students who had previously studied abroad also enrolled in the course.

Course design allowed many opportunities for students to critically reflect upon and examine cultural differences in their lives at home and while abroad in the weekly classroom and weekly to bi-weekly online discussions. Cultural simulations provided students with the opportunity to experience how it can feel to be in a different culture where the rules may be different than expected (e.g. Barnga/5-tricks). Critical reflection papers required students to compare and contrast theories presented in readings; address any ambiguities, inconsistencies, or lack of clarity; extend ideas from the readings to their own experiences and identify connections between readings and in-class or online activities. The midterm prompted students to demonstrate content knowledge, whereas the final exam, which served as data in this study (Appendix A), asked students to discuss what they learned throughout the course and how they could apply this to their future lives.

Course Participant Selection

33 out of 54 students who enrolled in the course over two semesters consented to participate in a larger study examining ICC (Author, 2018). Of the 33 students who consented to participation, six had previously studied abroad. Post-study abroad students were considered to be those who had studied abroad in a credit-bearing program abroad after beginning at the university. These six students' final exams were selected for further examination.

Non-course Participant Selection

In order to reach students outside of the class, an email was sent to a post-study abroad listserv stating the general goal of the study and, if students consented to participate and completed the section on demographic information, they were prompted to discuss what they learned while abroad and how they could apply this to their future lives (Appendix B). 85 students began the survey, however, only 34 were completed and used for initial analysis.

Data Analysis

Course participants wrote an average of 1408 words per student, and the non-course participants wrote an average of approximately 160 words per student with a disparity from as few as 40 words to as many as 542. Following Creswell (2007, p. 185), an initial read-through of data highlighted that all students had learned something while abroad whether in regards to language, culture, self-growth, logistics, etc. In order to explore what students were discussing and potentially highlight a focus for inquiry, a frequency analysis was run on the two groups' responses with AntConc[1]. The frequency analysis uncovered that "culture" was the most frequently used word by both groups. This was not an unexpected outcome given the frequency with which cultural learning is used to encourage students to study abroad (Paras et al., 2019), the topic of the course, and the phrasing of the question. Five of the 34 students in the non-course group discussed culture in each of the three questions posed, and all six students in the course group discussed culture throughout their final exams. Two layers of analysis of the eleven reflections became the subject of this study. A summative data analysis (Creswell, 2016; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) generated understandings about how students were using the word "culture" through the lens of sociocultural theory and the intercultural reflection rubric was used to assess the presence of ICC development in the reflections. It was hypothesized that course students

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[1] AntConc is a freeware concordance program available at: http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html

would score higher on the intercultural reflection rubric and be able to articulate their learning abroad more concretely as a result of having more tools and signs at their disposal to mediate and discuss their experiences.

Results

The five non-course student reflections scored on the lower end of the five-point rubric (two students earned scores of 1, two students earned scores of 2, and one student earned a score of 3). Course student reflections scored on the higher end of the five-point rubric (four students earned scores of 4, and two students earned scores of 5). The main difference in the usage of "culture" between the two groups was that those who did not enroll in the course used "culture" to name a vague notion of what they learned while abroad, often in trite catch phrases, whereas students who were enrolled in the course utilized more specific notions of "culture" in reference to the variety of aspects of culture covered in the course. The course students had a repertoire of terms at their disposal that could serve both as a tool to describe what they learned while abroad and as a more poignant sign to communicate what they learned to the reader.

Student Examples

In the tables below, each of the five levels of the intercultural reflection rubric (Williams, 2017) are outlined and include a selection from the results of assessing non-course and course students' responses to the prompts.

Intercultural Reflection Rubric Score 1 Breakdown with Example

Score	Rubric Criteria	Student Response
1	**Observation**: The reflection is simply descriptive; does not attempt to understand, explore, or make meaning of experiences or observations. The	**Non-course student:** My fluency in the Italian language was fulfilled in Italy. . . . I learned about the Italian culinary art and how to cook several different Italian dishes as well as the ability to take care of myself not only in a living situation but amongst a very different culture and life style. . . . I have spent nearly a year outside of this country and am still not satisfied with my travels. My next study abroad experience should hopefully be in Spain. Each experience that I've

reflection does not recognize other points of view, is unable to suspend judgement of others, or may be critical or negative toward the other.	had has held its own unique qualities and challenges that I have had to overcome. Each time I've been, I bring home a more open mind and cultured heart. I know I have applied my knowledge of foreign cultures to accept some of the faults in my culture and the differences of the people around me in general. I use the cooking skills I acquired everyday [*sic*] and continue to practice the Italian language with the friends I keep in touch with.	

In this reflection, this non-course student describes what she learned on a very factual and descriptive level. At the time of the survey, she was a senior reflecting back on a three-month study abroad in Italy three years prior. While she notes that she had studied abroad multiple times, she relies on catch phrases such as "overcoming challenges" and having an "open mind and cultured heart" without giving a clear sense of what these meant to her. She has learned to take care of herself in a "very different culture," but makes no attempt to explore what that means. Although she is not critical towards other cultures and she actually appears open to critiquing her own culture, she reverts back to the tangible cooking and language skills that she acquired. There is no clear sense that she has tried to understand, explore, or make meaning of her experiences.

Intercultural Reflection Rubric Score 2 Breakdown with Example

Score	Rubric Criteria	Student Response
2	**Growing Awareness**: The reflection is mostly descriptive and may show basic attempts to understand or learn more about observations. The reflection begins to recognize other points of view but in simplistic and superficial ways; prefers own perspective or does	**Non-course student:** My program was really good but now I can see what sort of a program would be a better fit for me. I realize how much trouble and frustration I have not being able to communicate as well as I want to and being underestimated because I am white and blond and having certain stereotypes applied to me solely based on that however I do the same to other people even if I try not to, its [*sic*] a part of culture that needs to be overcome. I realize how much trouble I have living in such a macho society and accepting that sort of culture as simply another way of life coming from my background which is very much in education and open-minded ideas just makes me want to scream. Education-wise I learned a lot that makes you ashamed to be America [*sic*], learning the extent of our actions in other countries and the ways in which they affects [*sic*] are still being felt. The political power the US has and the

| | not know how else to interpret or act. | abuse it makes or [*sic*] it. Also though, I learned that there are always people while traveling who are willing to help or just talk on the bus and that is what makes traveling such an excellent experience. |

In this example, this non-course sophomore student has just returned from a three-month study abroad program in Guatemala. Her response has elements of a score of 1, 2, and 3, but her response more aptly earned a score of 2. While she is critical towards the other culture (1), she also recognizes that there could be other points of view in that stereotypes could be invalid (2). Nevertheless, her awareness is simplistic and she prefers her own perspective (2). Her reflection has some elements of a score of 3 in that she is attempting to understand the larger context of the way that America's geo-politics have affected the region. While she seems to be balancing some negative experiences encountered with other interpretations, her awareness is not developed further, and she strongly prefers her own culture and self-proclaimed "open-mindedness".

Intercultural Reflection Rubric Score 3 Breakdown with Example

Score	Rubric Criteria	Student Response
3	**Appreciation and Eagerness**: The reflection begins to make simple interpretations. The reflection may list simple new understandings or simplistic personal growth and change. The reflection demonstrates an emerging desire to learn or a sense of wonder to find answers to questions. The reflection shows increasing recognition of other points of view and shows growing respect for differences. The reflection begins to validate differences or attempts simple explanations of differences.	**Non-course student:** I've learned to be flexible and be open minded about different beliefs from various cultures. . . . I've also learned that there are numerous ways to look at problems. . . . I've also learned to have an open heart and that there are many people out there who are in the same situation as I am. . . . My goal is to fill up my passport with as much [*sic*] visas as possible before it expires. I think studying abroad has caused me to really embrace another's cultures and to just to experience with an open mind. Another culture can feel awkward to another and feel that it's not right. It's different and that's what makes it a beautiful thing to experience. . . . The goal is to put yourself into someone else's shoes and walk in them without any judgement or any comparison to where you're from.

This non-course student studied abroad for five months at the end of her junior year in Australia and is reflecting back on her experiences six months after return. She is demonstrating

a desire to value otherness and validate difference, yet there is nothing in her response to give the reader a sense of what that entails. This student is certainly expressing a desire to understand and travel more. However, her response is vague and uses idiomatic, largely superficial expressions such as "flexible and open minded," "embrace another's culture," and "put yourself into someone else's shoes". Her use of culture presents as a reductionist catch-all phrase to encapsulate the differences she felt.

Intercultural Reflection Rubric Score 4 Breakdown with Example

Score	Rubric Criteria	Student Response
4	**Emerging Comprehension**: The reflection attempts to articulate more in-depth interpretations though it may reveal inconsistency. The reflection demonstrates an increasing desire to learn and may list ways knowledge is incomplete. The reflection describes and respects other perspectives but may not reach level 5. The reflection attempts to explain differences in more depth, or draw connections and conclusions without fully exploring them.	**Course student:** When I returned from my time in Costa Rica and Panama, I felt as though I had learned more about other cultures and myself (self-reflexivity). . . . I feel [that being in an intercultural encounter] is the situation that I need to improve on the most and that I will try my best to incorporate into my life and my traveling experiences. Sometimes picking up on new things can be easy. However, this situation will be much more difficult. Instead of being able to focus on one or two ideas at a time, I need to read into many ideas at once including, but not limited to—direct and indirect styles, gestures, and power. When speaking English, I can acknowledge all these aspects easily and simultaneously. I feel the best preparation I can do when trying to improve is simply introduce myself to unknown situations and cultures. In order to fully understand what I am doing I will need to learn the language as well. Because it is unlikely that I will be able to speak the language of every country I visit, learning about the cultures before I travel would be the best way to reduce the number of mistakes I make. . . . One thing I realized in this class, however, is that traveling could be more difficult that [*sic*] I had previously thought. I plan on meeting some friends in certain locations and now because I am more aware of cultural differences, I may have to plan who I meet where depending on their cultural awareness.

This course student had spent six weeks on a service-learning study abroad program in Costa Rica and Panama the summer before enrolling in the course. He is attempting to understand how speaking a foreign language in a foreign environment is different from speaking his native language in his native culture. He is cognizant that adaptation is difficult and, much

like the student who scored a 3, requires taking in multiple perspectives. However, he elaborates on what those communicative differences could be: direct and indirect styles, gestures, and power (dynamics). While he recognizes that he may not need these at home, he doesn't fully elaborate on this nor does he fully explore the larger context of cultural or linguistic difference within the US. Nevertheless, he is aware that there is an onus upon him to learn as much as he can before traveling, especially if he cannot speak the language. Additionally, he is keen to seek out friends who can serve as cultural mediators. Overall, his response validates difference and highlights an awareness of what is still left to learn.

Intercultural Reflection Rubric Score 5 Breakdown with Example

Score	Rubric Criteria	Student Response
5	**Intercultural Consciousness**: The reflection shows complex interpretations and thoughtful insights about self and culture and discusses how to apply learning. The reflections show a strong desire to learn more and may offer ideas for gaining more knowledge. The reflection describes other perspectives in depth and recognizes and respects the complexity of culture. The reflection explains differences in depth and/or describes incidents through the other's point of view.	**Course student:** Recognizing and being open to the notion that there are various learned cultural rules for various societies is a pivotal step toward true cultural enlightenment. However, to claim that something is learned, implies the duty of one to not only continue learning, but also perhaps to even re-learn one's culture and fix one's educational mistakes. . . . For example, two summers ago I studied abroad at the University of Westminster in London, England. I falsely believed that since we spoke a similar language, our culture would be alike and our communication would be flawlessly and easily achievable. However, after completing my first pub visit and attempting to speak with the natives I realized I couldn't have been more incorrect. After being teased and (I felt) attacked by all the pub goers, I was ready to call it quits and go home safely away from all of the "mean" Brits. Seeing my friends and I distress, one woman kindly explained that British men flirted with "unkind" humor. She explained in general the British tended to not shy away from negative aspects in life and didn't allow it to affect them the way it affected our group. This proved true throughout the remainder of the trip. For instance, my native British teacher described my group project (that by the way received full marks and achieved only 100% in the class) as "not horrible at all". I was about to "throw in the towel" on my London experience due to my inability to relearn my American culture that I had so rigidly subscribed to and embrace the British way of life. In London, I unknowingly discovered that if culture is learned, it can be relearned and developed according to the addition of educational material. Furthermore, by practicing self-reflexivity and truly examining the my [*sic*] study abroad occurrence, true merit can be drawn from the situation that may be utilized later on in my life.

This last student had studied abroad twice before enrolling in the course as a senior. She had spent five weeks in England two years prior and five weeks in Italy the summer prior to enrolling in the course. In this student's response, she describes an encounter at a pub that was unfamiliar to her and that she initially misinterpreted. Although it was someone else who provided the explanation, she was able to extend the learning to the situation with her British teacher describing their group project. While she does use the clichéd "cultural enlightenment," she goes on to illustrate what she means using a concept from the course that "culture is learned." She grapples with the meaning of this concept, ultimately coming to the conclusion that she had to unlearn her own American culture in order to acculturate to the British way of life. Her response explains the incident through another's point of view, has thoughtful insights about both self and culture, and she is aware that the lessons gleaned can be applied to future learning.

Discussion & Implications

As noted above, students enrolled in the course provided lengthier responses as required in their final exam than non-course participants. It is also clear that there is a level of formality in the course students' responses likely as a result of writing for a final exam versus an online survey. Nevertheless, there is a clear difference between how the two groups articulated what they had learned abroad. For example, speaking of differences in values between India and the U.S., the second course student whose response earned a score of 5 wrote that he, "was unable to determine why this difference in orientation existed prior to taking [this] class. Learning about Geert Hofstede's theory of value dimensions in [this] class has allowed me to better understand why these differences in values occur between cultures." In contrast, a non-course student whose response earned a score of 2 wrote, "I learned a lot about what makes American culture different

as well as a lot about myself." From a sociocultural perspective, the examples analyzed

highlight how concepts introduced helped students mediate their experiences abroad.

Interestingly, both course students' responses highlighted the importance of having someone help

them understand culture from an emic perspective. Vande Berg (2009) found that a cultural

mentor on-site, someone who understands students' home as well as the foreign culture, during

the study abroad experience could be an effective strategy to help students overcome cultural

differences. A cultural mentor may have been able to help the student who earned a score of 2

processes the cultural differences she described as "macho" to such an extent that she could have

potentially adapted while still in-country, ultimately preventing her from "want[ing] to scream."

Similarly, providing students with a "toolbox of concepts" (Paras et al., 2019) to interpret their

experience whether prior to, during, or after the experience can help students "master nature"

(Kramsch, 2000). By mastering nature, students are mediating their experiences which leads to

"higher forms of mental development" (p. 141). The findings of this study echo those of

Kortegast & Boisfontaine (2015):

> By not having opportunities to discuss their experiences and to negotiate meaning
>
> making, students engage in practices that minimize and reduce culture, cultural learning,
>
> and development to superficial examples. The lack of intentional opportunities to develop
>
> more complex meanings could reduce study abroad to cultural tourism and reduce
>
> cultural learning to superficial differences. (p. 824-825)

These authors found that students wanted to discuss their experiences and wished that friends

and family could have done this more, and, as a result, the authors hypothesize that students'

experiences were limited to reductionist catchphrases. From a sociocultural perspective,

catchphrases were the only tools at students' disposal and by using them as a sign to express a

certain meaning to their audience, their experiences are limited to the tools and signs available in everyday speech. "… [T]hus, they potentially undermined the purpose of their study abroad experiences to develop more expansive and complex understandings of other cultures and cultural practices" (p. 824). Williams (2017) came to a similar conclusion:

> If the goal is to help students develop knowledge and skills to adapt to future intercultural interactions and to have truly transformational experiences, we have to help students connect everyday experiences to deeper insights. To use reflection in that manner – in other words, to develop intercultural competency – students need enough fluidity to have natural and organic experiences and interactions as well as enough structure to help them make sense of their experiences. (p. 24)

Once students have connected their experiences to deeper insights, it is important to extend the discussion to the context of why it is relevant outside of the academic context.

Ripmeester & Deardorff's (2019) work discusses the importance of ICC as a bridge across differences relevant to both the workplace and society noting that differences could be "generational, gender, religious, racial, ethnic, national, or socio-economic" (p. 215). Studying abroad can certainly be the catalyst for developing ICC, however Paras et al. (2019) note that higher education often relies on the ability to cite intercultural skills in the form of study abroad on students' resumes without necessarily incorporating those skills into the program itself (p. 41). Thereby, the onus falls on the student. This study adds to the body of literature that students may not always be able to articulate what they learned, let alone apply learning to future contexts, particularly the workplace. "[G]raduating seniors have flunked one of their most important exams – the hiring interview because they were not prepared with appropriate examples of skills required from their international experiences." (Gardner et al., 2008, p. 1).

Training students in how to bring up the intercultural skills they acquired abroad that align with what employers seek (Trooboff et al., 2007) empowers students to shape their own narrative to articulate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they acquired abroad. As educators, we must consider how to integrate intercultural learning from study abroad experience across the curriculum and into our diverse communities.

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Limitations and Future Directions

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While this study concluded that post-study abroad students who enrolled in a three-credit course were better able to articulate what they had learned abroad than students who had not enrolled in this course, there are a number of limitations that must be addressed. Firstly, the non-course and course students' responses were crafted in different contexts and students may have altered their responses for a different audience. Future studies should examine these groups of post-study abroad students by eliciting answers in the same context for both groups. To that end, a further implication of this study is that students who enrolled in the course may be more capable of articulating what they learned in a job interview. Without following these two groups of students through the interviewing process, it is impossible to surmise how they would actually fare. As such, future studies should not only focus on training students to articulate what they learned abroad in a job interview, but also on how students use the scientific concepts associated with intercultural communication as a sign to create meaning for their audience. This could be done by recording job interviews or following up with students or employers after job interviews. Of note, the student who scored a 1 on the intercultural reflection rubric had studied abroad three years prior. It is possible that the farther away from the experience a student is, the more difficult it becomes to pinpoint learning. Williams' (2017) finding that essays that had higher scores in her study had a critical incident to analyze was similar in this study and, thus, specific prompting

of a critical incident may be required to elicit answers reflective of the skills on the higher end of the rubric. Lastly, Kortegast & Boisfontaine (2015) noted that students "used photographs as prompts to help explain, demonstrate, and broker their experiences" (p. 816). In light of the ubiquity of camera phones and students reifying their experiences without more in-depth reflection, it may be of interest to examine how posting on social media affects students' choices to engage with host cultures and their understandings of the experiences.

Conclusion

In this study, without the benefit of guided instruction that contributes to the use of more scientific concepts, non-course students relied on the usage of more everyday concepts of culture that reduced their experiences to vague catchphrases. Scientific concepts associated with intercultural communication allowed course students to unpack their experience in ways that are not only meaningful, but applicable to personal, professional, and societal contexts.

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Appendix A
Final Exam Question

1. Please discuss what you learned specifically in this course. Focus on tangible and intangible skills and capabilities you gained through this course and how you could apply them to your professional, personal, and educational pursuits. Be sure to apply concepts, ideas, and vocabulary that you have learned.
2. Has this class increased your desire or willingness to travel or study abroad? If you have already studied abroad, how did the class allow you to process your experience in new ways?
3. How would you use the skills that you have learned in this course in traveling or studying abroad, or even at home in your interaction with other cultures (note: culture need not be limited to "foreign" cultures)?

Appendix B
Non-course Student Prompts

1. Please discuss what you learned while studying abroad. If possible, focus on tangible and intangible skills and capabilities you gained through studying abroad and how you could apply them to your professional, personal, and educational pursuits. Be sure to apply any concepts, ideas, and vocabulary that you might be familiar with.
2. Has studying abroad increased your desire or willingness to travel or study abroad again in the future? How does your experience studying abroad allow you to process your experience in new ways?
3. How would you use the skills that you have learned studying abroad in future travels, study, or work abroad, or even at home in your interaction with other cultures (note: culture need not be limited to "foreign" cultures)?

Comfortably Uncomfortable:

Challenging anti-Asian bias in Spain and the United States through the Graphic Essay

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In the United States, the recent murders of Vicha Ratanapakdee, Yao Pan Ma, Michelle Go, GuiYing Ma, and Yan Zhiwen, along with mass killings such as the 2021 Atlanta Spa shootings, have catalyzed a growing national movement to *Stop Asian Hate* in protest of racist violence against Asians and Asian Americans during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, attacks on members of the AAPI community have resulted in a groundswell of public protests, demonstrations, and rallies across the United States, and supported significant research into questions of anti-Asian bias in this country; in 2021, California legislators allocated $1.4 dollars to the national nonprofit Stop AAPI Hate to help combat discrimination (Wong, 2021). Despite these accomplishments, however, assaults on communities of color continue to surge; in California, for example, hate crimes stemming from racial bias increased so much between 2020 and 2021 that Attorney General Rob Bonta described the situation as an "epidemic of hate" (Shafer, 2022).

As a result of concerted efforts by Stop AAPI Hate and related organizations like Black Lives Matter and the Women's March, educators are embracing social justice pedagogies that question the relationship between power, privilege, and bias (Adams, 2010) and incorporate current events into classroom discussions. Culturally relevant education is increasingly seen as a viable strategy to tackle curricular mandates that have historically been "guided by Whiteness" (Muhammad, 2020, p. 40). Pedagogies must reflect the lived experiences of a new generation of students closely connected to the world around them, who have come of age confronting "the deceptions drilled into them in school about the fundamental freedom of our nation" (Jones & Hagopian, 2020, p. 5). In the face of ongoing violence towards the AAPI community, this article examines the past use of Quan Zhou Wu's (1989, Algeciras) 2020 graphic essay, *Gente de aquí. Gente de allí: ensayo gráfico sobre migrantes y españoles* [*People from Here. People from There. A Graphic Essay about Migrants and Spaniards*] in the college-level Spanish literature class as a strategic tool for fostering social justice dialogue while building transatlantic connections about the challenges faced by Asian diasporic communities both in the United States and Spain.[2] As a graphic essay, Zhou Wu's *Gente* blends longform narrative and vivid, colorful imagery to examine xenophobia and anti-Asian bias in Spain through dual critical and personal lenses, interpolating contemporary research on racism and identity with the author's own experiences as the Spanish-born daughter of Chinese immigrants. *Gente* was the first assigned text in an advanced topics curriculum that examined the intersection of politics, identity, and ethnicity in twenty-first century Spain through the contemporary Peninsular novel, theater, and film.

As Carmen Granda (2021) has shown, issues of racial diversity and racism in contemporary Spanish culture are rarely addressed in any foreign language classroom. This,

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[2] All translations are my own.

coupled with the frequent tendency for undergraduates to imagine Spain as a fully white country with little to no ethnic or racial diversity, has generated the common but incorrect belief that racism just isn't a problem in Spain like it is in the United States. Even in the college classroom, this misconception tends to persist, as "in many traditional Spanish classrooms, issues of discrimination tend to focus on the experiences of Latinx immigrants…Rarely does the curriculum consider other migrants' dangerous journeys and struggles to adjust to a new country and culture" (Granda, 2021, p. 341). Indeed, undergraduate students expressed considerable surprise at learning that Spaniards of Asian descent exist, despite Chinese migrants forming the fifth-largest group of foreign-born residents in the country in 2020 with over 220,000 in residence (Observatorio permanente de la inmigración, 2020).

Despite a lack of awareness about this community, rising rates of violence—the latest government report identified racism as the root cause of the majority of hate crimes in Spain (Oficina Nacional de Lucha contra los Delitos de Odio, 2020)—have brought US-based antiracist organizing like *Stop Asian Hate* to Spanish consciousness for the first time. Facing increased instability and brutality during the ongoing COVID pandemic, a new generation of *chiñoles*, or the Spanish-born children of Chinese parents, have challenged the traditional concept of "Spanishness" in the country, forging new identities that celebrate their diverse cultural backgrounds. Crucially, young *chiñoles* like Zhou Wu take pride in identifying as both Spanish and Chinese. Since the publication of her first graphic novel, the autobiographical memoir *Gazpacho agridulce* [*Bittersweet Gazpacho*] in 2015, Quan Zhou Wu has emerged as a vocal advocate for Asian and Asian diasporic populations in Spain and as a leading antiracist activist in both the US and Europe. Her graphic essay's frank discussion of racism suffered by

Asians and other minorities in Spain reminds students that discrimination exists on both sides of the Atlantic.

In using Zhou Wu's *Gente* as the introductory text in a contemporary Peninsular literature class, undergraduates began the semester building an interpretative framework for analyzing and discussing the complex themes of race, racism, and bias in both the United States and Spain. Structured around a rich variety of key social justice topics, including stereotypes, integration, xenophobia, implicit bias, identity, and immigration, among others, and accompanied by detailed explanations and vivid illustrations, *Gente* served as an approachable introduction for many undergraduate students—and in particular white students—who reported unfamiliarity with these topics, having never directly examined them in a college classroom regardless of their year of study. Others were curious to investigate topics that their political or cultural backgrounds deemed as taboo. It is important to keep in mind that despite the international growth of movements like *Stop Asian Hate* and Black Lives Matter, the increasing polarization and politicization of curricula—since 2020, book bans in K-12 schools in the United States have risen dramatically (Shearer, 2022)—means that even in an advanced topics' classroom, most students were encountering concepts related to social justice for the first time. As a result, some expressed shock at being asked to discuss these so-called "divisive" topics in the context of contemporary literature. Yet, this is the chief goal of fostering social justice dialogue in the classroom: to create a course "in which the perspective (whatever the specific curricular content) calls into question the relations of power and privilege" in order to simultaneously expose and oppose racial injustices around the world (Adams, 2022, p. 62).

In class discussions, identifying common ground between the experiences of discrimination Zhou Wu describes in *Gente* and that from students' own lives pushed

undergraduates to develop critical awareness through which they formed crucial connections between a foreign culture and their own. For undergraduates, surprise at the existence of Asian Spaniards eventually gave way to indignation at racist discrimination in Spain, which in turn prompted reflection on the United States' own enduring struggle with anti-AAPI bias and violence towards its minorities. Zhou Wu's (2020) tongue-in-cheek discussion of whether or not she should eat her pet cat (and thus fulfill the stereotype that the Chinese eat pets) was both laughable in its artificiality *and* uncomfortably familiar to undergraduates who had heard its echoes in their own communities. Examining these stereotypes through collaborative group written responses, students were quick to identify that *Gente* engages with racial stereotype not to reproduce it, but rather to call attention to how its dissemination—especially through contemporary social media sites like Twitter, TikTok, or Instagram—harms members of racial minority communities. Asking students to debate *why* Zhou Wu would purposefully include offensive racial stereotypes in a graphic essay devoted to antiracism not only generated meaningful conversation in the target language (several wondered ¿si la autora es racista? [if the author is racist?]), but also helped undergraduates recognize the subversive role that contemporary literature plays in resisting discriminatory ideologies through satire.

The interactive nature of *Gente* played a key role in heightening awareness of the ubiquity of racist tropes in both the United States and Spain; throughout the graphic essay, Zhou Wu frequently asks for reader contribution. *Gente* features blank spaces, empty lines, and hashtags (#gentedeaquígentedeallí) that require readers to interact with the text in both a physical and virtual sphere by publishing their beliefs on social media. Readers are asked to share their thoughts on controversial topics and give their views on hot-button issues like integration, racism, and belonging, among others. During a section examining racial stereotype, for example,

alongside an offensive drawing of a Chinese man, Zhou Wu (2020) lists seven commonly-held misconceptions about her community—such as that the Chinese are kung-fu masters—but leaves three blank lines at the end of her list for readers to add their own stereotypes and share them online with the graphic essay's hashtag. In assigning students to prepare weekly responses to the interactive sections of *Gente,* they actively engaged in the uncomfortable process of identifying and confronting widely-held racist misbeliefs about the AAPI and Asian communities that circulated within their cultures and countries. Despite initially reporting feeling uncomfortable over time, students responded positively to these weekly assignments, as reinforcing the idea of discomfort as "a natural and often necessary part of learning" (Chávez & Longerbeam, 2016, p. 51) affirmed their experiences and emotions during class discussions of these difficult topics. In using *Gente* to facilitate the critique and deconstruction of racist beliefs, students were empowered to recognize and respond to discrimination both at home and overseas, with one student concluding that "racism isn't just an American problem, it's an everywhere problem."

With its critical examination of the challenges faced by Asian Spaniards and other immigrants in Spain, *Gente* serves as a point of departure for discussions about xenophobia, nationalism, and populism that could be employed in a variety of foreign language education contexts. Although used here in an advanced level course, Zhou Wu's approachable mix of the visual and the verbal marks the graphic essay as an accessible introduction to social justice topics in the Spanish language, and brief excerpts could easily serve as resources for vocabulary or cultural learning in an intermediate to advanced Spanish language class. In *Gente*'s embrace of "a pedagogy of discomfort," the author actively creates a radical "disjuncture that initiates critical deliberation on one's experiences, thoughts, feelings, and assumptions" (Nolan & Molla, 2018, p. 732). Beyond contesting discriminatory ideologies through social justice dialogue,

Gente asks students to become comfortable with addressing the uncomfortable in order to question ideologies that sustain racial injustices and thus stand up for the victims of discriminatory violence across the world.

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Transforming Short-Term Study Abroad Through Service-Learning

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Abstract

Study abroad can be one of the most impactful experiences in a student's college career. When considering types of programs, year and semester-long programs are often considered the best opportunities for students to obtain the greatest benefits of the study abroad experience. However, short-term study abroad programs appear at the bottom of many rankings of programs and program types. This study describes how a short-term study abroad program in Paris was transformed through the implementation of a service-learning component. As a result, the program achieves many of the "higher-level" objectives that are believed to be obtained primarily through long-term study abroad programs.

Keywords: Study Abroad, Short-Term Study Abroad, Service-Learning, Experiential Learning, Learning Outcomes

> Whether the university abandons or assumes its leadership role in seeking and transmitting knowledge, broadening the definition of knowledge beyond the merely utilitarian, fostering critical and innovative thinking, and nurturing humane and civic values, will make a significant difference in the quality of society in the future. International education can make a major contribution to these endeavors if it makes full use of its potential for changing both individuals and institutions. (Grunzweig, et al., 2013, p. 12)

Introduction

Study abroad is one of the most impactful personal and academic opportunities that a student can have while in college. It provides students with an opportunity to get out of their comfort zones into a foreign environment where, in addition to learning about themselves, they learn about other countries and cultures. Through this experience, they have the opportunity to develop, among other things, "intercultural awareness" and a sense of what it is to be a "Global Citizen". While there is a myriad of study abroad programs appealing to a broad spectrum of student needs and interests, Lillie and John Engle have sought to codify them by developing a "qualitative hierarchy" of four program "types" based on how closely each one comes to achieving the objectives that include "language acquisition and cross-cultural competence" (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 1). Correlatively, the ability of each program to provide students with the opportunity to achieve higher-level objectives, is equally implied in this hierarchy. All of these "higher-level" objectives focus on students "gaining knowledge and understanding [of] other cultures" and a sense of what it is to be a global citizen (Kehl & Morris, 2015, p. 69). Some scholars describe this as "cross-cultural competency and global-mindedness" (Kehl & Morris, 2015, p.67), "intercultural competencies" (Dwyer, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004, Rizzo & Marlow, 2020; Dolby, 2008; Rundstrom Williams, 2005) and the role these play in developing an understanding of global citizenship (Stebleton et al., 2013). To this end, Engle & Engle (2004)

have selected key pertinent features of study abroad programs that underpin their rankings. These include the duration of the study abroad program, the amount of exposure to and use of the target language, and students' cultural engagement while abroad (p. 8).

At the top of the Engles' (2004) hierarchy are "Cross-Cultural" programs that are either a semester or year-long and require at least an intermediate level of linguistic competence (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 12). In these programs students often take regular courses with domestic students at a host institution, taught in the target language. There is a broad range of housing options, from group accommodations to home stay visits and home stay rentals. And there are often "optional" and "occasional" integration activities—included among them, opportunities for internships and service-learning.

At the bottom of the hierarchy are the shorter programs that are less than a semester in length. The "short-term study" programs are often between 3-8 weeks in duration and include summer programs (Engle & Engle, 2003, p.11). At the very bottom is the "study tour", lasting from "several days to a few weeks" (Engle & Engle, 2003, p.10). These programs are similar as they often require little or no competence in the target language. In these programs, students frequently travel and live together often in accommodations that offer limited exposure to the target language and culture. In these types of programs, students often take courses offered by their home institution, taught by faculty from that same institution. Perhaps, the most critical part of the programs that puts them at the bottom of the Engles' list is that not only are they short, but there are also few provisions, if any, made for "cultural interaction" or "experiential learning" (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 11). As described, students in these programs remain at a distance and detached from both the host language and culture.

Kehl and Morris (2015) suggest in their study that a statistical analysis of their data comparing students who participated in short-term study abroad with students who are simply "interested" in it, "indicates insufficient evidence to conclude that significant differences exist in the global-mindedness [their measure of assessment] of students who study abroad for eight weeks or less and those who plan to study abroad in the future" (Kehl & Morris, 2015, p. 76). Although statistically inconclusive, it is at least notable that when comparing groups of students who are "intending to study abroad" with those who have participated in short-term and semester-long programs, the students who studied in short-term study abroad programs scored the lowest in global-mindedness among these groups (Kehl & Morris, 2015, p. 76). While these and other studies question the value of short-term study abroad (Allen, 2010; Freed, 1990; Freed, et al., 2004; Davidson, 2007), my recent experience challenges and refutes a number of claims of their inferiority and failings.

For over 20 years, I have taken students from my institution on faculty-led short-term programs to Paris over the summer. And for many of those years, the program fit the lower-tier model described by Engle and Engle (2003) and others in their hierarchies of programs. Up until recently, I accepted that this characterization of short-term programs was definitive. This all changed, however, when I implemented the Communication and Culture Through Service course in the program's curriculum. It is through this course, at Louisiana State University, after 40 years of the program's existence, that this faculty-led program broke the mold of short-term study abroad and was transformed into a program on par with any at the top of Engle and Engle's (2003) hierarchy of types.

The Paris Program and Short-Term Study Abroad

With between 25-35 students, the Paris program is a large program that includes a broad variety of courses offered and taught by my institution's faculty. Courses offered in the past include History, English Literature, Political Science, Architecture, Anthropology, Film Studies, Landscape Architecture, Geology, Art History, and Art. While these courses are all taught in English, the Paris program also offers a number of intermediate and advanced level courses in French that are taught in the target language. These include courses in intermediate French language, intermediate and advanced oral communication, introduction to reading literature, French culture and civilization, and French film studies.

As a short-term, faculty-led study abroad program, the Paris program provides a variety of benefits and opportunities to a broad range of students. Today, many students recognize the importance of having a study-abroad experience as part of their undergraduate education. But many students are unable to spend a semester or year abroad. Short-term programs often provide these students with an opportunity to study abroad that they would not otherwise have. Additionally, this program provides students with a certain level of familiarity and comfort, since the courses and their instructors are all from the home institution.

The aspect of comfort is often part of the attraction of this and other short-term study abroad programs. While it provides students with an opportunity to leave the comfort zone of their home and home campus, there is the security of knowing they are still attached to the umbilical cord of home through the program while being in unfamiliar territory. As Hanouille and Leuner (2001) explain, "Students (and parents) may be more comfortable with the familiar rules and regulations, even in a foreign land" (p. 4).

While there are many advantages for students participating in a short-term study abroad program such as this one (Hanouille & Leuner, 2001), there are also a number of disadvantages. Programs such as these are often designed to give students a chance to visit many of the cultural sites—the monuments and museums—and experience some of the cultural activities that include: shopping in Paris' famous department stores and open-air markets, having picnics in the parks, going to cafés and restaurants, and meandering along the grand boulevards and the banks of the Seine.

As critics, like Engle and Engle (2003) suggest, what is often found lacking in such programs, is deep and meaningful direct contact and engagement with the culture itself. Many short-term faculty-led programs are primarily Anglophone programs that are designed to draw the greatest variety and number of student participants possible. As a consequence, the idea of having or developing a deeper contact and understanding of the language and culture—improving linguistic competence in the target language and knowledge of that culture and society—and developing a sense of "intercultural connection" and "global citizenship," is not in the foreground in the design of these programs.

This situation creates a dynamic tension. On the one hand, in its general curriculum and design, it attracts a student body that seeks a certain level of comfort in experience and instruction. On the other, by offering some courses requiring intermediate and advanced levels of French, the program is also promising these students that they can, indeed, fulfill the broader goals of improving their level of spoken French and gaining a greater and more profound understanding of French culture and society through participation in this program.

This combination of curriculum and courses make it hard at times to attract French students to the Paris program. Not only is the city of Paris itself—where everyone speaks

English—a disincentive when recruiting French students to this program, additionally this program competes with the university's French immersion program in the French Alps that takes place at roughly the same period and for roughly the same amount of time.

Yet, every year there are between 6-12 students who are studying French and decide to participate in the Paris program. They are motivated by the promise that through their participation they will, indeed, improve their skills in French and develop a deeper knowledge of French culture and society. The task here for the program is: How does the program keep this promise?

The Pedagogical Search

After decades of effort, I believe I may have finally devised a program that helps students to improve their language skills while at the same time they develop their intercultural competency. At times, this has seemed an insurmountable task. Something that seemed, as if by definition, unachievable in a short-term study abroad program. How could a primarily Anglophone program in Paris, over a short period of time, provide students studying French with the opportunity to improve their skills in French and achieve the higher-level objectives described above—while concurrently providing them with the comforts of participating in a faculty-led program? To this end, I have experimented with innumerable strategies of instruction and pedagogy. And each time, these efforts may be best described—by myself and the students—more by their failings than by their successes. Neither one of us could describe the outcomes as meeting the course and program goals. This is not to say that we didn't try. In my courses, I have tried all manner of pedagogy and instruction. Among these activities is: A "Meilleur" project. This is a project that has students design and develop a project where they dedicate themselves, during the course of the entire program, to discover "the best" of something

in Paris. They research their topic, explore and experience it while in Paris, and then assess and report on it to the class at the end of the program. Also, students have participated in weekend homestays with families in the City of Troyes; they have had invited dinners with Parisian families; they have done scavenger hunts around Paris that required them to navigate the public transit system and interview people; students have taken cooking lessons at *Le Nôtre Pavillion* cooking school; they have spent weekends visiting the French Alps immersion program. In addition, students have participated in visits to boulangeries, chocolateries, charcuteries, and open-air markets where they have had the opportunity to meet the proprietors and vendors and talk with them about their professions, their products, and their experiences.

The idea behind all of these assignments was always the same: To get the students out of the classroom and directly into French culture, where they could use and practice their French. Yet, each time, these assignments—to greater and lesser degrees—failed to do so. I found an explanation for why, in the fact that these assignments were just that: assignments. That these activities were considered *assignments* that the students *had to* complete for the class, as class assessments, led the students to adopt the attitude that what they were doing was *for the class* and not to enhance the linguistic skills and cultural knowledge—e.g. not for them.

That is, while these assignments were designed to engage the students directly with and in the target language and culture by getting them out of the classroom and onto the streets of Paris and into France and French culture, they failed to *engage* the students in any *meaningful* way. Considered as assignments for the class, students did not *invest* themselves in these activities. As for them, these were just things that they were doing, not for themselves and not for their learning. Rather, they were doing them for the class and because I was making them do it, for their grade.

If I correctly understood the shortcomings of what I was doing in my design of courses and their assignments and activities, then I had to find a strategy for designing them in a way that would change the mindset of the students. I would need to shift the focus of activities and assignments away from any concern for the course itself and towards students investing and engaging themselves in activities that would be meaningful to them. Such a course would turn instruction on its head to a certain extent, as it would place learning in the hands of the students instead of the instructor. I would set up certain parameters for learning, but the students would have to actively participate in, engage and invest themselves in what they were doing. The problem, again, was how to accomplish this.

Enter Service-Learning

In 2017, after years of trying and failing, I had a new appreciation for the limits of short-term study abroad programs, like this one in Paris. I understood why such programs are often considered in the lower tier of study abroad offerings. Nonetheless, I remained determined to figure out a way to succeed as I continued to experiment with new activities and teaching strategies. That year, I had a breakthrough when I reached out to a number of service organizations in and around Paris.

In Spring 2017, I decided that I wanted to incorporate a "day of service" in my French Conversation and Culture classes in Paris. In the course of my online search for service opportunities, I found an organization dedicated to fighting against food waste at the open-air markets in Paris. On Sundays, volunteers from this group arrive at open-air markets around Paris. There, they work with vendors to "glean" and "re-distribute" unsold fruits and vegetables to those in need. I contacted the coordinator of this organization and asked if my five students could participate in one of these activities. He welcomed this idea and proposed they meet up at

the open-air market at the Bastille. For this first activity, I accompanied the students and worked by their side. Once there, we met the organizers and other volunteers. After introductions, the tasks were explained and everyone was set to work. There was an overall atmosphere of welcome and comradery with a communal spirit. Meeting each other and working side-by-side, together with other French volunteers removed any and all of the students' apprehensions and fears about participating so directly and immediately "with Parisians" in a real-world community service activity—and having to do so only in French! With other volunteers, students helped set up a booth for distributing food to those in need. They helped collect fruits and vegetables from vendors at the market, arranged the food at the booth, and distributed the food to those who came there. At the end, they helped take down the booth and put everything away. As a token of gratitude, volunteers were invited for a drink and snack at a nearby café where the students and other volunteers got to know each other as they passed the rest of the afternoon in fellowship and conversation.

In the end, I felt, after so many years, that I had finally found the long-sought-after key to success. In this single afternoon of service, despite students' initial apprehensions and fears, they personally committed and engaged themselves with French people in a community service activity in a real-world context. That is, in their service, they were not simply completing an assignment for the class. Rather, they participated in an activity that was authentic and meaningful for them. And what's more: This amazing experience was done entirely in French.

We all met up later to discuss the experience and share our feelings and thoughts. The students were clearly very proud of what they had done that day in their service. But their pride was reflected, as well, in their own feelings and in how they had overcome their own obstacles and trepidations in rising to meet the challenges set out in this unorthodox "class" exercise. Their

pride extended as well to a new confidence in speaking French, meeting French people, and navigating the public transit system on their own. In short, in this single community service experience, they had all left their comfort zone and had found a place of comfort in it.

I could not have been happier with this activity and the students' embrace of it. What I needed now was to find a way to build on this success. I had found the key to success here. Now I needed to use it to open the door. When it opened, I found more volunteer organizations and service-learning opportunities.

Many of these groups belong to a network of service organizations operating in and around Paris, brought together and linked, under a single umbrella organization: *Benenova.* This organization, itself, is part of a global network of service organizations, *Points of Light*, whose objectives are to empower individuals to engage and "[…] create a society where it is easy for every individual to take action and accelerate change within their community and around the world […]". As part of this network, *Benenova*, in Paris, brings together over 140 service groups and serves as a centralized location for these organizations to post and promote their community service activities and opportunities. In its role, this organization vets each individual organization and each service activity. It also requires that each organization welcomes and trains the service volunteer upon arrival at the activity. Key and unique to its mission is that all service activities are open and available to anyone who wishes to engage in community service. To participate, one does not have to be a member of the particular service organization. Nor does it require any prior experience or training. All that is necessary is the desire to volunteer and establish an online account with it. After setting up an account, it is simple to sign up for service activities. The umbrella organization has established categorical themes for service activities that can be used to help filter the types of activities based on the individual's volunteer interests. The themes

included the following: working with the environment; working with the disabled; working across generations; and working with people who are at the margins of society. To participate, one simply chooses from the themes and selects the dates of availability. A calendar of activities appears with a list of the dates, times, and locations, plus a description of each activity and how ,many volunteers are needed. All activities last 2 to 5 hours. There is no commitment to either action or organization beyond the single activity of interest. Participation requires simply selecting that activity by clicking that you want to participate. After that, in advance of the activity, the particular organization will reach out to the volunteer and provide them with any additional information.

Re-Developing the Course

After this very successful student experience in international community service, I dedicated myself to developing an entire course around it. I met with the director of the umbrella organization and presented this idea to her. She enthusiastically agreed to partner with me on this project. As an *Institutional Partner* with the umbrella organization, and in addition to the regular services they provide, my students would receive additional orientations and detailed information. The organization would help coordinate student schedules and activities. Plus, they would help troubleshoot any problems that might arise. They would also keep a digital log of each student's service activities and provide details that included: who, what, where, when, and for how long each student performed their service. The course, set for Summer 2018, would be titled: Communication and Culture Through Service in Paris.

Communication and Culture Through Service is a course designed to overcome the shortcomings of previous efforts to meet the desired goals of study abroad and the student objectives of improving their skills in French while developing direct cultural knowledge of

France. By focusing instruction on the students' own intensive engagement in direct and meaningful experience through their participation in community service activities, they are, by necessity, immersed in real-world and real-life experiences. It is through these experiences that the students not only use and improve their skills in French; they also gain direct knowledge of contemporary French society and its problems, and the means individuals and groups are using to address them.

This course takes a decidedly different approach to service-learning than is common. In his *Introduction to the Service-learning Toolkit*, Andrew Fuoco describes service-learning as a particular style of experiential learning that focuses its "attention to benefit the provider and the recipient of the service equally, as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring" (p. 14). As well, in the context of study abroad, service-learning is considered among the "high-impact" components that are engaging students to "foster transformational learning experiences and the development of global citizenship" (Stebleton, Soria & Cherney, 2013, p. 5). In a traditional service-learning course, the service activities often serve as a complement to a course's content and instruction. That is, while a course may provide abstract concepts and theories in its in-class instruction, through student participation in relevant community service activities, they gain real-world experience and knowledge of the issues studied in class. In so doing, students are able to synthesize the knowledge and experience in developing a better understanding of the subject of study in the classroom. An example of this pedagogy is described by Cone and Harris: "In our program, students enter the community with a set of clearly explicated theories that have been introduced in the classroom. These offer the students a systematic way of looking at the world" (Cone and Harris in Fuoco, p. 31). Cone and Harris' approach, reflects the inherent deductive character of

traditional service-learning courses which use the particular service activities as a vehicle for reinforcing classroom contents.

By contrast, the Paris Communication and Culture course turns traditional service-learning on its head in its adoption of an inductive approach to service and learning. Here, by design, rather than having a priori and prescribed concepts, theories and outcomes that inform the students' experiences and their learning, this course places primary emphasis on the students' experiences in their service activities and in their meaningful direct engagement with the community through community organizations as they address contemporary social issues and needs. It is out of these particular real-world experiences in conjunction with discussion and guided reflection activities—during and post-program—where the broader implications, ideas, and concepts are derived. With a priority on the service activities as vehicles toward fulfilling the personal and academic purposes of improving skills in French and gaining cultural knowledge, the time spent in the classroom serves as a complement to the service experiences. In this way, students are able to synthesize what they have experienced with what they have learned through these experiences in developing a greater conceptual understanding of the social issues that are not unique to Paris, France, but are global and pertain to their lives at home in the United States, and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The Course:

The course was offered during the 2018 and 2019 Paris programs. (Note: It was scheduled for the 2020 and 2021 Paris programs, but both programs were canceled due to COVID-19.) Upon arrival in Paris, all instruction, assignments, and communication between myself and the students were entirely in French.

In the first offering, in 2018, the course presented a unique set of challenges to me and the students, as neither I nor the students knew what was going to happen. In the design, I had ideas and expectations in terms of what I wanted the students to get out of the course and how the objectives were going to be achieved. But, since this was the very first time the course was being offered, I could not provide the students with any specific details that would assuage their uncertainties, concerns, and anxieties. I was unable to answer with any certainty the barrage of questions they had: How will we know where to go and who to talk to? Who will be in charge? How will we get to the service activities? Do we go alone? What will we be doing? Will our French be good enough to communicate and perform the services? What if we go to an activity we don't like? What if we don't understand? What if we get lost? How will we be graded? If we aren't meeting regularly in a classroom, when and how will we meet? Who do we contact if we have problems?

To these and many other questions, I simply could not give a precise answer. While I could provide some answers of a general nature, these questions could only find answers as they arose during the course itself. It was clear that this course would require flexibility and patience from everyone concerned as we went along. Yet, this aspect of the course should have come as no surprise, as to a certain extent, this ambiguity and uncertainty was an inherent part of the very structure of the course itself. That is: The course was conceived precisely to place ownership of learning and the experience of learning in the students' hand while giving them the opportunity to provide their own answers and solutions to these questions and circumstances as they encountered them. The course was, by design, set up to challenge the students to go out into French society and to work side by side with French people—to be immersed and engaged in the

community—and do so entirely in French. As such, it would require students to not only leave their "comfort zone", but to get—as one student described—"way out of my comfort zone".

The following year, I had the advantage of being able to offer specific answers to the students' questions. With the experience of the previous year, I could provide them with greater details and specifics as to what exactly they were going to do and what to expect in the course. Perhaps the greatest lesson I learned from that year was that the students needed to be mentally prepared in advance, that the course—by its design—would be a true challenge, as it would take them way out of their comfort zones.

Both iterations of the course taught in the 2018 and 2019 Paris programs shared the same basic syllabus and structure. Ownership for the course began with our first pre-departure orientation meeting on the university's campus. After my presentation of the course, the students then logged onto the umbrella organization's website and established their individual accounts. Together, we navigated the site and learned how to identify specific service activities and how to sign up to participate in them. The next pre-departure assignment was for the students to each select a preliminary weekly schedule and calendar of the 26-30 hours of service activities they would complete during the four and a half weeks in Paris. Each student would present these details to me and the student cohort at a final pre-departure meeting. At that meeting, students were given the assignment to choose one of their anticipated service organizations and prepare an oral presentation on that organization at our first meeting in Paris. They were also given their first video assignment on the day of departure for Paris: They were to film a 5-minute video that recorded their thoughts, feelings, and expectations of the experience upon which they were about to embark.

Student self-reflective videos were a central role in student assessment. In addition to the pre-departure video, at the end of every day—for the duration of the Paris program—students would film a 1-minute reflective video journal where they would describe that day's activities, their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and what they had learned. In total, there would be 33 journal entries. Additionally, each student would complete three other short videos: One would be an interview with an employee at one of the service organizations; another, an interview with a fellow volunteer; and finally, a reportage on someone who received the benefits of a particular service activity. At the end of the program, for our final meeting, each student would prepare another 5-minute video where they reflected on their overall experience, including their thoughts and feelings referenced in their pre-departure video. All these video assignments served as tangible markers for student activities and engagement. By comparing videos made early in the program with videos filmed at the end, these documents served as a chronological tool for assessing the progress in the student's competence and confidence in speaking French.

In addition to the service activities and the video assignments, each day I would meet informally with each individual student for a de-briefing on their activities and experiences. As a formal exercise, we would all meet twice per week for dinner and discuss their experiences and what they had learned. At the final class meeting, students would present their reflection videos and they also would make a brief presentation on a service organization in their home communities, in the United States, that had a service mission and activities comparable to the ones with which they served in Paris. This would all function as a kind of final course de-briefing. Finally, I would reach out to each student by email at six-month and one-year intervals after the end of the Paris program and ask them to reflect on their experiences and the impact—if any—the service-learning in Paris course had on them.

Once in Paris, we met with representatives of the umbrella service organization and they gave us an orientation explaining their mission, the organizations with which they worked and their role assisting in the coordination, communication about, and troubleshooting for us as service volunteers.

Shortly after that meeting, in both the 2018 and 2019 programs, the students—together as a group—participated in an inaugural service activity with the same organization from the year before at the open-air market at the Bastille. Since I had worked previously with this organization, I was confident that the students would be well received and have a positive first service experience volunteering with them. As well, I wanted the students to take ownership of their learning and experience, so I did not accompany them in this activity. They were provided with the essential information found on the umbrella organization's website that included: the name and contact information for the person in charge, the date, time and location of the service activity, and a brief description of the service activity itself. The students had the responsibility for organizing themselves and coordinating their travel to and participation in their first meaningful engagement with French, Paris, Parisians, and French society. And while at first nervous and apprehensive, afterwards—as before—the students were proud, self-assured, confident, and satisfied with what they had achieved that day in the two and a half hours of volunteering at the open-air market at the Bastille. They were no longer scared. They were ready to go and ready for more.

Some students began their service activities the next day. In the first year, there were 3 students enrolled in the course. The following year there were 6. While I supervised, briefed and debriefed the students, they were all independent, autonomous and fully responsible for their service activities. They set up their schedule, contacted and communicated with each service

organization, and coordinated their transportation. The service activities sent them to all parts in and around Paris. The transportation itself was a challenge, as getting to the service activities would require them to master not only the Paris metro, but commuter trains as well as local and regional bus systems. Once they arrived at the service activities, students would have to communicate entirely in French with those who were participating in service—both those performing service as well as those receiving its benefits.

They would participate in service activities across the spectrum of the umbrella organization's themes. In the first year, the three students performed service activities related to the environment and working with the handicapped and the elderly. The focus of the environmental activities was on conservation, recycling, and reducing waste. In addition to working with the organization at the Bastille market and with other environmental groups, students performed similar service activities at a number of other open-air markets in and around Paris. With one organization, students traveled around Paris and collected unsold and unused food from restaurants, caterers, and grocery stores. They then delivered it all to community food banks and kitchens. At another service organization, students assisted in the thrift store where they sorted, priced and stocked the shelves and racks with donated goods. With another community group, students worked side by side with volunteers, school employees and parents to create an organic vegetable and flower garden at a middle school. Students also served at a senior center where they assisted residents getting from their rooms to on-site concerts and activities. They were also able to participate in conversations with the residents. The residents enjoyed meeting and getting to know them and the students, for their part, enjoyed learning about them and their lives. An additional service activity at the same senior center was "Dansons un Pas à Deux", where the student volunteer learned to dance the Tango and then taught it to

blind residents. At another activity dedicated to helping people living at the margins of society, students had conversations and fellowship and served drinks and meals to those without shelter. Students served, as well, alongside other volunteers to provide meals to refugees.

Assessing Students' Experiences

The second year of the course had six students enrolled. This year, in addition to the service activities from the previous year, students participated in the service activities that included: "Travaillons le Corps et le Mental à Tout Âge" at a senior center, where they helped seniors exercise—physically and mentally. In the activity "Nageons avec les Dauphins" student volunteers helped teach disabled adults to swim. They worked with volunteers serving in community kitchens in immigrant and low-income communities. They made and repaired toys and games with a service group in Nanterre. With a judo club and the activity "Judo Pour Tous: Handicap ou Pas", student volunteers assisted in the instruction of Judo lessons for the disabled. These examples of the students' 30 hours of community service activities, while here limited, are reflective of the kind of personal commitment and community engagement that transformed them and their experience in the course of the Paris programs. While this program in Paris is short—roughly a month—it was able to make up for any lack in duration by the frequency and intensity of the students' direct, meaningful engagement, and immersion in the community through their service. Through these experiences, I witnessed their transformations as the process—that was the course—unfolded. Initially, students had great trepidation. In anticipation, they were apprehensive, nervous, and a little scared. The tasks seemed daunting and "way out of their comfort zones". But as they took on each new experience, contacting each community partner, traveling to the activity site, introducing themselves, meeting other volunteers and receiving training, they became increasingly comfortable in their discomfort. These adventures

out into the community became regular daily activities that they eventually undertook as if going to class. In this process, the students' affective filters diminished, and they gained confidence and took great pride in their achievements. On a daily basis, while they were in France, they participated in authentic and meaningful community service while doing it on their own and entirely in French. The transformation in each student was made tangible through their video assignments and daily video journals.

For 32 days, each student filmed a 1-minute daily video journal. In each journal they described their daily activities—whether they did service that day or not. On the days they performed community service, their videos had to include: the name of the organization; details describing where they went, what they did, who they met; and their thoughts and feelings about that day's experience. At the end of the program, these and the pre-departure and final reflection videos were downloaded onto a flash drive and handed in for assessment. With all of these videos collected together—like a flip-book or time-lapse—I was able to see and hear the transformation in each student with each act of reflection from beginning to end. What I witnessed in each student, initially, was an awkwardness, a discomfort and trepidation that went beyond simply speaking French. The act of reflecting itself on their own experiences was a challenge. The initial video journals were very much in the spirit of simply completing an assignment. In these entries, students often didn't say very much, and they paused, and waited for the 1-minute time limit to pass. They spoke with a halting French, which made it clear that, even with intermediate to high levels of French competence, they were uncomfortable and lacked confidence in actually speaking the language. As time lapsed, however, as student comfort and confidence grew, so did their daily journals. Their entries increased not only in length and depth of detail but in their fluency and thoughtfulness as well. Probably the best assessment of the

course and student outcomes, and the transformational character of this service-learning study abroad experience, is through the students' own words. I cite a few comments extensively:

My French skills definitely improved while studying abroad because talking to actual French people made me realize that making mistakes wasn't that big of a deal. Having never taken a conversation class before going on this trip, it was time to sink or swim, and being put on the spot with no other option except speaking really helped me learn a lot. When you go to volunteer, you are there to do a job and obviously want to do it right, so if you can't adequately communicate with your organization, you're of no use whatsoever. Having real conversations helps you realize which grammar rules you need to revise for the future. People are also incredibly willing to help you out if you're stuck with a word or conjugation, which really helps remove any element of fear or embarrassment that comes with learning a new language. With the new volunteering program, I was happy to find that I did not feel like a tourist at all because the program sent us around every inch of Paris that we otherwise never would have explored. It also allowed us to have in-depth conversations that would have been almost impossible otherwise. (Student Comment)

The service-learning course definitely had a large-scale impact on me. While the course didn't influence me to volunteer for charities, and NGOs […], it did encourage me to become more active in my community. A lot of the work I did in Paris brought me into close contact with disenfranchised groups of people (refugees, the homeless, the poor, students, etc.), and it was made abundantly clear after speaking with them that they need someone to listen to them. The best way to do that, in my opinion, is to help people find their political voice. I am now the outreach director for [a campus-wide "get out the vote" organization], which means I am responsible for registering […] students to register to vote. (And we registered over 2000 people last semester!!!) I go give presentations in the classroom, dorm, and club settings as well as speaking to people at various on-campus events. Without being **forced** to speak French in the service-learning course, I doubt I would have been able to casually speak to people, for public speaking is nothing in comparison to the intense pressure of conversing in a language in which one is not at all fluent. Interacting with the [umbrella organization] volunteers also taught me how to have meaningful conversations with strangers instead of just sticking to small talk. I also think that being surrounded by such helpful and understanding individuals has encouraged me to treat people with the same patience and helpful spirit that was given to me. The program has made me almost addicted to volunteering time (that I definitely do not have) to various political organizations that advocate for the rights of others. (Student Comment)

My world view has become decidedly less cynical than before because the interactions I had whilst in Paris taught me to appreciate the beauty of humanity, the power that each individual has to enact change, and the little things that make life worth living. I know this is sappy as hell, but it's the truth. [The] Paris [program] was simultaneously the worst and the best time of my life, but I would not trade the experience for anything. (Student Comment)

Going to Paris for many students in the USA is the opportunity to have fun in the city of LOVE. However, for our class, going to Paris has been more than just to have fun in one of the best cities in the world. The volunteer services we did make me feel valuable, and, for me, it is considered the first step into action to fight for a better world. This trip was life changing.

When I enrolled […] in [the] Paris [program], I was just trying to get credits to, finally, graduate from my French Studies degree. Then [the program director] told me that there was a service class. For me it was the best opportunity to do something good for others. The trip ended-up to be more than just "do something good for others". [The] Paris [program] opened my mind about environmental protection and safety. As a just recent Petroleum-Engineer graduate, being with people that really care about our planet gave me a different perspective about my future career. It actually helped to realize that, even a petroleum-engineer needs to fight for the best of our planet. Therefore, I will give my best to find better ways to deliver energy while protecting the environment. This is an amazing feeling. I will not just focus on producing oil and gas, but I will give my best to reduce environmental harm and help shift more toward renewable resources.

On the other hand, I realize that Paris is more than just the "Eiffel Tower." Paris is about refugees, people left alone in retirement facilities, food waste, and the list goes on. Paris has issues. This trip helped to better understand these issues. It is easy to be a tourist in Paris. It is hard to see the other side of Paris. For instance, many things are left to do to help people dying with no food. It is painful to see a family (not just one member of the entire family) begging for food and money. It is even more painful to see aged people left alone in the retirement home. However, it is a relief to find good people that fight against these issues. I found people that serve people every day. They leave their comfort zone to help other people and the environment. It is very inspiring. I wish everyone could experience how lovely and inspiring it can be. Today, I am a better man thanks to this trip, and I hope to never forget that in a world with so many issues, little actions actually matter. (Student Comment)

I am so grateful for my experience in Paris. While I still make mistakes, both in speaking and writing, I find that I have a foundation that never before existed. The structure of the program is its greatest asset. Being forced to continuously use a language

makes one become better at the language. Before Paris, incorporating a newly learned French word was "a task", but now I find that I can more easily incorporate new words/common "slang". Reading has also become significantly easier. (Student Comment)

In her "longitudinal study" of study abroad experiences over fifty years, Mary Dwyer's (2004) focus was on measuring the "impact" of study abroad on participants over time. While the Paris student comments above are only six months to a year post-program, the impact of their experiences on their lives and learning in this short-term program belie the Engle and Engle's (2013) claim that "brief stays [abroad] allow an at best superficial interaction with the host culture" (p. 36). The depth of meaning reflected in these student comments mirror Kiely's (2004) observations that: "[F]or many undergraduate students, the international service-learning experience marks an important transformational event in their lives, one that will forever shape their sense of self, lifestyle, connection to others, view of global problems, and purpose in life" (p. 5). Experienced as such, the students in this short-term program have achieved a number of the higher-level objectives described in the references to short-term study abroad programs that were considered out of the reach of such programs. In its impact, intensity, and scope, the Paris program may well be considered among higher-level study abroad programs.

Conclusion

The Engles consider short-term faculty-led study abroad programs at the lower-level of their qualitative hierarchy of programs. They describe these programs as designed for the students' comfort and convenience where everyone lives together, and students take courses from their home institution, taught by instructors from that same institution. The students' direct exposure to the host culture is somewhat limited by the length of the program as well as by the practical possibilities of managing the broad interests of a collectively diverse group. This was

true of the traditional Paris programs of the past. But with the implementation of the

Communication and Culture Through Service course, students with intermediate and advanced

levels of French, with goals of improving their competence in French and knowledge of French

culture, were—for the first time—able to achieve these goals, as reflected in their

self-assessments six months to a year after the program. The course provided students with

situations and contexts that allowed them to transcend many of the limits that the Engles

establish between the higher and lower-level program types. In this case, the students left the

comfort of the insulated environment provided by the program for the discomfort of directly

engaging with French people in a real French context. By implementing the service-learning

course into the Paris program, grafting elements of Engles' higher-level types, the program had a

hybrid structure that, while retaining elements of the traditional short-term faculty-led program,

also allowed students to develop their linguistic competence through their inter-cultural

exchanges, and in doing so, they were able to realize the higher-level objectives for study abroad

in whatever terms one might wish to use. For years, I had unsuccessfully tried to find the key to

these positive results. And it was *Conversation and Culture Through Service in Paris* that

transformed the Paris program and provided the *open sesame* to unlock the magic of study

abroad.

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"I don't know if I want to be a teacher anymore":
The effect of cooperating teacher burn-out on student teachers

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One of my favorite class sessions in my 'seminar on teaching'—a course reserved for student teachers about to finish their major—is the one devoted to creating a professional development plan. Aimed at supporting future World Language educators, the cohort of students who enroll in the course is quite small. The general atmosphere is positive, and students feel free to share their dreams and concerns, roses and thorns alike. Teacher candidates share their immediate and mid-term goals, and we, as a group, devise strategies that will help them work successfully toward reaching those goals. As our university motto reads, "Think big, we do." We underline the importance of continuing to develop their proficiency in their world language ("Don't get stuck speaking German 102 for the rest of your life!"), remain up to date with new teaching methodologies and research, advocate for language education at the local, state, and regional levels, join and actively contribute to professional associations, etc.

Last March, the situation was different. As I entered the room, I immediately noticed a negative vibe: It looked as if the gray, cold, rainy weather had infiltrated the classroom. I began my class plan. To get students engaged, I asked them a very direct question: "Where do you see

yourself in 3-5 years?". I posed the question expecting that it would generate all kinds of optimistic answers to be followed by a vibrant, energetic discussion. Instead, I was faced with long, serious faces. Students did not volunteer their answers: I had to drag the answers out of them. The most common reply was, "I don't know". I asked Linda (all names in this article have been changed to guarantee anonymity) to elaborate a bit. She went on, "I don't know if I want to be a teacher anymore." Her answer hit me like a rock, and I am certain that they could see the surprise on my face. This cohort of student teachers had worked so hard to achieve their dream of becoming teachers, and they were about to give up now that the finish line was within their immediate reach. Linda explained that she felt that most of the teachers at her current placement (a suburban middle school) were manifesting signs of educator burnout. The negativity that teachers manifested was extremely high. That statement did not surprise me as I knew that more than 50% of current teachers are considering leaving the profession and that 90% of teachers say that feeling burned out is a serious problem for them (Jotkoff, 2022). I simply had not considered the significant impact that the attitudes of burnt-out teachers could be having on the future of the profession. In response to this conversation, I did more research into teacher burnout and discovered that it might actually start during the student teaching experience (Fives, Hamman & Olivarez, 2007). As a result of these realizations, the topic of burn-out and, what I view as the opposite of burn-out—sustainable professional satisfaction—became regular segments in our subsequent class discussions; and I made a conscious effort to counterbalance the negative effects that concomitant teacher burn-out might have on our teacher candidates.

During these months I have been able to identify a series of common trends that took a toll on our student teachers' experiences:

1. Lack of time to devote to mentor, advise and provide feedback to student teachers.

Larkin (2013) underlines the importance of feedback that cooperating teachers[3] provide, and stresses that student teachers, especially during the first months of their experience, reported their need for feedback to be higher than their desire for autonomy. During the last two years the existing pre-pandemic teacher shortages have become more acute. In fact, 80% of teachers reported that, due to unfilled vacancies, their job obligations have increased as they must take over new responsibilities (Jotkoff, 2022). Under such extreme circumstances, it is simply not possible for teachers to devote the necessary time for effective mentorship of student teachers. They cannot meet with them as often as they likely intended and wanted to meet with them, nor as much as the student teachers feel that they need to meet with them. When cooperating teachers provide feedback, some worry about the effect that comments of constructive criticism might have on the student teacher, as they know that student teachers are also under tremendous amounts of stress. One of our cooperating teachers, a strong advocate for social emotional learning, before submitting her evaluation of a student candidate, commented, "There is still a part of me that worries that my feedback could negatively contribute to" the student teacher's self-image as an emerging educator. But, if cooperating teachers do not provide this kind of feedback, mentorship, and guidance, the student teachers are denied essential opportunities for learning and growth.

2. Exhaustion, low morale, and negativity.

The pandemic has significantly exacerbated what was already a troublesome consequence of the K-12 teacher shortages: The classroom teachers who remain are continually asked to take

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[3] Cooperating teachers are certified classroom teachers who guide and support visiting student teachers, usually for a full semester. They serve as mentors, models, instructors, and evaluators in the student teacher program. For more details on cooperating teachers' role and responsibilities, please, see the University of Rhode Island School of Education "Student Teaching Handbook" (pp. 13-20).

on additional duties, without tangible consideration for or adjustments based on the significant demands of their "normal" duties. Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association, stated: "This crisis is preventing educators from giving their students the one-on-one attention they need. It is forcing them to give up their class planning and lunch time to fill in for colleagues who are out due to COVID. And, it is preventing students from getting the mental health support needed" (quoted by Jotkoff, 2022). Their work/personal life balance has suffered, and educators are "exhausted, overwhelmed, feeling unloved, disrespected" (Kamenetz, 2022). During our class discussion, Linda's comments confirmed that the teachers in her Middle School are part of this trend: She noted that they suffered from "overwhelming levels of stress and fatigue" and she was particularly alarmed by the fact that, "many teachers actually went out on stress leave in my time there". Likewise, another educator, Anna felt that negative vibes were "brewing in the atmosphere at the school, and the positives seem to be outweighed by the negatives on most days".

3. Persistent questioning of student teachers' decisions regarding career choices.

Student teachers reported that multiple faculty members at their placement schools (not only cooperating teachers) often questioned if their decision to become language teachers was a wise one, for example:

- "Are you sure you want to be a teacher?"»;
- "Make sure you have a plan B"
- "If you leave running and screaming from the building in your first year, we won't blame you for it!"

Such statements, intended to lower tension, provide some comic relief, and create a more relaxed, humorous atmosphere, were repeated so often that they ended up taking a toll on teacher candidates and motivated them to seriously question their own goals and aspirations.

4. Cooperating teachers' low expectations regarding their own students.

Student teachers reported that on multiple occasions when they tried to implement rigorous class plans and to apply best practices, such as conducting class in the target language, cooperating teachers would shoot down those attempts alleging that their students were not ready or capable of handling such activities. One cooperating teacher at an urban high school stated: "During the last two years, students have done absolutely nothing, and they have continued passing to the next course. Two of my classes at the level III are discouraging, they should be at level I. In previous years students have not even attended classes and they don't know anything. Consequently, our classes are a little unorthodox". Student teachers, such as Meagan felt that distance learning has made classroom teachers "soft and [that they do] not really hold [students] accountable anymore".

5. Lack of confidence in student teachers' abilities.

Despite multiple difficulties that teachers face due to the pandemic, they are still responsible for the learning of the students in their classrooms. They are being observed and evaluated by supervisors and administrators. Student performance in different standardized assessments is being used to judge their effectiveness as professionals, which limits their ability to adjust content and methods to the actual students' needs. After being forced to adapt to an ever-changing environment and spending countless hours on a screen, one of our CTs mentioned that she was ready to teach in "more old-fashioned ways". Consequently, she was reluctant to

give our teacher candidate full control of her classroom and asked her to teach in an old-fashioned traditional way.

The idea is not to simply identify the problem and create a list of all that is wrong. That is only the first step. The key issue is to find solutions to such problems. The future of the profession is on the line. During the semester, I tried to create some habits and strategies that could positively influence the experience of these future educators. I have grouped them under five general epigrams:

1. "Do not be overcome by evil; rather overcome evil with good."

Present student teachers with a myriad of successful stories, especially those of people with whom they can relate. If possible, invite to your own course recent graduates from your program to share their success stories and experiences with current student teachers. Don't hide the difficulties they encounter but make a conscious effort to close those sessions with positive, high notes, such as asking them to speak about the favorite parts of their jobs. Also, celebrate each little victory of student teachers during the practicum experience. Give them an opportunity to share those victories with their peers and to create a peer-to-peer support system. From a constructivist point of view, we must not forget that learning (which includes learning how to teach) is a sociocultural endeavor. In fact, research has suggested that a constructivist-oriented mentoring style has a positive effect on student teachers, and it also lowers their levels of exhaustion (Burger, Bellhäuser, & Imhof, 2021).

2. Provide even more detailed feedback.

As previously mentioned, teachers are required to do more. This is especially true for cooperating teachers. It is natural that they might not be able to provide the same amount of detailed feedback that they were able to provide in the past. It is the role of the university

supervisor to compensate for that. It becomes crucial that after each class observation, they provide detailed, constructive feedback in a timely manner and devise ways to bring the cooperating teacher into that feedback loop by sharing some of the recommendations offered to the student teacher so that both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor can support the student teach in tandem. It is also important that we provide student teachers with the opportunity to self-assess the effectiveness of their own teaching and help them cultivate a lifelong learner approach to their own teaching by reflecting on their strengths and areas for potential growth.

3. Underline the good relationships that student teachers create with the students in their classrooms.

One of our teacher candidates (Norma) was placed for the first part of her semester of student teaching in one of the high schools with the lowest graduation rates in the state. Upon my first observation, I commented that her group of students was very well-behaved. She responded that this was not usually the case and that some students' behavior was often disruptive, even when the cooperating teacher oversaw the lesson. Apparently, they were at their best behavior solely because I was observing the class. In her mind, they wanted to impress me. I sincerely doubt that those students wanted to impress a guy they had never seen before and that would have zero influence in their future lives. The motivation that modified their behavior was apparent to me: They liked her and wanted Norma to do well. I shared my perspective and assessment of the situation with Norma, and when the students asked her if she had "passed" her observation, they confirmed my hypothesis. Underlining this fact helped Norma bond with her students.

4. Remind teacher candidates that cooperating teachers do care – about them and especially about their students.

Everyone has the right to have a bad day, especially if you are overworked and under constant pressure. Teachers in our schools have a key virtue that is often overlooked --perseverance. Why do they keep showing up to school every morning? Why did they choose to become teachers? The answer is easy—because they care about the world and about people, and they want to make a difference in the lives of their students by helping them to learn. Sinclair (2008) confirms the findings of Fox (1962) who indicated that two of the four main reasons that motivate individuals to become teachers are, 1) service to society; 2) helping students to acquire knowledge (the other two being their desire to work with children or adolescents, and opportunities to further their own education. Funny enough, becoming rich does not appear to be one of those four!). Many things have changed in 60 years, but not why teachers become teachers.

5. Remind cooperating teachers that what they do is key for the future of the profession.

Show gratitude to and appreciation for your cooperating teachers, clearly and frequently. Despite being accountable to their supervisors and school districts during an extremely complicated time, they have chosen to take on additional responsibilities. They have very little to gain by opening their classrooms to teacher candidates with no teaching experience. Our Teacher Education programs are only possible thanks to teachers like them who are willing to serve as role models and guides for our teacher candidates. Remind cooperating teachers that they are key to making the student-teacher practicum a productive, enjoyable, and formative experience. Foster this culture of gratitude and appreciation in your teacher candidates, remind them that they are guests in another teacher's classroom and that they must respect and follow their rules.

Invite them to have open and respectful communications with their cooperating teachers. Tell your students that their responsibility is to be a helping hand and not a source of additional stress. And never forget that thanks to the hard work of cooperating teachers, our students have grown immensely during their final semester in the program.

Conclusion

"Mentoring a student teacher is challenging and rewarding" (Larkin 2013, 43). The crisis of teacher shortages and the pandemic have only increased the challenges that classroom teachers face. This is also true for cooperating teachers, whose "job" has become even more complex and demanding than before. They are under constant pressure, and this has an effect both on them and on our teacher candidates. As supervisors of these experiences, we need to make sure that our teacher candidates are not a source of added stress for those who open the doors of their classrooms to them. We have to do everything possible to compensate for that potential added stress and to make sure that our teacher candidates have a positive, formative experience. And while doing so, we need to make sure that we let cooperating teachers know how thankful we are. So, I cannot find a better way to finish this article than by expressing my wholehearted gratitude to and appreciation for all those who accept to serve as cooperating teachers. Your hard work is shaping the experience of our future students and of the profession.

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The Four Cs Strategy

in L2 Online and F2F Instruction

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Through my years in the profession, the most rewarding teaching strategies for L2 in higher education I have practiced are what I summarize as The Four Cs: Contextualizing, Communication, Confidentiality, and Confidence. These fundamental and distinctive principles, often recommended to primary and secondary school educators[4], are also pivotal at the college and university level L2 courses by helping put students at ease when using the target language, creating a collaborative environment, and aiding instructors at gaining the students' trust and positive attitude as they develop proficiency in the target language. Following, are my own professional language-teaching strategies and best practices as I developed them over the years.

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[4] The concept of the 4Cs as an acronym has been used with diverse meanings in education and in other fields for decades. In education, and in relation to the Common Core, the acronym is today used to refer to communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. In a 1992 article about teaching languages in primary school, Keith Sharpe also resorts to the 4Cs acronym to discuss communication, culture, context, and confidence in particular practices and examples related to language teachers teaching L2 to children. Sharpe's findings and strategies limit themselves and are specific to that educational environment, and do not discuss the points and examples I share in the present article.

1. Contextualization

One of the best approaches I have experienced in teaching L2 at the college level has been contextualizing. Whether the text is lengthy or brief, I first give it a background. I put it in context, just as when we teach a film class and introduce the film to L2 students by presenting the background: In this case, beginning level students are given a simple, short, interesting, self-contained, and contextually significant passage from L2 prominent literature. The passage lends itself to the understanding of concepts and notions in relation to the film which might be known to some students and new to others. In this approach, cognates (Beinborn et al., 2014; Hammer & Giauque, 1988) as well as the use of glossaries and dictionaries, are of great help.

Contexts, better than texts, rise above the limits of textual comprehension and open more horizons, thus accounting for effective pedagogical means in the L2 classroom. They encompass texts and bring them to life. The more we offer a contextualization, the more students feel stimulated and get involved in the activity. While it might be perceived as frustrating for most L2 students to approach authentic reading material for the sake of merely reading it, without a targeted specific purpose in mind and taking into account the slower pace of reading a text in L2, it is much more stimulating when the text is framed in a context, therefore, aiding in answering comprehension questions as well as in expressing opinions, ideas, and critical thoughts. In this way, students approach the L2 text with a purpose by answering questions of semantic relevance, for example: What does the author mean by such and such expression in context? Questions involving why, when, where, and how, all pertaining to the semantic field, that are part of the quest for meaning, are easier for students to work with when given a specific context. Synthesis also becomes crucial for the contextually minded approach to L2 learning. However, it must be stressed that analysis lends itself more to the beginner L2 learner, while synthesis requires at

least intermediate or more advanced L2 levels for students, more acquired competence in performing their own sentence structuring, more creative skills, and a post beginner's L2 fluency. All in all, contextualizing promotes a more natural and satisfactory acquisition of the target language.

2. Communication

Error correction has always been a point of contention among language educators. Yet, I have learned through the years that, more often than not, students do expect some form of feedback when it comes to grammar use. Correction of sentence structures gains more acceptance and understanding for students, whether for their oral or written work, when preceded and followed by the instructor validating students' relevant thinking and semantic expression. As research has shown, communicating with students to tell them only what they did wrong, to underline their mistakes, will prove to be of little if any pedagogical value (Pawlak, 2013). There is much more to learning a new language than focusing on errors. If we want students to learn from their mistakes, we have to customize feedback to each individual student in such a way that there is:

1. an expectation from the student to have his/her mistakes corrected,
2. a willingness to learn from those mistakes, and, most importantly,
3. a strong validation of the student's positive accomplishments in other fields than the grammatical and syntactical ones, such as when expressing their original ideas, critical thinking and opinions, when showing a collaborative predisposition in activities with their peers, etc.

Failing to praise valuable content in student work and focusing on the poor points only, weakens the students' ability to learn and lessens their engagement and motivation for finishing the course, and/or pursuing higher levels in L2 proficiency.

In my communication with students concerning the writing of short compositions at the beginning level, I like to encourage students' expectations in relation to what extent they want their writing corrected, in other words, to how curious they are to learn better ways to communicate what they have stated, that is to express it clearly, concisely, and eventually using some idiomatic L2 expressions. For that purpose, I ask them to add a "Please Correct" note to their assignment. This note determines the difference between a short basic grading, and long-extended suggestions of better ways to communicate their ideas in L2 at length (Ha et al., 2021). As a matter of fact, some students might have no time or disposition to read extended comments, while others are eager to learn more and better ways to communicate their ideas in the target language. I have switched to this "Please Correct" note I ask students to add (or omit) after reading students' evaluations. Some complained of the length of the comments on their drafts, emphasizing their time-consuming nature. Others were thrilled by the possibilities, while happy and grateful about the same extended communications and options offered, thus appreciating the enriching nature of those linguistic variations. So, the lesson I learned as an instructor was to give each individual student the choice on the short -vs- long feedback they receive and also to enable students to decide on their choice on each single different assignment. Sometimes, even a student who usually likes to receive long feedback along with their grade might have several exams or projects due on a given week, so they would be free to opt out for that particular week. This flexibility works best for today's students as some of them are also working and/or parenting at the same time they are pursuing their degrees.

Positive communication is also key when using the language in class. One of my favorite techniques to correct F2F students' answers on the blackboard for a particular practice/activity is

to change the question of the exercise by making up a new question that is appropriate for the incorrect answer given by the student.

This becomes a deeper learning opportunity for all students while offering a tactful way to correct a mistake. After doing so, going back to the original question and giving the right answer to it, I find students understand it better. This is a win-win opportunity as the point they made is validated and at the same time the textbook or workbook author's point is validated as well.

This is another way to communicate in a positive fashion being that, at the same time, it creates a dynamic, enthusiastic environment in the classroom since the student who made the mistake on the board feels proud instead of ashamed or embarrassed.

3. Confidentiality

Another underlying factor that is important to student success whether online or F2F is a confidentiality disclosure set forth in the syllabus.

Confidentiality (Schmidt, 2004) is an important component in L2 student learning success, especially at the beginning level. Learning a language involves use and practice at its core, hence, confidentiality sets the tone to freely use and dare to practice the target language, putting aside the barriers of mispronunciation fears or the general L2 mistakes (Bashori et al., 2020) can generate. For example, students might ask themselves: How will the instructor handle mistakes? How will my peers react to my errors when I use the language in class? Such concerns might be a source of uneasiness in the L2 learner's mind, even as an unspoken fear or concern.

Fear of ridicule often constitutes a barrier to enunciation or early pronunciation. The fear of mispronouncing L2 words can be largely overcome when confidentiality is guaranteed to protect students from mockeries, outsiders' interferences, and even unpleasant negative comments. Once the fear factor is removed from the use and practice of the L2 being studied, the learning process

becomes effective and of academic relevance. So, I found it to be very helpful to reassure students that what is being said, pronounced, shared in the classroom stays within the classroom, whether F2F or online, so that everyone can share candidly and with confidence. Just as in the printed syllabus, I include the following confidentiality disclosure in my online syllabus: *The communication that takes place within this online classroom should stay within it. Please take the opportunity to use the Discussion Forum Café Cybernétique Introductions to get to know each other better. Like any class, we are a community, and we need to treat each other with respect*.

Moreover, in order to stress the importance of respect and discretion, I also have an introductory quiz online titled "Syllabus Agreement", which stands in lieu of students' signatures in print, which they have to closely read and then agree to all terms. In this way, all students alike are guaranteed a safe environment in which to use the target language unperturbed and worry-free.

4. Confidence

As fear factors are removed, the more motivated and engaged students become, and the more they tend to express themselves confidently and creatively. This leads in turn to the student's desire to pursue more advanced levels of L2 learning, while it also instills in them a much-needed confidence often expressed through a sense of humor (Neff et al., 2022), laughing (healthy laughter) at their own mistakes (for example secretly telling themselves 'I know I am going to say this wrong, but I am going to say it anyway'). Most important, this gained sense of confidence will lead them to improve their proficiency and to more deeply engage in the L2 learning journey.

Once confidence has been established through confidentiality, through communication, through contextualization, and through the instructor's positive comments and encouragement, it is important to sustain this confidence by a meaningful curricular content. If there is no light at the end of the tunnel, it might be scary to go through it. Poor curriculum design can be both discouraging and disengaging in L2 students' learning. Students must also be confident that they are learning stimulating content that is both challenging and rewarding. Moreover, confidence also promotes creativity which, at the same time, drives students to continue learning and optimizing their skills.

Conclusion

Encouraging students' participation without sacrificing accuracy in L2, pointing out correct/incorrect structures while always validating, valuing, showing appreciation of the effort made for higher semantic and syntactic students' input when expressing critical thinking and opinions, is at the foundation of a communicative approach that sets a friendly tone, puts students at ease and encourages them all the more to share and participate, even in the case of the shyest, most timid language learners. These standards are at the core of best practices in teaching languages and a key factor of students' success that can be applied in an online or an F2F setting alike. These essential concepts, which have been decidedly rewarding for me as a professor at the college level, are key and important to keep in mind whether in the F2F or online environment in order to make the most of students' learning, optimize their abilities, and increase their motivation and their participation. Our students' continuous engagement and commitment to the basic four L2 objectives: Speaking, writing, listening, and reading, are encouraged and reinforced through the Four Cs: *Contextualizing* for fluid comprehension, *communicating* in a

positive fashion, *confidentiality* to boost self-assuredness, and a sense of *confidence* that leads to

creativity. All four Cs combined connect and guide my teaching experience.

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Connections as Catalysts or You Are What You Read:
Teaching and Learning about Literature

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Redes literarias: antología del texto literario en su contexto sociohistórico (2018) was born at the intersection of social justice, canon disruption, pedagogical shifts, and 21st-century-student needs. Full disclosure: Yes, we are the authors/co-editors/co-compilers of the textbook in question, but no, we have zero promotional intentions. Rather, we refer to *Redes* and the strategies therein to promote student success. Ultimately, *Redes* is a student-driven, student-minded textbook that strives to address student-adjacent issues within and beyond the text itself, including readership and engagement: we were intentional about the inclusion of more indigenous authors/themes and voices of women, while connection making within and across time periods is prominent and deliberate.

Research shows that deep learning happens through connection making, which is exemplified in the textbook's title. As Jane E. Meléndez and Robert H. Pritchard assert, "background knowledge readers bring to the reading act is as important as the information residing in the text" (399). After decades of adopting (and adapting) the same textbook, we saw

room for and were eager to initiate change when it came to the filling (and retaining) of our students' knowledge reserves. In a moment, we will talk more specifically about how the readings were chosen with this fundamental idea in mind. We also argue that this strategy pays off not only at the end of each unit (when students demonstrate knowledge of course material), but also at the end of the term in a way that positions students to be better critical thinkers; to be able to transfer knowledge across subject matters more easily (and, as a result, more enjoyably); and to become lifelong learners.

In addition, while we loved what has come to be known as the standard for introduction to literary analysis courses, as well as that standard's primary author, we nevertheless began to question the genre approach. We asked ourselves, "What happens when we sacrifice chronology, history, and, to a degree, culture?" What we found was that while students did understand the difference between a short story and a poem at the end of the semester, and they were able to apply the terminology necessary for literary analysis, by the next course they lacked a solid grasp of literature in motion and how literary movements frequently grappled with each other, often in dynamic and fascinating ways. Why not capitalize on that opportunity? We likewise found ourselves increasingly supplementing that textbook with our own readings, questionnaires, and activities, which was the catalyst for the prospectus. *Redes*, then, in myriad ways, simply formalizes and organizes those materials in a way that pedagogically speaks to us.

Service, broadly speaking, at our respective academic institutions helped us conceptualize *Redes* as an outgrowth of our commitment to student success and enrichment. I, Bonnie Gasior, am a Professor of Spanish at California State University, Long Beach, a large, public, urban university with an enrollment approaching 40,000. It forms part of a 23-campus system, the largest in the country, with nearly a half a million students matriculated in any given year.

Designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, (>44% of students are Latinx), it ranks in the top 20% of all schools for diversity.[5] CSULB also consistently ranks as a top regional institution in the West (#12 in 2022 by *U.S News*) and has recently been touted for it upward economic and social mobility index (#3 nationally by CollegeNet). Recent census data reveals the following: 51% are Pell-eligible, and 55% (of freshman) are first-generation, defined here as students who are first in their family to go to and complete college, as well as those whose parents attended but did not graduate.[6] A few years ago, I recognized that "Hispanic serving" is not the same as "Hispanic enrolling" and *Redes* represents a way to ensure we are, in fact, *serving* that population through the voices, countries, races and genders the texts represent.

I, Mindy Badía, am a Professor of Spanish and International Studies at Indiana University Southeast (IUS), a small regional campus that is part of the Indiana University system. IUS is a 4-year, comprehensive institution dedicated primarily to undergraduate instruction. It is a teaching and service-intensive, a student-centered campus located in New Albany, Indiana. It serves a mostly rural population, drawing students from surrounding counties in southern Indiana and northern Kentucky. According to recent census data, nearly 31% of IUS students are the first in their families to attend college, 32% are of non-traditional age, approximately 17% are minorities, and roughly 39% are Pell Grant recipients. Service to the student body at an institution like IUS enhanced my sensitivity to the myriad barriers that can undermine student success, contributing to the pedagogical basis for a new Hispanic literature anthology that would reflect changes in the profession and its approach to literary survey courses in terms of both

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[5] We recognize and appreciate the debate between the descriptors "Hispanic", "Latino/a," and "Latinx." After much consideration and consultation with experts—many thanks to Dr. Maria Carreira, for her insight—we choose to use both "Latinx" (in the spirit of showing solidarity with non-binary identity politics) as well as "Latino/a," which recent national surveys show students prefer. We likewise maintain the use of "Hispanic" when referring to literature.

[6] We are grateful to Dr. Beth Manke, who graciously ran this report for me on April 7, 2022 on CSULB's Student Success Dashboard (SSD) 2.0.

content and course delivery, would provide high-quality materials, and would encompass a diverse range of voices that make up the literary production of the Spanish-speaking world.

Indeed, as Hispanists, we both were frustrated by the dearth of anthologies that examine the literary production of the Spanish-speaking world as a dialogue or exchange between Spain and the Americas. Despite recent trends in scholarship that seek a transatlantic understating of Spanish-language letters, and the fact that many of us are employed in positions in which a knowledge of the cultural production from both sides of the Atlantic is essential, most textbooks maintain the rigid distinction between Peninsular (European) and Latin American literature. We chose a chronological organization for *Redes*, with each of the four units corresponding to a different historical period (Medieval/Pre-Columbian, Renaissance and Baroque/Colonial, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, and Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries). This format fosters discussion that is both synchronic (focused on texts from Spain and Latin America that were produced at about the same time) and diachronic (attuned to the evolution of these texts over time).

The literary selections in *Redes* also consider the growing number of heritage speakers of Spanish enrolled in university language, literature, and culture courses. Although some institutions have boasted a sizable Latinx student population for decades, others are experiencing a recent increase in students who identify as such. In both contexts, the selections in *Redes* reflect the fact that Spanish is the most common non-English language spoken in US households, and that many of these Spanish-speakers find their way into our classrooms. While rates of Latino/a/x college attainment have improved in many states over the last twenty years, they remain below those of white students. Representation enhances the likelihood that these improvements in post-secondary education gains continue, as students who see themselves in the

materials that they study are more likely to appreciate their relevance. Given that approximately 20% of all undergraduate college students identify as Latinx or Hispanic, reading stories about characters that resonate with them provides role models and encourages goal setting.[7]

Selections from Juan Felipe Herrera's "187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross the Border" and Edmundo Paz Soldán's "Lazos de familia" ("Family Ties") resonate with most students, but they are particularly poignant for those who see their own experiences reflected in the words of these authors.[8] In student feedback from the Fall 2020 semester, the first in which one of us used *Redes*, approximately 60% rated Herrera's work as their favorite, and comments highlighted that the immigration issues that the poem raises as among the most thought-provoking topics of the course. In Fall 2022, one student in a California classroom shared her thoughts: "Este poema ayudó a confirmar mis raíces mexicanas y las luchas migratorias de los latinos en general" ("This poem validated my Mexican roots and migratory struggles in general"). Indeed, a complex text like Herrera's presents students with anti-immigration rhetoric that Anglos may have heard espoused within communities to which they belong (family, friends, church, etc.), only to subvert it with cutting irony. Thus, Anglo and Latinx students alike learn to identify and counter the racist subtext of programs like Proposition 187 or, more recently, former president Trump's executive order "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements."

While students are often drawn to selections by Latino/a/x and Latin American authors because of their proximity—which they often read as relevance—*Redes* encourages them to forge connections that are not so apparent. "Redes analíticas" (Analytical Networks) questions that appear at the end of each unit are designed to facilitate review of previously studied material

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[7] See Bauman; Krogstad and Noe-Bustamante; and Rachel Dinkes.

[8] As we wrote this paragraph, we ruminated on the challenges involved, which we admit had more to do with securing permissions and editorial stalemates than classroom issues (thank you, Juan Felipe and Edmundo, for being two exceptions!). Other than that, we highly recommend the experience but suggest proceeding with someone you know, trust, like, and respect. We're happy to report that nearly four years later, the book as a teaching tool has yet to hit a speed bump.

and to enhance students' critical thinking skills by asking them to make thematic connections between texts over time. Consider the following prompt: "Da algunos ejemplos de escritores españoles, latinoamericanos y latinos (hispanos viviendo en EEUU) que emplean la literatura como herramienta sociopolítica. ¿A qué situaciones históricas concretas responden?" (Give examples of Spanish, Latin American, and Latino/a/x authors who use literature as a socio-political tool. To what concrete historical situations do they respond?). This question asks students to reflect on similarities and differences between texts as chronologically and culturally diverse as *El cantar de Mío Cid* (*The song of the Cid*, anonymous, Spain, c. 1195); *Brevĺsima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (*Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, Bartolomé de las Casas, 1554); "A Roosevelt" ("To Roosevelt," Rubén Darío, Nicaragua, 1904); *Bodas de sangre* (*Blood Wedding*, Federico García Lorca, Spain, 1933); "Ay, ay, ay de la grifa negra" ("The lamentations of the Kinky-Haired Girl," Julia de Burgos, Puerto Rico, 1938); and, of course, Herrera's contemporary "187 Reasons."

March of 2020 initiated a period of reflection and reimagining for most academics, as we scrambled to meet student needs amidst a pandemic that disrupted our carefully crafted classroom plans. Although Covid certainly brought about challenges, it also pushed us to explore alternative methods of course delivery and new ways of connecting with our students. The publication of *Redes* shortly before the pandemic, coupled with the urgent need to offer high-quality online instruction due to the cessation of face-to-face classes at many universities, turned out to be a happy coincidence for us since, from its inception, *Redes* was envisioned as a textbook that, in both its print and electronic versions, would appeal to technology-savvy students.

For example, each literary selection includes a section titled "Imágenes en contexto" ("Images in Context"), where students consult a visual image (a painting, video, advertisement, etc.) that relates thematically to the text and then reflect on a series of questions designed to forge additional connections between artists, time periods, and various forms of media. One of the hurdles we faced when creating these sections was the expense of acquiring permissions to reproduce the images. We solved this problem by simply letting students do what they do anyway (use the internet to find resources to complete coursework) but gave specific instructions to ensure that they found the images we had selected.[9] As an extension, students could then progress from this highly guided level of internet research to selecting their own images and writing questions to develop student-driven "Imágenes en contexto."

While the previous example highlights the usefulness of technology, such benefits are mediated by the challenges of fostering meaningful connections in an asynchronous online course. Weekly Learning Management System discussion posts in which students respond to a prompt (and to each other's responses) is one method of ensuring regular student-instructor and student-student engagement. This activity allows students to interact informally in the target language without any high-stakes grammar grading; the goal is to contribute meaningfully and thoughtfully to the conversation. A favorite discussion activity was the following, which is based on a selection of stories by Spanish/Catalan author Joan (Juan) de Timoneda (16th century): "Escribe tu propio cuento corto (microcuento) al estilo de Timoneda. Lo que escribes tiene que demostrar creatividad y una buena comprensión de los cuentos de Timoneda. Para hacer esto, tu cuento necesita tener por lo menos TRES de las mismas características que tienen los de Timoneda (aunque, por supuesto, no puede ser una copia). Además de compartir tu cuento, es

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[9] Joni Larson writes in favor of technology in the classroom, citing that students will continue to exist and operate in a digital world and therefore, we, as instructors, should embrace rather than resist that reality (231).

necesario indicar explícitamente cuáles son estas tres características. Recuerda que también tienes que leer los cuentos de tus compañero/as de clase y hacer por lo menos tres comentarios." ("Write your own micro-story in the style of Timoneda. What you write must demonstrate creativity and that you have understood Timoneda's stories. To do this, your story must include at least three of the characteristics found in Timoneda's work (without copying it, of course). In addition to sharing your story, please indicate explicitly which three characteristics of Timoneda's style it illustrates. Remember to also read your classmates' stories and make at least three comments."). Students found this exercise challenging but fun, and it served its primary purpose (engagement): it was the only discussion that had 100% participation (students could drop 2 missing/low discussion post grades), and they requested we do it again for a different literary selection.

In sum, as co-producers of *Redes*, our teaching was impacted by design and by default: we wrote not with a/n (outdated) canon in mind nor by prioritizing the (now less relevant) conventions of literary analysis, but rather with a nod to diversity, inclusion, and student-forwardness. Not only did we think of students every step of the way, but we also put our fifty-ish-year-old selves in their shoes with the inclusion of each text, the creation of each homework assignment, and the design of each weighty assessment. If, as some claim, literature is the mirror of life, we confirm that students are receptive to what they see: the relationships they may have otherwise overlooked when studying literature in a way that spotlights their own personal experiences, identities, and reflections.[10]

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[10] Toward the end of the semester, one student, who was taking another literature class concurrently that term, remained in the Zoom room one day with a confession: that she was resourcing our textbook to avoid being "completamente perdida" (completely lost) in that other class (where they were studying the same literary movement). While I sympathized with her struggles, her comment allowed me to reflect with pride on Mindy's and my process with *Redes*.

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The Role of Supervisor in Creating the Supporting Conditions for Teachers'

Self-Reflection: Action Research

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Abstract

For teachers to change their practices and improve their performance, they need to reflect upon their actions consciously and continually. Understanding the self-reflection tendencies of teachers would provide a realistic starting point for making recommendations for teachers' professional development and creating the supporting conditions for teachers to reflect. The role of the teachers' supervisor in this process is instrumental in order to provide teachers the time needed to exercise reflective practice and to adequately guide them. This action research measures the self-reflection tendencies of 13 foreign language teachers. Data were collected via two instruments: (a) a survey (quantitative data) and (b) a focused-group discussion (qualitative data). Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to describe teachers' self-reflection tendencies and frequency of reflection. Findings showed that teachers reported higher self-reflection tendencies on the survey than what they reported in the focus group discussion. The findings guided the development of the action plan to explain the role of the teachers and teachers' supervisors in increasing teachers' reflective teaching tendencies to improve students' learning.

Introduction

Teaching foreign languages in the twenty-first century has undergone a paradigm shift to equip learners with the necessary critical thinking and language skills to meet-world challenges with professional language proficiency, autonomy, and problem-solving skills. Such demands require a distinguished degree of teachers' awareness of what students can and cannot do, intentionality in planning lessons to address students' needs, implementation of meaningful assessment tools to measure students' learning, capability to adjust instruction in response to students' learning, and high frequency and quality of self-reflection. The challenge is that while teachers attend the credential teaching programs and acquire the essential knowledge and skills to support students' learning, the importance of embracing insightful, recurring self-reflection through the course of their professional career is often not emphasized enough. However, self-reflection should not be overlooked. It is vital to teachers' and students' advancement as it aids in teachers' continued learning, professional growing. Subsequently, self-reflection leads to a better understanding of students' needs and instructional strategies. Therefore, a different type of thinking is needed to address this issue. Danielson (2009) explained that difficult choices require teachers to practice a high-level of self-reflection. Teachers would need to reflect on their role in the classroom to improve performance.

Dewey (1910) reminded practitioners to step away from routine actions in their daily work. He explained that, over time, individuals, who do not reflect on their practices, become trapped in a routine as their actions are driven by impulse and traditions. He added that these individuals would be blinded by their routine actions and would not see that their actions are just an option of many possibilities. They become agents of others in the decision-making process. They would not innovate in their practices or initiate a change to improve students' learning.

Being a reflective teacher means more than having logical and rational problem-solving skills. Reflective teachers engage their intuition, emotions, and passion. They practice conscious and continuous reflection upon their actions (Mezirow, 2000).

When teachers practice reflective teaching, they need time to self-ass their own teaching and the content they teach, consider students' feedback in instruction, and revise content and instructional strategies to improve students' learning. Self-reflection is not a simple task and is most effective when implemented with the support of colleagues and mentors. Benamor and Guerroundj (2018) recommend that mentors guide through the self-reflection process and provide how-to models. Through discussions with peers, supervisors, and more experienced mentors, teachers are empowered and encouraged to reflect and modify their teaching. Also, teachers should be provided with adequate time for the self-reflection process. The school management system shares the responsibility in sparing teachers the time, access to mentors, and supervisors' guidance.

This action research aims to assess language teachers' self-reflection tendencies to guide the decision-making process of teacher professional development. The research uses Hall and Simeral's (2015) framework for developing reflective teachers. Hall and Simeral explained that teachers' beliefs guide their daily actions in a cyclical manner. In the self-reflection cycle, teachers "develop awareness before they act with intentionality, they engage in intentional practice prior to assessing the impact of one's actions, and then they determine impact prior to enacting interventions" (pp. 38–39). For teachers to adopt reflective mindset, Hall and Simeral (2015) noted that reflection must develop through teachers' proactive, continuous monitoring of their reflection. They must constantly be attentive to their teaching and to students' learning. The last step in the self-reflection cycle is when teachers make decisions intentionally and adjust their

instruction to better meet the needs of students. The adjustment of instruction must be based on

the results of in-classroom assessment. Hall and Simeral's (2015) practical framework for

teachers' self-reflection presents five essential characteristics that could guide teachers'

professional development programs at the school level (Figure 1):

1. Awareness of students, teaching content, teaching approaches and teaching context

2. Planning teaching objectively

3. Assessing students' response to instruction

4. Adjusting instruction in response to students' learning
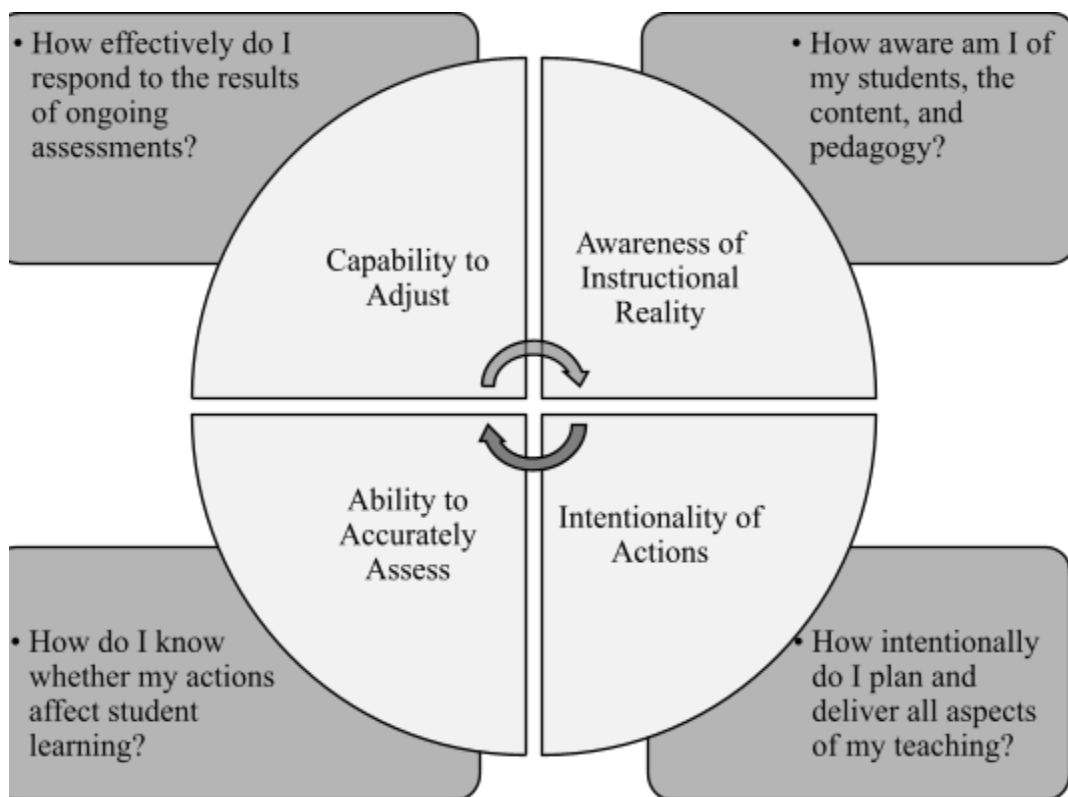
5. Frequency of self-reflection

Figure 1 The Reflective Teaching Cycle (Adapted from Hall and Simeral, 2015)

Additionally, Hall and Simeral (2015) present teachers' reflective tendencies along a

self-reflection continuum. They explain that as teachers build their knowledge and develop their

teaching skills, they move along the continuum with the end goal of reaching a refinement stage of self-reflection that is consistent and continuous. There are four stages of self-reflection: (1) Unaware stage, (2) Conscious Stage, (3) Action Stage, and (4) Refinement Stage (Figure 2). Below is a description of the stages of self-reflection. Hall and Simeral ask teachers to remember that the self-reflection continuum is simply a tool to help them learn about how they think, act, and reflect to become effective decision makers and practitioners.

Figure 2 Continuum of Self-Reflection Stages, Adapted from Hall and Simeral (2015)

1. *Unaware stage.* Hall and Simeral (2015) define unaware as "having no knowledge of a situation or a fact" (p. 46). In the unaware stage of self-reflection, teachers have vague and shallow understanding of teaching principles and practices. They have very little knowledge of teaching strategies and are not attentive to their students' learning. Teachers in the unaware stage do not reflect deeply about their teaching responsibilities.

2. *Conscious stage.* Hall and Simeral (2015) describe the conscious stage as "being aware of what is around you and having knowledge with the ability to think" (p. 71). In this stage, teachers attempt to understand what their students can and cannot do. They track students' development through unit tests and grades. They describe students' learning in general terms. They are aware of the need to implement new instructional techniques but cannot match their strategies to students' needs.

3. *Action stage.* Hall and Simeral (2015) define action as "the fact or process of doing something, typically to achieve an aim" (p. 98). Teachers in the action stage "both take

action when they see a lack of learning and try multiple methods to solve the problems they encounter" (p. 101). Teachers understand students' needs, can provide specific information about students' performance, and explain how their teaching is tied to previous and future lessons. They implement classroom assessment tools to assess students' learning but find a difficulty adjusting their instruction to meet the new needs of students. They may intervene to adjust instruction, but intervention does not solve the problem.

4. ***Refinement stage.*** Hall and Simeral (2015) define refinement as "improvement or clarification of something by making small changes" (p. 123). Teachers in the refinement stage "strive to see students in terms of strengths, not deficits" (p. 127). They base their teaching on research and can precisely describe students' needs and learning styles. They are aware of the content they teach and can employ multiple teaching strategies to tailor content to maximize students' needs. When developing their lessons, they set objectives intentionally. While teaching, they orchestrate their lessons skillfully and adjust instruction smoothly to meet the evolving needs of students. Hall and Simeral (2015) indicate that teachers in the refinement stage are always self-reflecting.

The goal of this action research is to answer one question that relates to teachers' reflective teaching stages and tendencies: What are the self-reflection tendencies of the participating foreign language teachers?

Research Design

To answer the research question, action research with an explanatory mixed-method approach was chosen to generate understanding of teachers' self-reflection and act upon it. Mertler (2017) describes this design as one where "The practitioner-researcher first collects

quantitative data and then gathers additional qualitative data in order to help support, explain, or elaborate on the quantitative results" (p. 107). The action research followed Creswell's (2005) strategy of convenient sampling of individuals at a particular educational site. The sample consisted of 13 teachers of a foreign language in a college in California. They volunteered to participate in the study in response to an email sent by the researcher. To answer the research question, the study used two means to collect quantitative and qualitative data: (1) Survey (Hall and Similar, 2015) to collect quantitative data; (2) Focus group discussion to collect qualitative data. See Appendix A. Initially, teachers responded to the online survey questions following the instructions of the researcher. The survey measured teachers' reflective teaching stages and tendencies. The survey includes 10 items with four options. Each option corresponds to a particular self-reflection stage. The survey was used to collect the quantitative data. Then, six weeks after taking the survey, teachers participated in a focus group discussion to share their daily reflective teaching practices. The researcher conducted the discussion. Questions were guided by the 10 survey items in the self-reflective assessment survey.

Data Analysis

The researcher adopted the recommendations of Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) for analyzing and presenting the quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics such as percentage was used to analyze the quantitative data. To analyze the collected data from the focus group, the researcher took Cornell notes of the discussion and coded the qualitative data. Qualitative data were coded into themes. The researcher looked for meaning-capturing codes that corresponded to five reflective teaching tendencies: (a) awareness of instructional reality, (b) planning lessons with intentionality, (c) assessment of students' needs, (d) adjustment of

instruction in response to assessment, and (e) frequency of self-reflection. The mixed-method analysis of data helped explain the relation between the qualitative and the quantitative results.

Findings and Discussion

The action research answers the question: What are the self-reflection tendencies of the participating foreign language teachers? The results of the survey indicated that nine teachers were within the Action Stage of self-reflection tendencies (Table 1), three teachers were in the refinement stage, and one teacher was in the conscious stage. However, the qualitative data revealed a discrepancy between the collected data from the focus group discussion and the survey results. During the focus group discussion, all the participants indicated that while answering the survey, they imagined their desire to carry out the reflective teaching tasks that pertained to the Action stage. In reality, and most of the time, teachers follow a preset teaching content and activities that are mandated by the curriculum. When time permits, they change content and design lesson plans to address students' needs. This finding would place the thirteen teachers in the conscious stage of reflective teaching.

Table 1

Instructors Stages of Reflective Teaching

Conscious	Action	Refinement
1	9	3
8%	69%	23%

Regarding teachers' awareness of their instructional reality (students, content, and pedagogy) 69% of teachers were in the conscious stage, 23% in the action stage and 8% in the refinement stage of reflective teaching. However, as explained above, during the focus group discussion, the response of the thirteen teachers showed that they were within the conscious stage of reflective teaching, with no indication of the action or refinement stage of reflective

teaching. Findings showed that teachers stick to the textbook learning plan to make sure that they cover the required material. They opt to understand their students' learning needs, but cannot pinpoint why students struggle, as there are many variables. They track students' development through classroom performance and testing results, but describe students' performance in general terms such as "student X does not participate in class, students' homework is acceptable, listening skills are not strong, reading still needs improvement, students don't volunteer to answer questions, etc." Teachers explained that they embed assessment tools in the lesson to assess students' learning but did not explain how they would adjust instruction on spot to better attend to students' needs. According to Hall and Simeral (2015) teachers in the conscious stage are aware of the need to implement new engaging instructional strategies but cannot think about specific actions to take to address the needs on the spot. Hall and Simeral (2015) defined conscious as "being aware of what is around you and having knowledge with the ability to think" (p. 71). Regarding the frequency of reflection, teachers mostly reflect after grading assignments or quizzes. None of the teachers indicated that they continuously reflect or that reflection will guide their on-spot adjustment of instruction to better attend to students' needs, which is the frequency of reflection at the "Refinement Stage" of self-reflection.

Action Plan and Recommendations for Practice

Mills (2017) reminded researchers to ask, "Based on what I have learned from this investigation, what should I do now?" (p. 155). Accordingly, the researcher reflected on the findings to decide on the action plan. The findings suggested that the self-reflection tendencies of teachers are at the conscious stage. It can be developed to the action and refinement stages to better meet the needs of students' learning. Zeichner and Liston (2013) argued that teachers' practices are influenced in many ways such as their pedagogical beliefs and attitudes.

Additionally, Zeichner and Liston (2013) explained that the contexts in which teachers work, rules, regulations, teaching schedules, and directives outside teachers' control limit their freedom to act according to their own pedagogical beliefs. During the focus group discussion, teachers indicated that they mostly follow a prescribed teaching schedule that mandates the content and method of instruction. This places limitations on what each teacher could do to adjust instruction to students' needs. This action plan takes into consideration such limitations. Reflective teachers need the supporting conditions such as a manageable teaching schedule, adequate preparation time, and a fixed group of students to teach. Accordingly, to improve teachers' self-reflection tendencies, the role of the school administration is instrumental and needs to be defined to facilitate teachers' development of reflective teaching practices and subsequently improve students' learning. The following action plan describes the role of the administration.

Action Plan

Hall and Simeral (2017) remind us that for teachers to develop their reflective tendencies, administration needs to have extensive knowledge in principles, practices, benefits, and challenges of reflective teaching. Immediate supervisors have an essential role in engaging teachers in reflective dialogues to discuss successes and challenges, identifying teachers' individual developmental needs, motivating them, and facilitating teachers' self-reflection. Supervisors must guide and empower. They should act as leaders and exhibit the necessary behavior to achieve the desired teacher-development results. Supervisors create the proper training environments for teaching to flourish (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Therefore, administration shall design a reflective teaching professional development program to guide teachers to the next stage of self-reflection. In this program, teachers can collaborate with peers as well as supervisors to establish the meaning of, and purpose for, their learning experiences.

With these goals in mind, teachers plan instruction, reflect upon instructional practices, and exchange resources. It is anticipated that by doing so, teachers' self-confidence will increase, and they will develop self-direction in their learning.

Meuser, Liden, Wayne, and Henderson (2011) found individuals who are interested to be reflective are high performers. Therefore, only interested teachers will participate in the reflective teaching professional development program. Volunteering to participate in the program should increase teacher's receptivity to learning. At the beginning of the new performance plan in the new rating cycle, the supervisor advises teachers to set individualized learning plans considering their reflective teaching tendencies. Supervisor and teachers meet to set goals for students' learning and professional goals to grow as reflective practitioners. The supervisor celebrates teachers' successes in achieving their goals and take actions to show teachers that their concerns and needs are priorities.

Hall and Simeral (2017) explain the benefits of constructive feedback in enhancing teachers' reflective skills and abilities. Regular feedback has a transformational effect on teachers' performance when it is matched to teachers' initial stages of self-reflection. Therefore, it is recommended that supervisors plan to tailor classroom observation protocol and pre-and post-conference meetings for the observation with teachers according to each individual teacher's stage of self-reflection. Classroom observation is not a one-size-fits-all type of observation protocol. Rather, the observation is tailored to promote teacher' awareness of students' needs and ability to plan lessons objectively, to assess students' response to instruction, and to adjust instruction in response to assessment. Through dialogues and empowering strategies, the supervisor strengthens teachers' confidence to make changes in their practices.

Furthermore, the supervisor creates opportunities for teachers to carry out methodical action research to improve their learning and sharing their experiences with peers at the school-level. By doing so, supervisors would help in creating value for the school to attract, retain, and support the continued learning of well-prepared and committed teachers (Liden et al., 2014). When teachers acquire the desired experience that allows them to be successful with students, they will be an even greater resource for the school.

Limitations

Action research is a human experience with the intent to generate knowledge (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The researcher realizes that she might have brought subjectivity when interpreting the results. Anyone may revisit the data and see new findings. Also, results are bound by moment in time, the research context, and the participants. Generalizability is not the intent of the researcher.

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APPENDIX A
Reflective Self-Assessment Tool

Reprint from Hall and Simeral (2015, p. 26–31)

1. **When planning for today's (or tomorrow's) lesson, MOST OFTEN I...**

    a. Begin with the content and activities that we will be covering, and occasionally prepare specific teaching strategies.
    b. Utilize recent student assessment data to determine what I'm going to teach and how I'm going to teach it.
    c. Spend most of my time deciding which instructional methods I'll use to meet specific needs of my students, relying on unit plans to determine the content.
    d. Consult the teacher's edition and follow the lessons as provided

2. **When considering the frequency that I reflect on my teaching, MOST OFTEN I...**

    a. Reflect usually after teaching a particular lesson and/or analyzing an assessment.
    b. Reflect after grading student work or when prompted by an administrator, coach, or colleague.
    c. Occasionally reflect on my own, usually after grading assignments or quizzes.
    d. Continuously reflect, including during the lesson itself.

3. **When planning to address student misconceptions, MOST OFTEN I...**

    a. Address them when they occur, because it is difficult to tell where students will struggle.
    b. Follow the plan for the lesson from beginning to end.
    c. Analyze student work to determine what struggles they're having, then plan to address them.
    d. Plan for check‑ins through the lesson, so I can provide support as necessary.

4. **When I encounter students that struggle in a lesson, MOST OFTEN I...**

    a. Analyze each student's specific struggles to determine a course of action to address them.
    b. Can't always tell why they struggle, because there are so many variables.
    c. Realize I have little control over how some students perform, so I continue to encourage them.
    d. Look at my teaching strategies to see if changing strategies might have a better effect.

5. **When attempting to re‑engage students who are off‑task, MOST OFTEN I...**

    a. Stop the lesson, regroup the students, and resume the lesson when I'm ready.
    b. Address the situation with a variety of pre‑planned engagement strategies.
    c. Employ a strategy that I am most comfortable with and have used before with success.

    d.   Use ideas from the lesson plan I'm following and/or power through in hopes that the students will reengage.

6. When I ask questions in class, MOST OFTEN I...

    a.   Ask questions that I have prepared in advance.
    b.   Ask questions from a collection I have prepared, varying my asking/answering strategies.
    c.   Ask questions that come to me while I'm teaching that will continue to move the lesson forward.
    d.   Ask the questions as written in the lesson plan.

7. When describing the students whom I teach each day, MOST OFTEN I...

    a.   Can identify those who are most/least successful, who struggle with assignments, and who are the first to finish.
    b.   Share the students' academic profiles and can cite the latest assessment data.
    c.   Focus on personality, behavioral, and overarching descriptive traits.
    d.   Can explain the latest assessment data, including anecdotal information, and describe how students are grouped for instruction.

8. When students are struggling in a lesson, MOST OFTEN I...

    a.   Stick with the lesson plans to make sure we cover the required material.
    b.   Attempt to address the learning gaps by modifying the following day's lesson.
    c.   Adjust my instructional approaches immediately.
    d.   Will go back and re‑teach the problems they got wrong.

9. When determining the level of success of a particular unit, MOST OFTEN I...

    a.   Monitor the progress of individual students through continuous formative and summative assessment strategies.
    b.   Monitor class performance on lesson assignments and/or quizzes to see if they are "getting it."
    c.   Monitor performance by administering an end‑of‑unit test and noting student scores.
    d.   Monitor class progress through formative and summative assessment strategies.

10. When reflecting on the levels of performance my students demonstrated on a recent assessment, MOST OFTEN I...

    a.   Check the grade book to see how the students fared.
    b.   Can describe individual students and the specific concepts they have mastered.
    c.   Explain with solid details about how groups of students performed.
    d.   Provide information about how the class did as a whole.

Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom

Florencia G. Henshaw & Maris D. Hawkins

Reviewed by Jie Lu
University of the Pacific

Common Ground: Second Language Acquisition Theory Goes to the Classroom by

Florencia G. Henshaw and Maris D. Hawkins is an important contribution to the field of second

language acquisition (SLA). As stated in the preface, the authors' goal is to build connections

between SLA principles and the reality of language classrooms, and specifically, to help world

language educators understand how they can develop materials or implement classroom

strategies that are informed by core principles of SLA, and to help the learners develop

communicative abilities in the second language. *Common Ground* is a handbook on how to

develop language proficiency for both language educators and learners. Focusing on application

rather than on the theoretical research on language acquisition, the book begins by defining the

SLA principles without the usual literature survey and summary of the latest research. All six

chapters of the book are formatted to respond to two questions of "What Do I Need to Know?"

and "What Does it Look Like in the Classrooms?", followed by a section of "Now That you

Know" on reflection, expansion, and application questions. Most prominently featured in every

chapter are the useful and well-thought-out examples, tasks, and activities that are also designed

to illustrate that chapter's principles and language models.

Chapter one outlines the book's fundamental premise. It begins to define the important

concepts of language acquisition and communication; to do so, it uses three modes of communication based on the Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) model assessment as its framework. The authors' definition of acquisition stresses "meaning" in the form-meaning connection, with key elements of input referring to building a language system and output that refers to helping learners access the system (skill development). Their definition of "communication" as "the purposeful interpretation and/or expression of meaning" underscores the information or content conveyed and what the learners will do with that information. In contrast to traditional methods of language teaching, they alternate teaching methods, as illustrated by the examples/tasks focused on "meaning" in this form-meaning continuum. Corresponding to their definitions of acquisition and communication, they choose interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal modes of communication rather than the traditional method of framing communication in terms of the four stills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. While underscoring the importance of context and purpose, these three modes can cut across oral and written levels and different proficiency levels, and occur either in different orders or even simultaneously. This chapter also discusses acquisition approaches in the first and second languages. While identifying and acknowledging their similarities, it discusses various differences in acquisition, before continuing with a discussion of the role and challenges for language teachers.

The second chapter discusses the important connection between the goal and the assessment. In terms of goals, the chapter focuses on the roles of proficiency and performance in curriculum, course, unit, and daily lesson designs, and demonstrates how to plan measurable, appropriate, and reliable tasks that correspond to the targeted proficiency level. Of significance here are the concrete examples/tasks the chapter provides for connecting the ACTFL Proficiency

Guideline and the Can-Do Statement (drafted by both the National Council of State Supervisors for Language and ACTFL). Regarding assessment, the chapter stresses the importance of alignment between instruction and assessment. It gives valuable suggestions for the use of IPA, a performance-based assessment, and how to design rubrics in clear, accurate, and easy-to-follow wording and categories. Integrating intercultural competence into the goals of SLA, the chapter argues that educators should go beyond superficial cultural knowledge to consciously develop learners' intercultural competence.

Chapter three focuses on input and chapter four on reading, listening, and viewing from Section II on Interpretive Communication. The chapter on input discusses various ways/approaches including resources that help build a language system in the learner. These strategies underscore interactive exercises/tasks that compel the learner to understand and engage in communication. For one example, the authors recommend implicit grammar instruction, that is, to embed the grammar into the content or meaning in the meaning-form continuum. Thus, chapter four highlights interpretive proficiency and communication in reading and listening, and proposes local/micro and global-macro strategies to compel students to be actively involved in interpretive listening and reading activities.

Chapters five and six on output and interaction respectively form the third section on Presentational and Interpersonal Communication. In contrast to input, output helps learners develop skills to access the system. Defining output as production of the target language in order to express meaning, the chapter again focuses on meaning formation. It further underscores the importance of process versus products and recommends various strategies of the process (such as scaffolding and revision) to facilitate learners in producing products.

Chapter Six on interpersonal communication provides suggestions that facilitate instructor-learner and learner-learner interaction activities. The exercises and tasks are designed to highlight the information gap and back-and-forth exchange that characterizes interpersonal communication. The book ends with an epilogue that answers many what-ifs questions often encountered by

instructors.

The book's greatest merit is that, again, it provides a wealth of useful, concrete, well-informed, and carefully thought-out examples, activities, and tasks that help instructors implement their proficiency-based instruction and pedagogical concepts/models into the practical classroom. Highlighting interactive, communicative, and student-engaged teaching/learning in all aspects, these strategies, most importantly, help cultivate active learners in SLA.

Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning

James M. Lang

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Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning

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The book Small Teaching stemmed from a conviction found in how scoring works in baseball. Hitting grand slams is one way to score. The teams can also score by hitting small balls and advancing from one base to the next, eventually to home plate. The book argues that teaching works similarly. It advocates for little everyday acts that result in fundamental differences in the classroom. Many of us teach a pre-existing curriculum, whether it is commercial textbooks or texts produced by curriculum developers at our institutions. Some of us also team-teach a class of learners according to a predetermined team-teaching schedule. This review mainly focuses on simple 5-10 minute interventions faculty members can make within a sphere of pedagogy, preset materials, and periods of 50 minutes. The smallest possible increments can start changing teaching and learning positively without an extensive overhaul of

course design or curriculum.

The book was written for classroom instructors across disciplines. Here are some highlights for world language instructors.

Part I

Knowledge is about helping learners build a solid knowledge base through adequate first exposure and then retrieving the course content repetitively through mixing and spacing practice to create robust wiring.

1. Prediction-Exposure-Reflection

It might seem out of sequence when we ask learners to use their existing knowledge and skills, prior experiences, and contextual cues to struggle with the new material before we teach it. Yet, corrective re-modeling, i.e., "generating a prediction, detecting one's error, and correcting oneself, is the very foundation of effective learning." (Dehaene 2020, p.209)

2. Retrieving

Retrieving specific information from memory in real-time is required of second-language learners. It involves linguistic and cultural competence and referencing a vast amount of background knowledge. Storing massive amounts of information in the brain is a means to an end. Practicing effortful retrieval is a powerful way to strengthen neural pathways in our brains. How do we foster retrieval practice in class? For example,

- In the first minutes of a class session: use the teaching schedule to draw out previous course content.

- In the final minutes of a class session: ask learners to write down one thing they learned from this class session. Draw the information from memory, not from their textbooks or class notes.

3. Blocked Practice versus Spacing and Mixing Practice

Knowledge gained from blocked practice (also known as cramming) lasts a few days. Blocked practice is an effective way to get things started. However, Spacing and Mixing (learning different components in mixed order, such as integrating language skills) are essential to strengthen memory. Spaced-out retrieval practice needs to be scheduled after a bit of forgetting, over and over again, beyond the original context throughout the course. Keep it small but frequent.

Part II

Understanding is about helping learners connect dots from textbook knowledge to forge new synapses in unfamiliar contexts, expand those neurological connections into neuronal networks and develop a deeper understanding of the real world.

4. Connecting

Making new connections is more complex than retrieving pieces of remembered knowledge, as explained in Part I. For the connections to be long-lasting, learners must devise them in their brains. Lecturing learners about what resonates with us is helpful but fleeting. Our role is to create connectable moments and invite learners to fill the synaptic gaps between disconnected neurons with their epiphanies. How exactly do we develop structured opportunities and ask learners to make connections between our class materials with the world around them? For example, by using prompts and focus questions such as:

- How does something you learned in class today connect to something you have learned
- before?
- Provide learners with a skeletal mind map and let them slot disconnected details with newfound relationships into a fully developed network.

- How is American English/culture similar to or different from the target language/culture?

- What does this remind you of that you've experienced in your life?

- Identify a film, song, painting, story, or book that somehow manifests an idea from class.

- Connect today's class material to a current event that's in the news right now.

The author concludes the Connecting Chapter with a wallpaper project depicted in George Orwell's novel A Clergyman's Daughter from 1935 in which the school children produce a panoramic chart of English history by connecting elements across time and space. The teaching method clashes with parents' expectations at the time but is inspiring even in the digital era.

5. Practicing

- The key is mindful learning. Mindless repetition is not what we are after in this kind of practice.

- When practicing, it is essential to have a meaningful feedback loop: trying, making mistakes, correcting, and trying again. Self-correction, peer-correction, and instructor-correction all have their own merits.

- For a presentation assignment, rehearse the first two minutes of their presentations in class about two weeks before the actual presentations.

6. Explaining

- Ask learners to self-explain what they were doing.

- Ask learners to explain something to other learners. Learners can better help each other understand how to connect disconnects. Both parties gain a deeper understanding.

Part III

Inspiration is about helping everyone grow in an inclusive classroom, especially under the post-failure condition.

7. Belonging

Spotlight the collective strengths, talents, and life experience individual learners bring to the table. Single out every learner for good personal work. Praise learners for their excellent efforts. Affirm to learners that their performance reflects the efforts they put into the learning. Emphasize the importance of persisting through early failures; help individual learners find alternative pathways to overcome challenges. Provide a higher structure to normalize struggle and help-seeking. In doing so, individual special treatments are unnecessary.

8. Motivating

A sense of purpose, especially self-transcendent, plays a unique role in motivating learning. Self-transcendent motivation is a desire to change the world positively. Helping others can help bring meaning to one's life and give one the innate drive to persist through learning difficulties.

Our attention, enthusiasm, and compassion can boost individual learning. Emotions are social and contagious. Learners as well as all of us play a crucial role in charging the motivation battery over social-emotional learning. Small modifications in communication to convey warmth would encourage learner engagement.

9. Learning

In this final chapter, the author and his mentor, Ken Bain, share a fundamental idea: teaching is not about teaching. It is about helping a human being learn, and it is about learning how to help other human beings learn. This is a mental shift to make!

To round up the book review, does the book Small Teaching fulfill its purpose? Five-to-ten-minute small, continuous changes are feasible on a daily basis within the existing pedagogy framework, curriculum, and course structure. They can improve knowledge retention, deepen understanding, and inspire everyone in the classroom. These research-based practices are simple, practical, and sensible.

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