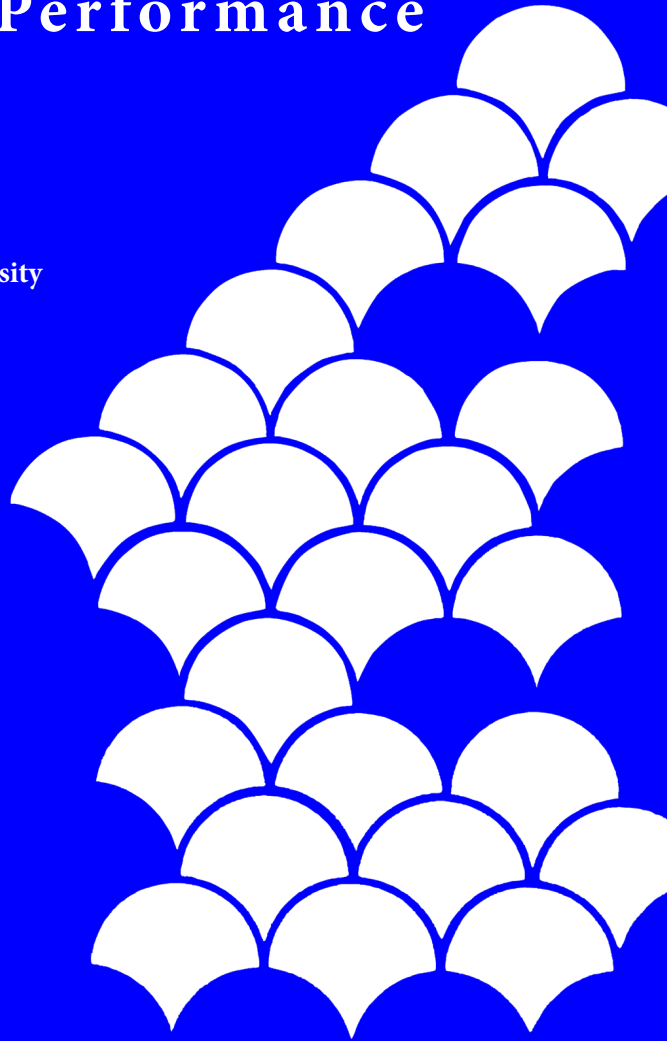# Breaking Barriers
# Building Bridges
# Promoting Performance

**Editor**

Brigid M. Burke
Bowling Green State University

**Articles by**

Sean R. Hill

Xianquan Liu

Aleidine J. Moeller

Lisa Greenman

Monica Hansen

David Beard

Martha E. Castañeda

Rebecca L. Chism

# Breaking Barriers
# Building Bridges
# Promoting Performance

---

## Selected Papers from the 2019 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

Brigid M. Burke, Editor
Bowling Green State University

**2019 Report of the
Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages**

# Review and Acceptance Procedures
## Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages *Report*

The Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages *Report* is a refereed volume of selected papers based on the theme and program of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Abstracts for sessions are first submitted to the Program Chair, who then selects sessions that will be presented at the annual conference. Once the sessions have been selected, presenters are contacted by the editor and invited to submit a manuscript for possible publication in that volume. Copies of the publication guidelines are made available to conference presenters on the CSCTFL website. All submissions are read and evaluated by the editor and at least two other members of the Editorial Board. Reviewers are asked to recommend that the article (1) be published in its current form, (2) be published after specific revisions have been made, or (3) not be published. When all of the reviewers' ratings are received, the editor makes all final publishing decisions.

---

## 2019 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Report Editorial Board

### Editor

Brigid M. Burke, Bowling Green State University

The editor would like to thank the following professionals for their contributions to the review of the articles in this volume:

### Editorial Board

## 2018 – 2019 CSCTFL Officers and Directors
(followed by year term ends)

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair ........................................................... | Martha Halemba (FY20) |
| Vice Chair ................................................. | Jason Jolley (FY22) |
| Executive Director .................................... | Anne Nerenz (FY20) |
| Recording Secretary................................. | Richard Emch (FY20) |
| CSCTFL Delegate to ACTFL ................................ | Jill Woerner (CY19) |
| Director ..................................................... | Julie Foss (FY22) |
| Director ..................................................... | Ryan Rockaitis (FY 19) |
| Director ..................................................... | Gary Spurgin (FY 21) |
| Director & Program Co-Chair .............................. | Linda Havas (FY20) |
| Program Co-Chairs ................................. | Cathy Stresing (FY19) |
| Assistant Program Co-Chair ................................ | Todd Bowen (FY20) |

# Contents

### Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Promoting Performance

# Preface

## Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Promoting Performance

The 2019 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, held in conjunction with the Ohio Foreign Language Association (OFLA), was held at the Hilton Downtown Columbus from March 14–16, 2019. In accordance with the goals set forth by the founders of our organization, the 2019 conference endeavored "to support language teachers and to advance the study of foreign languages." The conference theme "Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Promoting Performance" inspired presenters of 27 workshops and over 200 sessions to focus on three areas: breaking barriers to learning languages, building bridges to new teaching practices and cultures, and promoting and improving student and teacher performance both within and beyond our classrooms.

At the 2019 conference, 11 of the 14 states that comprise the Central States region were represented by "Best of State" sessions. A wide variety of sessions and workshop topics offered ideas for infusing world language instruction with music, art, film, literature, technology, current events and much more. Participants explored innovative techniques that integrated technology to enhance student learning. World language educators discovered strategies to engage students to help them take control of their learning.

The keynote speaker, Gregory Duncan, was previously a high school Spanish teacher and administrator. After having served as Coordinator of Foreign Languages and International Education for the Georgia Department of Education, he continued his work as an independent consultant. Greg has authored or co-authored numerous publications in the field of world language education. In his keynote address, **"Capturing Their Interest: Gaining Their Commitment,"** Greg reminded educators that the relevance of a lesson to students is paramount to breaking barriers, building bridges, and promoting performance.

The Central States Conference *Report* 2019, *Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Promoting Performance***,** complements the guiding principles of the conference theme, providing practical activities and strategies so that world language educators can maximize their impact on the learners in their classrooms. The words on the following pages, representing the work of colleagues across levels and languages, endeavor to inspire educators throughout the CSCTFL region to reframe and innovate their work so that the lifelong adventure of language learning can continue to touch the lives of students in an impactful way both within and beyond the classroom.

Linda Havas and Cathy Stresing
2019 Co-Chairs

# Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Promoting Performance

Brigid M. Burke
Bowling Green State University

During these challenging political times in the U.S. where politicians debate building walls to close borders as a solution to curb illegal immigration, students and teachers may wonder what the future holds and how they can influence it positively. The theme for the 2019 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, "Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, Promoting Performance" was timely as attendees benefitted from professional development and reflection focused on how to make the political times effectively pedagogical. Now more than ever, world language educators play a crucial role in school buildings and campuses. U.S. students, parents, and administrators need to understand the value of knowing a world language and its culture. If all stakeholders agree that citizens benefit from being a part of a multilingual and multicultural society, the U.S. will be an extraordinary nation. As of January 2019, all but two states have approved, or are in the process of approving, legislation to support a Seal of Biliteracy to recognize students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages, one being English. The authors of this year's volume focus on making the U.S. exceptional through language immersion programs, interactive digital technology tools, cross-district and multi-grade collaboration, task-based integrative curriculum and instruction, and more careful mentoring of pre-service teachers during their student teaching practicum.

In the first chapter, Hill examines the lived experiences and role navigation of non-immersion U.S. teachers who paired with foreign Chinese teachers in a one-way Mandarin immersion program in a rural Midwestern elementary school. His analysis of the U.S. teacher participants' responses during interviews yielded five significant themes: (1) Teachers served as mentors to inexperienced Chinese teachers; (2) Teachers experienced unfamiliarity and frustration with the Chinese culture and language; (3) Teachers tended to fulfill a parental role; (4) Teachers were frustrated with perceived lack of administrative support; and (5) Teachers felt like outsiders in their school building. Hill concludes with implications for breaking barriers and building bridges for schools considering implementation of a one-way Chinese immersion program.

In the second chapter, Liu and Moeller caution us that the mere utilization of technology tools does not guarantee learner growth in language proficiency without careful attention to research-informed learning strategies and standards-based instructional design. The authors provide a review of the literature on technology integration in world language education as well as examples of popular digital tools designed to facilitate meaningful, interactive communication. Liu

and Moeller present three digital tools: WeChat, iBook Author, and Spark Video, providing techniques for varied and multiple instructional functions to promote students' communicative and cultural proficiency.

In the third chapter, Greenman and Hansen discuss how a unique and effective partnership between a middle and high school exists because of teacher collaboration, increased communication, multi-grade student learning experiences, and curriculum alignment. Their efforts to provide clear communication, shared experiences, as well as common expectations, have given students the tools for sustained success in language learning. Greenman and Hansen conclude that is important for school districts to develop cross-district collaborative relationships in order to improve world language teaching and learning for teachers and students. These efforts create effective, sustainable programs where students thrive and want to continue their study of world languages.

In the fourth chapter, Beard and Castañeda focus on task-based language teaching strategies that promote interpersonal communication so students are able to share information, react to conversations, express feelings, and give opinions. They discuss how theory can inform classroom instruction to help break down communication barriers, how authentic materials can be used to bridge content and language learning and teaching, and how interpersonal communication tasks can be used to promote performance.

In the final chapter, Chism discusses how the telling of one's story can play a crucial role in determining how certain life events are framed and contextualized. Her research study explored the use of digital stories written by pre-service world language teachers as a means to integrate their student teaching experience more fully. They used multimedia to create their narratives in the language of their choice. The framework of the narratives offered a chance for student teachers to review their story objectively and share it with their peers within a community of practice. The data indicated that, while the exercise provided opportunities for reflection and insight, a more structured mentoring approach is needed to promote deeper learning and pedagogical development.

# Paired Teachers' Lived Experiences in a Chinese Immersion Program

**Sean R. Hill**
Central Michigan University

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences and role navigation of non-immersion U.S. teachers who paired with foreign Chinese teachers in a one-way Mandarin immersion program in a rural Midwestern elementary school. The paired teachers were largely responsible for the program development and for managing the novice Chinese teachers' needs, although they did not have a background in Chinese language or culture. Using phenomenology as a research method, interviews were conducted with U.S. elementary teachers in one rural school that offered a Mandarin immersion program in addition to traditional instruction in English. The analysis of the U.S. teacher participants' responses yielded five significant themes: (1) Teachers served as mentors to inexperienced Chinese teachers; (2) Teachers experienced unfamiliarity and frustration with the Chinese culture and language; (3) Teachers tended to fulfill a parental role; (4) Teachers were frustrated with perceived lack of administrative support; and (5) Teachers felt like outsiders in their school building. In conclusion, implications for breaking barriers and building bridges for schools considering implementation of a one-way Chinese immersion program are discussed.

*Keywords*: language immersion, Chinese/Mandarin, paired teachers

### Introduction

Imagine kindergarten students who enter their classroom on their first day of school and the teacher does not speak to them in a language they understand. Instead of English, the teacher speaks Mandarin until lunch. After lunch, those

children then go to a different teacher who speaks solely in English. This is the case for many students in dual language programs across the U.S., especially in schools with morning and afternoon cohorts of children in immersion education. Although the experience is initially confusing, the students quickly learn the norms and expectations of the classroom, and the differences in languages become routine for the students. This type of dual language immersion program takes the dedicated work of many people: administrators, parents, immersion teachers, and the paired teachers that partner with immersion teachers to coordinate and plan the students' educational program.

While there are many program variations of the language immersion model (Gómez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005), this study focused on the experiences of rural, non-immersion teachers that paired with Chinese national teachers in a one-way Chinese dual language program (OWCDLP) in a Midwestern elementary school. Within this OWCDLP, two teachers exchanged cohorts of elementary children in the same grade. These students were not typically heritage speakers as would be common in two-way immersion programs; all students' first language was English. For the purpose of this study, and as the term is used at this school, U.S. teachers who do not speak Mandarin are referred to as the Western teachers. Children receive instruction from the Western teachers in English language arts and a content area such as social studies in the English language. The other teacher in each teaching dyad is a Chinese national who provides instruction in Mandarin for mathematics and Chinese language arts. The morning cohort of students begins the day in Mandarin and concludes the day in English. The afternoon cohort reverses this schedule. In this manner, both classroom cohorts receive half their instruction in Mandarin and English.

Prolonged exposure and use of the language results in high levels of language proficiency in extended program sequences (Met, 1998; Padilla, Fan, Xu, & Silva, 2013). Often, elementary immersion students can achieve and surpass the language proficiency of students that begin their language instruction in high schools (Xu, Padilla, & Silva, 2015). According to the Center for Applied Linguistics (2011), there has been a large increase in the number of Chinese language programs offered across the U.S. Similarly, dual language immersion programs are also on the rise (Van Houten, 2013). Despite the growth of these programs, there is little described in the literature regarding the experiences of students, parents, or teachers in these programs. Furthermore, no investigations into the experience of the non-immersion teacher in the teaching dyads could be found. Subsequently, there is a complete paucity of research examining the experiences of rural U.S. elementary teachers that pair with Chinese teachers in OWCDLPs.

As a result of the long-noted difficulty in North America of finding world language teachers in general, and immersion teachers in particular (Karsenti, Collin, Villeneueve, Dumouchel, & Roy, 2008; Obadia & Martin, 1995; Patterson, 2008; Pufahl & Rhodes, 2011; Rubio, 2018; Van Houten, 2009), many school districts have begun to hire foreign teachers to teach world languages in the U.S. (Kissau, Yon & Algozzine, 2011; Rubio, 2018; Tedick & Fortune, 2012; Van Houten, 2009). This is particularly common for critical need languages, such as Arabic and

Mandarin (Haley, Steeley, & Salahshoor, 2013). Foreign nationals; however, have limited residency rights within the U.S., and their positions are often limited to a period of one to three years. This creates an additional pressure on the paired Western teachers to maintain the processes and institutional knowledge for these immersion programs, as well as continual mentoring of novice foreign teachers. Moreover, the Western paired teacher may be the teacher of record when student assessment scores are reported to the state. As schools and teachers face increasing accountability pressure, they must ensure student success across all content areas on standardized assessments to maintain their positions and accreditation.

Essentially, the decision of the Western teachers to participate in this teaching dyad can create a burden on them because it doubles their workload. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of rural U.S. teachers who pair with Chinese teachers in OWCDLPs. In addition, I sought to understand how the Western teachers came to navigate their role in this unique program model in one small, rural, Midwestern elementary school that planned and implemented an OWCDLP over a four-year period. The specific research questions in this study were: (1) What are the lived experiences of rural U.S. teachers in an OWCDLP? (2) How do rural U.S. teachers understand their role as the Western teacher in an OWCDLP? (3) How do rural U.S. teachers navigate their role as the Western teacher in an OWCDLP?

## Literature review

Although the extant literature illuminates minimal student, parent, administrator, and teacher voices from immersion programs in general, the Western teachers in dual Chinese-English immersion teacher dyads seem to be non-existent. To begin, student voices in dual language programs are seldom heard, although there are some notable exceptions. For instance, Lee and Jeong (2013) investigated the different points of view of students, parents, and teachers, finding many tensions related to language proficiency and its meanings from those different viewpoints in a Korean dual language immersion program. Swain and Lapkin (2007) gathered quotes from students about working in pairs in the immersion classroom, and Culligan (2010) examined students' choices about continuing in immersion education at the secondary level. In the studies, students considered their parents' goals while weighing their own concerns about the difficulty level of the courses and how useful being bilingual would be in the future.

Likewise, there are few accounts of the parents' experiences in immersion programs in the literature. Typically, parental anxieties have been considered and their questions and concerns have been addressed (Brzezinski, 2008; Fortune & Tedick, 2003; Kavanagh & Hickey, 2013; Levesque, 2010). One parent, Brzezinski (2008), reflected on how her initial excitement changed to frustration in her daughter's first year in a kindergarten Chinese immersion program and how she addressed learning deficits in English. However, by the end of the first year, both she and her daughter were excited again to continue in Chinese instruction in first grade. Baig (2011) and Williams (2017) investigated parents' motivations for enrolling their children in language immersion programs, discovering it often was to increase the

cultural capital of their children. Language-majority parents tended to emphasize their children's access to learning another language and the increased likelihood of enrolling in a more prestigious college or more career success.  However, as Gerena (2011) and Ee (2017) have noted, the cultural heritage of the parents can lead to different expectations for students in immersion schools. These expectations include a greater emphasis on the acquisition of language-specific linguistic capital and increased facilitation of parental communication with the school (navigational capital) relative to majority-language parents who tend to emphasize general linguistic capital.

Similarly, little is known about being an administrator of an immersion program. When the voices of administrators are heard, they often describe challenges at the program and building levels. For example, Arthur (2004) discussed the problem of attrition in an Indiana school district with a partial Spanish immersion program. Student attrition from the elementary school, in addition to the automatic enrollment of new students into the traditional track, created problems with disparate class size between immersion and traditional classrooms. He reported that the choice between canceling the program or making the entire school an immersion program was debated over multiple board meetings. Patterson (2008), a principal of an elementary school with a strand for a Mandarin immersion program, described challenges of integrating both immersion and traditional programs together to create one fully integrated culture for the neighborhood school. She was explicit that any form of favoritism between the two programs would quickly lead to tensions between teacher and parent groups. In addition to challenges with integrating the Chinese language curriculum with content area instruction, Patterson (2008) discussed the difficulty in finding qualified teachers and explained how cross-cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese instructors led to different expectations of her as an administrator and of the students in the classrooms. She recommended targeted staff professional development focused on raising cultural awareness, but did not explain other experiences of non-immersion teachers. Howard and Loeb (1998) reported similar findings for schools that housed both two-way immersion and traditional programs and noted that there were concerns with partner teachers and staff disagreements. However, the immersion teachers did not have paired non-immersion teachers because all dual language teachers were bilingual, English as a second language certified teachers. The authors did not indicate whether the school had hired foreign teachers.

Among students, parents, and administrators, the voices and issues confronting immersion teachers have been described the most frequently. Fleming (2007) expressed a list of ideas that she wished she had known about immersion education when she became an immersion teacher. Kaai`ae`a (2007) expressed important reasons for becoming an immersion teacher of indigenous languages. The most prevalent experience of immersion teachers reported is the difficulty of balancing the incorporation of language instruction with content-area instruction (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Howard & Loeb, 1998; Karsenti et al., 2008; Kong, Hoare, & Yanping, 2011; Ó Ceallaigh, 2016; Speece, 2017; Walker & Tedick, 2000).

Hood, Navarro, & Reynolds (2009) investigated program-level coordination and teacher collaboration in a rural Oregon school with a Spanish dual language program. The immersion and traditional teachers met in grade-level groups to design yearly curricular themes and reported that the administration treated them as professionals. As a team, they collaboratively designed instructional materials. The immersion teachers indicated school was an exciting and inclusive place to teach and felt supported by administration, fellow teachers, and the community. Similarly, Calderon (1995) described the classroom and professional development experiences of teachers in a two-way 50/50 bilingual Spanish and English program in Texas. A monolingual English teacher and bilingual Spanish/English teacher paired to team teach every day and reported positive and collegial experiences. The bilingual teachers also indicated they had greater self-esteem due to the co-teaching experience.

## Methodology

Phenomenology as a research lens, allows an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of an individual or group and explores how those experiences are used to arrive at a deep understanding (Moustakas, 1994). This approach has multiple strengths and has been utilized in multiple traditions, from psychology to education, to funnel down to the essence of a lived phenomenon (Van Manen, 1990). While it is difficult to generalize from the experiences of the four Western teachers from one rural, Midwestern elementary school, the themes derived from these interviews provide a glimpse into the lived experiences of these teachers and provide a rich foundation for understanding the difficulties of the role as a paired teacher in an OWCDLP. However, it must be noted that in a phenomenology, the researcher is both instrument and the tool of analysis and this can introduce personal bias into the results. As the chair for world language programs in the district, as well as a high school world language instructor, I helped to establish the program at the site and was invested in its success. Moreover, my daughter participated in the program from kindergarten through second grade when the program was discontinued. Conversations with both U.S. and Chinese teachers, as well as school administration and parents, provided insight into program-level concerns that needed to be addressed in the practical implementation of the program. My unique experience as both a staff member and parent of an immersion student led me to question how to better prepare elementary teachers for the role as a Western teacher, and they provide the lens through which I engaged with the participants and research. Though my personal motivations were strong, I attempted to bracket my experiences by documenting my own feelings and thoughts through the processes to objectively investigate the experiences of the Western paired teachers (Glesne, 2011; Moustakas, 1994).

### Conceptual framework

A guiding conceptual framework situated the expected lived experience of rural, Western teachers in an OWCDLP in the juxtaposition and overlap between

the theories of effective mentoring of novice teachers and effective cross-cultural communication and intercultural competence (see Figure 1). Because the Chinese teachers had not taught in an elementary setting in China, much less in the U.S., these teachers needed appropriate guidance from mentors and continual support as they navigated the demands of being a first-year teacher while attending graduate school to pursue a full teaching license. Similarly, the Chinese teachers in this program were foreign nationals from mainland China who were learning how to communicate in culturally appropriate ways in a rural area of the U.S. Relative to the megacities with which most Chinese teachers were familiar, a rural Midwestern state presents cultural challenges of its own. The Western teacher pairs, therefore, acknowledged the different backgrounds of the teachers with whom they would work but also would have to navigate their interactions with teachers from cultural traditions very dissimilar to their own. Lai, Li, and Gong (2016) documented the cultural and linguistic challenges that Chinese teachers faced teaching in international schools in Hong Kong and similar challenges are expected for Chinese teachers in the U.S. Therefore, the issue of how the Western teachers engaged in appropriate mentoring strategies in ways that demonstrate suitable intercultural competence for the Eastern teachers was deemed essential for program success. Appropriate teacher training and preparation is necessary for all teachers. Both Chan (2014) and Mullen (2011) signaled that the induction method, which focuses on "professional teaching standards, best practices, learning communities, and additional stakeholder groups," (Mullen, 2011, p. 66) are essential to help new teachers more fully understand their role in the classroom, school, and community.
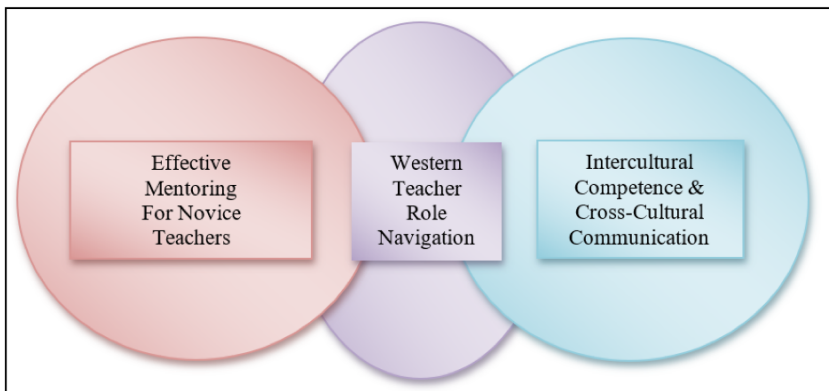


**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework for Western Teachers' Role Navigation

This conceptual framework envisions the intersection between new teacher mentoring and issues of developing intercultural and cross-cultural communicative competence. Bennett (1986), one of the primary researchers in intercultural competence (ICC), described a developmental stage model in which individuals move on a continuum from an ethnocentric viewpoint to one of greater sensitivity

to cultural differences. Regarding teacher preparation; however, the crux of the training has been developed and focused on helping teachers learn how to better address the different cultural backgrounds of their students. For example, Tolbert (2015) articulated a program in which indigenous facilitators helped provide mentoring to both novice and experienced teachers specifically to grow their intercultural capacity to increase indigenous student engagement. Similarly, DeJaeghere and Cao (2009) applied the need for intercultural competence training in K-12 schools to the rising diversity in the student population. They examined how school district professional development was able to lead to gains in intercultural competence.

On the other hand, little attention has focused on how teachers learn how to work with other teachers from different cultural backgrounds. As stated previously, the primary focus in the research regarding teachers' ICC involves their preparation to better understand students' needs (Ramos Holguin, 2013), not necessarily those of potential colleagues. Although it is plausible that the same skill set can transfer to cross-cultural communicative competence with international colleagues, this transfer is not guaranteed. The motivations of domestic and international teachers to work closely and collaboratively may be different than solely ensuring the success of diverse students in the classroom. Moreover, foreign Chinese teachers' own beliefs about educational systems, student learning, pedagogical theory, and classroom management (Correa, Perry, Sims, Miller, & Fang, 2008; Haley & Ferro, 2011; Yue, 2017; Zhou & Austin, 2017; Zhou & Li, 2015) can present a wider continuum to overcome than cultural beliefs of diverse teachers from the same country. Therefore, these teaching dyads were engaged in a continual process of learning to work together and work through cultural frustrations and misinterpretations. The Western teacher pairs had to navigate a space as mentor to a novice teacher as they developed their ICC and cross-cultural communicative competence as they learned their own role within the OWCDLP. Concurrently, the Eastern teachers had to develop their own ICC and cross-cultural communicative competence with their Western teacher pairs as they learned the intricacies of teaching within a new country and educational system.

*Participants*

Within the elementary school, there were five Western teachers (U.S. teachers who taught in English), who were paired with Eastern teachers (teachers from China who taught in Chinese). I contacted each of the five teachers individually by email and asked them if they would be willing to participate in a study regarding their experiences in the role of the Western teacher. Of those, four agreed to participate, including two female kindergarten teachers, one female first grade teacher, and one male second grade teacher. Three of the teachers had grown up in rural settings, and all said that they had very little experience with diverse populations throughout most of their life. All teachers were white and in their mid-30s or early 40s. Three of the four teachers had taught for over a decade in this elementary school before they paired with their Eastern teachers.

All the Eastern teachers were female and from the People's Republic of China. Each was between 22 and 25 years old and had very little teaching experience. The teaching position was part of program sponsored by a Midwestern university that provides an alternative licensure route to teacher certification and a post-graduate degree. One Western kindergarten teacher and one Western first grade teacher was paired with two different Eastern Chinese teachers over the course of the immersion program. The other Western kindergarten and second grade teachers only were paired with one Eastern Chinese instructor. Specific background information on the teachers is described in Table 1. All participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms to assure participant anonymity. The Western teachers received no additional compensation and volunteered for the opportunity and challenge to help pioneer the program. The Western teachers received three days of training in immersion educational methods with their paired teachers from a Chinese education professor at the Midwestern partner university. Part of the training included classroom management techniques and the behaviors of U.S. students. There was not an explicit focus on cultural training for the Western teachers regarding Chinese culture.

**Table 1.** Background Information of the Western Paired Teacher at the Rural Elementary School

| Western Teacher | Level | Background information |
|---|---|---|
| Brenda | Kindergarten | "Brenda" described herself as a Caucasian, female teacher who was in her mid-30s when the immersion program began. She grew up in a suburban area approximately 90 minutes from the school site. She was a seasoned teacher with approximately fifteen years of experience with the school district at the time of the program's implementation. Although she recounted very little diversity throughout her schooling, she spent a semester student teaching abroad and reported that she spoke a little Spanish. She had the opportunity to travel to China during the program's first year and described her experience with her paired teacher as her first "in-depth diverse relationship." |
| Evelyn | Kindergarten | "Evelyn" characterized herself as a white, female teacher who was in her mid-30s when the immersion program began. She grew up in the community in which she teaches and had taught exclusively in the school district for about fifteen years by the program's implementation. She described herself as very sheltered and had very little interactions with diverse populations throughout her life. She reluctantly traveled to China during the program's first year and described the experience as an "eye- opener." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ursula | First grade | "Ursula" defined herself as a Caucasian, female teacher who was approximately 40 years old when the immersion program began. She grew up in a rural area within 30 minutes of the school site and had taught seven years in rural settings in two different schools by the program's implementation. She had very little exposure to diversity or language throughout most of her life but did have the opportunity to travel to China during the program's first year and described it as her "only experience really being exposed to another culture." |
| David | Second grade | "David" described himself as a Caucasian, male teacher who was in his mid-30s when the program began. He grew up in a very rural area about 90 minutes from the school site and had little interaction with diverse populations until he attended college. He had spent about a decade in the school district by the program's implementation and was unable to visit China like the other teachers from the lower grade levels. |

### Data collection

This study aimed to understand how the Western teachers understood, learned, and navigated their roles as paired teachers within this program model design. Glesne's (2011) guided the development of the open-ended interview questions around themes of cultural and linguistic diversity, program planning and implementation, and the experience of the Western teacher (Appendix A). Three face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from the elementary school in June 2017. After asking the participants where they would be comfortable meeting, two interviews were conducted in local libraries and one at the teacher's residence. The interviews began with rapport-building techniques and were audio-recorded (Glesne, 2011). They ranged from 38 minutes to 1 hour 26 minutes in length. Two interviews were with individuals, whereas one group interview was conducted with two participants at their request. I took notes to guide follow-up questions that veered from the interview questions I had prepared. Finally, I explained to the participants that I would contact them with follow-up questions, as well as verification of the transcripts and my initial analyses as part of the member checking process (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2013). Although there was no expectation of remuneration, I provided each interviewee with a gift card to a local restaurant in gratitude for their time and participation.

### Data analysis

As each interview transcript was transcribed, I re-read all interviews again using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) to gain a continuing sense of emergent themes and repeated ideas. Once transcribed, the data were horizontalized, with each individual statement receiving equal weight and

consideration (Moustakas, 1994). Each statement was analyzed to determine whether it contained an essential element of the experience. I began the process of phenomenological reduction using NVivo 11 to enter codes. The coding process began with open coding at a line by line approach. A code was generated for single words, phrases, or sentences. Some passages were coded for the main idea presented, and some lines were assigned multiple codes based on whether they addressed multiple ideas or themes. Considering the relationship to the overall phenomenon in question, the initial open coding process produced 181 unique codes. This number was reduced to eliminate the non-essential elements of the experience as data were clustered through the process of creating axial codes.

Afterwards, I re-read the interview transcripts multiple times to immerse myself in the data and understand the participants' comments, which aligned with recommendations by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014). I identified statements that seemed particularly essential or revealing about the experience (Van Manen, 1990). These essential and profound elements helped me categorize the axial codes into five themes that contained related invariant constituents of the textural description, what the participants experienced, as well as the structural description, the context of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This process, the most important in a phenomenological study, leads to a thick understanding of what it is like to experience the phenomenon of interest. The themes represent the elements that formed the essential experience of U.S. teachers that paired as Western teachers with Eastern teachers in a one-way Chinese immersion program in a small rural elementary school in a Midwestern state.

**Results**

The analysis of the Western teacher participants' responses yielded five significant themes: (1) Teachers served as mentors to inexperienced Chinese teachers; (2) Teachers experienced unfamiliarity and frustration with the Chinese culture and language; (3) Teachers tended to fulfill a parental role; (4) Teachers' were frustrated with perceived lack of administrative support; and (5) Teachers felt like outsiders in their school building. The first two themes support the conceptual framework I used to frame the study. However, the three additional themes that emerged help define the lived experiences of the Western teachers.

*Theme one: Western teachers as classroom mentors*

The participants in this study were experienced teachers and had served as both classroom mentors to new faculty members, pre-service teachers, and student teachers. In their mentoring roles, they attempted to build trust and understanding with the Eastern teachers and provide appropriate supports as they would to any beginning teacher. The participants described how they provided support with classroom management and curriculum development. They also shared that they incorporated their teaching partners into their personal lives outside of work. Ursula commented that "my purpose is to be a support to you, my purpose is to help you academically and to help you with your life here," which indicates how she saw the purpose of her role as a mentor in the Western teacher relationship.

Regarding curriculum, Western teachers helped the new Eastern teachers understand what had to be taught at the corresponding grade level, and they provided opportunities for cross-curricular work. At times, the mentors had to advocate for appropriate curricular supplies and support for the Eastern teachers. Ursula recalled trying to get the school administration to purchase materials.

> They were teaching math and they just used the same math program we were using, but then had to do a lot of work on their own to try and translate it into the Chinese. We saw how much work that was for them, so I know I and the kindergarten teachers really fought for finding a math series because the school was looking for one anyway. There was a Mandarin component to the math series, so she didn't have to recreate everything. I remember fighting very, very hard for that and we got it and I think that helped tremendously. The lessons were already spelled out in Mandarin, practice pages for the kids were already done in Mandarin, but yet it still coincided with what was being done in the other non-immersion classrooms.

Ursula's comments indicate that part of the mentorship role involved making sure the new teacher had appropriate materials and supplies to be successful in the classroom. Western teachers also offered the Eastern teachers pedagogical support through suggestions for different strategies and methodologies, but sometimes found it difficult because they often were unfamiliar concepts to the Eastern teachers. The Eastern teachers needed their mentors particularly as they navigated the classroom management aspect of a U.S. classroom in a high poverty, rural school. In fact, classroom management proved to be a major talking point in the mentoring relationship. Evelyn commented about her paired teacher:

> In the beginning it was more behaviors. She struggled with how to handle behaviors, so we were trying to help with classroom management and that kind of thing in the beginning. I think she had a good handle on the academic parts, but she struggled with how to keep the kids behaved and focused because they are just so used to "sit down, do your job, and then do it" and that does not happen in [this town].

Ursula expressed a very similar focus on classroom management in the mentoring relationship with her Eastern paired teachers.

> We did a lot of talking about students that involved student and behavior management. Student management was a big concern of theirs because from what it sounds like, their experiences in China, there was not a lot of behavior problems [...] And here my main job is managing behaviors. I manage behaviors and I then I teach and they are "I want to teach and not manage behaviors," so that was a huge issue.

The Eastern teachers leaned heavily on their Western mentor teachers for classroom management support. All teachers coalesced in agreement that they felt needed in the mentor role to help guide the new teachers. David admitted that he felt more needed by his Eastern pair than he normally did with his U.S. student

teachers and colleagues. David underscored the similarities between student teachers and the Eastern teacher as having many of the same needs. However, he understood that the Eastern teacher was a professional teacher without a family support system. He admitted that sometimes he felt exhausted from the questions the Eastern teacher would pose to him at the end of the day. Brenda, on the other hand, expressed frustration about her Eastern teacher by stating:

> I feel like sometimes they didn't feel like they were being supported and we were like…we don't know what more we can do. We can't come in and teach for you. You need to do this, but we are here for you because we have this whole other class that we have to teach [...] they had every piece of material at their hands that they could to make their job as easy as possible.

Upon reflecting on the role and underscoring the role with foreign teachers instead of mentoring U.S. teachers, Brenda replied, "We were pretty much on call 24/7 if she needed us, so it probably went beyond a mentor teacher." Despite her reflection that she was probably too abrasive and overbearing, she recounted that her Eastern teacher had told the incoming Eastern teacher that she was a good mentor.

### *Theme two: Western teachers' unfamiliarity and frustration with the Chinese language and culture*

There is little diversity in this Midwestern school district, and the teachers who were interviewed had mostly grown up in rural communities. All teachers responded that they had little exposure to diverse populations, much less Chinese culture, before they began teaching. Therefore, the Western teachers had little background knowledge to draw on to understand their paired Eastern teacher and discussed issues of intercultural communication. They became confused and frustrated at times because of cultural differences and awkwardness. David mentioned that he watched how the Chinese teachers interacted among themselves as he navigated the boundaries of how he should interact with them. Ursula was adamant that she did not want to offend her paired teacher, while Evelyn and Brenda insisted that everything they did came from good intentions. All teachers agreed there needed to be clear and open dialogue in order to build trust and understanding among the pairs, and Ursula suggested that the summer immersion trainings include cultural dialogue training as an institutional support measure.

> I think cultural education, and I am not sure what the Chinese teachers got at [the partner university], but I feel like even just some opportunities for us to all be in a room with some guided support, someone who understands both cultures, for them to say they aren't trying to offend you when they do this or no, they aren't trying to be difficult when they do this because we didn't understand each other.

Overall, all teachers expressed that they wanted to make the Chinese teachers feel comfortable in this new environment and that they were always available to

help. The call for open communication and the offers of help may be a symptom of the disconnect they felt. Brenda commented that the Chinese teachers were reluctant to ask for assistance, and Evelyn agreed. David, on the other hand, questioned whether his gender influenced the interaction with his Eastern pair, or whether it was age or the mentoring role in general. Brenda and Evelyn questioned whether their age was a factor in limiting the openness of their perceived conversations with their Chinese pair. Their uncertainty clearly indicates how the lack of cultural knowledge about their paired Eastern teachers contributed to anxiety with effectively communicating among themselves.

Three teachers had the opportunity to travel to China to visit Chinese elementary schools and meet with Chinese teachers as part of their own training. During the trip, the U.S. teachers recognized the cultural differences of schooling between the countries. As a result of experiencing the Chinese culture, they felt they understood their Eastern teachers much better. Evelyn stated:

> It was an eye opener. Like you said, once you get an idea of what it is like there, you see why they struggle so much here because our kids are so much different than they are over there. The expectations are so different and I feel like if we had had that experience in the very beginning, I mean granted it was December, those first months might have not been such a struggle.

By experiencing the Eastern teachers' educational system, Western teachers developed a better understanding of why the Chinese teachers struggled with classroom management.

As the Western teachers grew more accustomed to interacting with the Eastern teachers, and more Eastern teachers entered the district, the same goals of making the Chinese teachers comfortable and establishing open lines of communication persisted. In fact, they were better equipped to recognize the distinct personality characteristics of the teachers apart from their more general cultural patterns. When asked if it was frustrating having to pair with a new teacher, Brenda indicated that she had learned from the experience with the previous teacher and found it much easier the second time. Brenda had learned to modify her speech with her paired teacher and indicated, "Sarcasm was really hard. I am very sarcastic and so they didn't get it." Brenda and Evelyn went on to discuss differences between the two Chinese kindergarten teachers. Ursula, on the other hand, felt she never improved as a mentor, "I feel like I didn't. I feel like I totally failed, I don't know."

Overall, the navigation of intercultural communication proved to be one of the areas that seemed to erect barriers among the teacher pairs. The teachers stressed that misunderstandings happened, but the Western teachers wanted their Eastern teachers to know that there was no intention to offend them. Ursula related that she felt she had greatly offended her paired teacher, but she felt frustration that she could not pinpoint the cause. She commented:

> Like I said, I think the big thing is cultural awareness and I think you need to be able to set as soon as you are paired with the immersion teacher, you need to somehow develop some trust and acknowledge that you do

have cultural differences and my purpose is to be a support to you, my purpose is to help you academically and to help you with your life here. My purpose is not to offend you in anyway and to be able to agree that you will have that open dialogue. If someone is offended, understand that it could be a completely innocent cultural issue and having nothing to do with somebody intending to hurt you in any way, shape or form.

For rural teachers negotiating the role of the Western teacher, the experience of working closely with an Eastern teacher can be disconcerting. They often feel culturally unprepared and worry about offending their paired teacher. All teachers commented that the experience of pairing with a teacher from another culture seemed to mold them for more open communication with other new U.S. staff members or among their grade-level teams.

### Theme three: Western teachers' parental role

The Western teachers felt a need to incorporate the Eastern pairs into their lives when they arrived to the U.S. The Western teachers attempted to get to know the Chinese teachers and requested to be included in the summer training to have opportunities to build relationships and collaborate. The Western teachers who lived in town incorporated their paired teachers into many social activities on the weekends. This was due partly to necessity, like to go grocery shopping, but also to give them an "American" experience and better understand U.S. culture. As more Chinese teachers came to the school district and found community among themselves, the role of the host family obligation faded. Evelyn came to this understanding during the interview process.

We took her shopping and all those things. We tried to introduce her to as much things as we could you know like "let's try to take her camping". To do all those things… She only had three years here so we wanted to introduce her to as much of it as we could. When it was just one of them, two of us and one of her, we could do all that kind of stuff. Then the second year when there was two of them, we did a little bit with the two of them together, but then I think as more and more came, they decided to do more and more on their own. They went on their vacations together and that kind of stuff.

Evelyn captured the importance of building community and treating the Eastern teachers like family, and Brenda concurred. Brenda came to this understanding during the interview:

We tried to involve them in our holidays. They came over and did Christmas cookies with all of the kids and you know they did go spend a lot of time down in [city] for holidays and things like that, but they were always invited to whatever we had. So, probably a host family too.

Ursula called her paired teachers on the weekends and included them in trips to the nearest supermarket, but also incorporated them into her family life.

I would have them over for meals. I would take them on little vacations with us. If it was a holiday we wanted to make sure that they weren't just sitting and I understand that a lot of them were our holidays, but still, and that's a good experience for them anyway to experience our culture in that way. I just felt the need for them to feel comfortable in their environment outside of school.

The kindergarten and first grade teachers lived in town and close to where the Chinese teachers lived. The novelty of being a host family to the new teachers faded as more Eastern teachers entered the district and became more mobile. They evidenced less need and dependence on the U.S. teachers in the rural community and ventured out more on their own. The second-grade teacher did not involve himself as much because he lived a considerable distance away from the district and was not in the area during weekends.

However, all teachers felt like a parent to their teacher pairs. On average, the Western teachers were 10 to 15 years older than the Eastern teachers. They recognized the isolation and vulnerability that the Chinese teachers felt in the distance that separated them physically from their friends and families. The Western teachers empathized with their Eastern pairs and doubted they would have been successful if the roles had been reversed. David, who had mentioned becoming a parent to his paired teacher, expressed surprise when he was asked about his word choice of "parent" in his role description, responding "I don't know why that popped up, but I guess it did." The Western teachers attempted to define their role as something other than parent at first, but eventually settled on the term. Ursula struggled to discover what her role needed to be.

Like I said, I felt like I needed to be... they are young, coming over here, and don't know anything, so I felt a real responsibility to be kind of a mothering figure and I realized that they didn't want to be mothered, so then you're trying to be this friend-parent and you want to take care of them. You really want to take care of them because you know. I remember when I went away to college myself at 18 years old back before there was all of this technology, I missed the familiarity of home terribly. They are so far away...

Evelyn described how her role expectations shifted from sister to parent as she came to understand her role as the Western teacher.

We felt our job, I probably shouldn't say we, was to make [first Chinese teacher] feel as comfortable as she possibly could here and we tried to be like her big sisters, but I think we became her mother. And to help as much as possible, to help with that transition because it was so hard. I mean, I would have never ever expected. I could have never done it, but to come here all by yourself and have absolutely nobody around you here that you know, and to try and support her in everything that she needed.

Conversely, David thought about his experience and role with his paired teacher in relation to how he had helped to train and guide student teachers. Still, he vacillated on his word choice of parenting as a close approximation for how he felt with his pair:

> It's really just teacher... what was appropriate, culture differences because I've had student teachers, so I know. I knew how to kind of do that but this was a student teacher plus this was a culture thing as well that I had to make sure that things were going okay. I'm almost like a... not like a parent but you know it's kind of a young kid you know? An older kid of mine. She was very maybe a couple years older than my stepdaughter, so you know she could have been my daughter so, kind of in a parenting role, okay, of making sure she was okay, and the things were going right and that all parents have to think about and… Maybe to not the extent of a parent but a lot of those issues, just making sure that I had a good relationship we were being able to work these problems if she had any problems.

David had difficulty in deciding on parent as the correct word choice for his role as a Western teacher because he was not in town on the weekends. He considered the other teachers who lived in the community to have taken on a mothering role. He listed how they spent the weekends together and helped solve problems with cell phones, for example. He also recounted how the other teachers would drive the Eastern teachers to town or to visit friends. He reflected:

> Teachers that lived in the community where the Chinese teachers lived, I think did more of a parenting role than I did [...] previous first year or second year in the program, teachers had to deal with and that was more of a mothering or a parenting role I would say because they're doing more than just mentoring the teacher in the classroom in school. The 7:30 to 3:30 day weekdays...it was a weekend thing for them.

The Western teachers, particularly at the beginning of the program, understood their role as extending beyond mentoring a new teacher and dealing with intercultural communication issues. They all expressed the obligation they felt to become a quasi-parent to their paired Eastern teacher in order to help them navigate life in the rural Midwest. All Western teachers expressed empathy for the distance between the Eastern teachers and their families and sought to become new families for them. They incorporated them into their family gatherings and included them on trips. The Western teachers felt responsible for helping the Chinese teachers adjust to their new life in the U.S. and to make them as comfortable as possible. Brenda mentioned that this changed as the program progressed and "more teachers got here, [her paired teacher] had a group of friends and once she started to drive we didn't have to do as much." The evolution of the Western role evolved as more Chinese entered the district, supported each other, and became more independent.

*Theme four: Western teachers' frustration with perceived lack of administrative support*

The Western teachers had little opportunity to plan out the implementation of the immersion program. The original program idea was proposed and implemented by the superintendent, and then he asked for teachers to volunteer as paired teachers. A few experienced teachers took the opportunity because they wanted to be involved with the program implementation. They wanted a

challenge and new experience, but they also wanted to feel supported along the way. Teachers expressed tension between the desire for autonomy and the need for administrative support. Ursula reflected:

> You know what? I am a go-getter and I was okay. I think maybe in the beginning I was naive. I was thinking this is our program and they aren't going to try to poke their nose in our business, but when we need the support we will have it, but when we needed it we never got it. So, I guess at the beginning I didn't think much about it, but as time progressed, issues arise and there was no support then you become disappointed.

She wanted the autonomy to help direct the program in the way she wanted, but also expressed the need and support she felt was missing from her administrators. David's view of the administrative support may have stemmed from his participation beginning during the program's third year because he was the second grade teacher.

> It was minimal but then again, I'm fine with minimal support. I don't need somebody breathing down my neck and visiting my classroom every day or visiting the Chinese classroom every day and I think it was efficient[...] I was coming in after the second year, the third year in, a lot of it was implemented already. It was kind of like, "Here, do this." We did have monthly meetings that kind of talked about curriculum and I had some input there but it's mostly administration or previous teachers that were in the program already driving the program. I kind of came in and then the next year was able to give them more input. Just kind of being a newbie you have no idea.

Brenda and Evelyn discussed the issue of autonomy and lack of support as well. This was coupled with their confusion about their roles implementing the program. Brenda commented:

> We didn't have a lot of leadership either because we had a new principal who was trying to learn the ropes and had never been in education before, so it was really Evelyn and I looking calm on the top and paddling hard on the bottom.

Evelyn agreed and responded, "we just kind of made it our own from what we saw and how we wanted to do it to be able to support each other and be able to support [the first Chinese teacher]." At times, these teachers felt they were in survival mode and focused on making the program and the Eastern teachers successful. The Western teachers who implemented the immersion program also felt that they managed all the practical problems of the program's integration into the district. They expressed frustration that administration had essentially handed them a task and let them figure it out on their own. Brenda summed up the feeling by admitting:

> I felt like it was kind of like a show at times that you know they had the state superintendent come in and look. Our administrator at the time

was always really excited to show it off, but not to really understand what was going one. I felt like it was put in our school, but then it was "okay you two, take it." It was very hands off by everybody else that told us that they were going to jump in with us and it was sort of like we were on a little island all by ourselves.

The frustration she felt added to the feeling that at times she was simply surviving and that the experience was isolating. The teachers' expectations of support were not met, and Brenda argued:

I think there needed to be more buy-in by the administration. They bought into it, but they didn't learn about it. They didn't spend a lot of time with us, walking hand in hand with us through this process. They kind of chucked it at us and then walked away and just said, "Well, we have a Chinese immersion program." They needed to learn, be more hand in hand with us, and helping us figure things out.

The teachers expected some confusion and trial and error, which is common with the implementation of a new program, but also expected that administration and other colleagues would be more supportive, and that they would all work together for the program's success. It was not until the third year of the program that this was accomplished. Ursula expressed those expectations with novel programs:

We had lots of meetings I remember, you know, trying to learn from each other and they would say what worked and what didn't. I remember we modified things from the way they did it when the kids came in first grade. It seems every year we had the program, we were changing it and tweaking it, which I think for any new program that is expected to happen.

The Western teachers did not believe that the administration recognized the extra time and effort that went into the establishment and maintenance of the program particularly in the beginning. They felt that their extra efforts were not recognized as exemplified when Ursula remarked:

As teachers we didn't feel supported by the administration. We felt like we were pouring our professional and our personal lives into the Chinese teachers and the program. I think we felt somewhat resentful that the administration wasn't even aware of everything that we were putting into it [...] Even just a verbal, like "thanks, good job, we see that you are immersing these people into your personal lives so that they can have a good experience" because when you bring teachers over for this type of experience it's not just a job, it is such a culture shock for them that they need to feel like they belong. So, it's not just an 8:00 to 3:30 kind of experience and I honestly don't know if we were ever told thank you. A thank you at that point would have gone a really, really long way.

The Western teachers felt much frustration in their role with the implementation of the immersion program due to the lack of support they perceived from their

administration. The teachers wanted to feel appreciated and have their extra effort recognized because they felt they were spending many additional hours and emotional energy for the success of the program.

*Theme five: Western teachers felt like outsiders in their school buildings*

The first couple years, the program model was accepted by the elementary school and seen as a novelty by other faculty and administration. However, as the program continued to expand, and other traditional teachers began to complain about increased class size relative to the immersion classrooms, the Western teachers indicated that they felt a rift and rising negativity in their building. Other teachers became concerned that their jobs would be in jeopardy and were hostile to the Western-Eastern teacher pairs or others who supported the program. Brenda recounted how her involvement with the program created division, "We were definitely outsiders in the school." Evelyn quickly jumped in and retorted, "Oh yeah, a lot of people were not happy with us. They felt like it was our fault." Ursula expressed the same sentiment about the building climate.

> This is just our politics, but there was a lot of negativity in the building about the program like financial times, the state, money's being cut, funding is being cut, and I think the school became very divided. You were either a Chinese teacher proponent or you were the other side and I guess that surprised me. When it first came in I was like this is a small town in the middle of nowhere and we have this great opportunity. We are a high poverty rural district, and what a great opportunity for our kids, and think what they could do with this in their future. I only saw the positives and then people felt threatened by it, their jobs are threatened, their coworkers' jobs are threatened, money is being taken away from programs that they felt needed in this program, so I was very surprised of the divisiveness that the program created.

The Western teachers had not expected the negativity they felt due to their involvement with the program. Brenda and Evelyn reflected on how the Eastern teachers must have experienced the hostile school environment.

> I think it crushed them too because they could feel it. They knew there was something going on and they felt that they were threatening other people's jobs, which is not what they ever wanted to do. They would come into this role not knowing what the climate of the school is and that was far from fair to them.

The antagonism took a toll on both the Western and Eastern teachers. The Western teachers felt they had to contest the misunderstandings and misrepresentations other teachers had made about the program. David got very direct about the atmosphere and felt he constantly was "putting out fires", surprised how often he had to do it.

> I had to educate others and kind of say, "No that's not how it is. Let me tell you how it really is" because there was a lot, there was some negativity

> from some people, not everybody, but there was a couple that I didn't anticipate that I'd have to talk to about, "This is how the program's running and it's doing fine and these are the reasons why we're doing it" and so maybe they didn't understand the program.

Despite David's efforts, the divide between the pro-immersion teachers and the traditional classroom teachers continued to grow.

When the immersion program was eliminated, the Western teachers expressed sadness that it had been ended abruptly with a surprise announcement in May, and Brenda openly cried at the announcement. Brenda summed up the moment, "I would say that I was very sad when the program ended. It kind of caught us all off guard." Every Western teacher expressed how they would not hesitate to become involved in a similar program and provided moments of insight with their retrospection. David expressed disappointment about the program being discontinued.

> I just was very, I don't want to say upset, but just very disappointed that we stopped doing that and I would do it again in a heartbeat. Yep, I felt I grew as a teacher. I felt I grew as, you know, just personally.

Similarly, Brenda responded, "I would be thrilled to be part of the program again if it were to come back." Brenda found her reintegration into the traditional classroom the following year was difficult and that it took time, "When the Chinese program left, and I went back just to teaching regular ed again, there was definitely some resentment towards me and it took some time for me to find my spot back in things again." Despite the difficulty reintegrating, Ursula mentioned that she had learned to be more responsive with her grade-level team in order to develop stronger relationships and maintain open communication.

Brenda and Evelyn expressed their heartache and the importance of their personal involvement in the immersion program. The experience left them with a desire to step up as mentor teachers to new teachers, even if they were not their official mentees, and to share their lives more with their colleagues. The negativity the Western teachers experienced due to their participation with the Chinese immersion program was unexpected. Regardless, all teachers felt the experience had been personally meaningful, and they would not hesitate to take on the role of the Western teacher again.

## Discussion

Immersion teachers have reported positive experiences when implementing an immersion program with co-teaching partners, but little has been documented regarding the experience of the partner teachers other than administrative challenges (Howard & Loeb, 1998). Therefore, this study sought to examine the lived experiences of rural U.S. teachers in an OWCDLP and how they understood and navigated their role as the Western teacher in an OWCDLP.

Western teacher volunteers who helped implement the OWCLP found the experience to be complex, challenging, and surprising. From the beginning, their unfamiliarity with immersion programs forced them to confront many logistical challenges in scheduling and curriculum. A similar unfamiliarity with Chinese language

and culture caused trepidation and frustration as they attempted to understand their paired teachers. They often felt that they were the face of the program in the school and in the community; they saw themselves as responsible for the program's success. As they struggled to direct and maintain the program, they also felt that they were unsupported by administration and colleagues; they were barely surviving the additional workload. The Western teachers indicated that the immersion program was seen by most district teachers as a novelty when first introduced to the district and few expected it to be successful. However, as the program reached its third year and class size differences emerged, the Western teachers indicated they felt isolated and ostracized from other traditional classroom teachers. Furthermore, many traditional teachers began to worry their positions would be replaced by immersion teachers. The school climate quickly eroded under the threat of budget cuts and continuing the program into the middle school quickly met opposition from teachers and administration. Although they were unprepared for the workplace animosity, the Western teachers indicated that the experience was worthwhile and personally fulfilling.

The Western teachers also experienced a tension between perceived lack of support from administration and a desire to drive their own program. They indicated they needed both guidance and autonomy from their administration. Similarly, Hood, Navarro, and Reynolds (2009) reported on the positive impact on teachers and school climate when immersion teachers were treated as professionals and received support and autonomy from the administration and fellow teachers. Contrarily, the Western teachers in this program expressed concerns that the school administration had not provided enough time for planning the program or for securing the target language materials that their paired teachers needed, a concern that others have indicated (Howard & Loeb, 1998).

The Western teacher pairs expected to gain a new colleague in their paired Chinese national teachers and understood that part of their role would be mentorship. Similarly, the teachers anticipated that working with novice foreign teachers would create cultural and linguistic frustrations. However, the relationship between the Western and Eastern teachers went beyond the role of mentorship typically seen between novice and experienced colleagues, student and coordinating teachers, or even co-teachers (Calderon, 1995). The Western teachers indicated that they took on a parenting role for their new teacher pair. They empathized with how difficult it would be to leave behind everything one knows and to be placed into a foreign, rural environment. Therefore, the teachers who lived closest to the school took on additional duties on the weekends and drove the Eastern teachers to the supermarket, to visit their friends in the capital, and had them partake in different outings to experience life in the U.S. and U.S. culture. Teachers who lived close to the school navigated their quasi-parental role cautiously, however, as they attempted to determine what their relationship to the foreign teacher should be. The Eastern teachers had much to learn in their new role as immersion teacher as well in an unfamiliar environment. When asked about the experience of being the new Eastern teacher, the district's first Chinese immersion teacher laughed and confirmed that she did act like a daughter.

Therefore, in addition to feeling like the parent to the Eastern teacher, the Western teachers far surpassed their role as mentor. Effectively, they became much

more than mentors to their mentees—they became host families to the Chinese teachers, as if they were a friendship family to an international student instead of a new, albeit foreign, fellow professional. This was especially true when there were few Chinese teachers in the building. As more Chinese teachers entered the school, the Chinese teachers found more support among themselves and they relied less on the Western teachers.

Additionally, the Western teachers came to understand that part of their role was to become a program and cultural intermediary for the elementary building and in the community. They generally were aware that part of their role was the implementation of a new program, but they felt unprepared for that role and the negativity it entailed as the program grew. They spoke on behalf of the Chinese teachers and requested the school purchase curricula-aligned materials in the target language after learning the Chinese teachers spent hours translating the math curriculum. They clarified misconceptions held by other teachers, and the community at large in regard to the immersion program and their nascent understanding of Chinese culture. As they came to understand the hierarchical structure and deference to school authorities within the Chinese system, they encouraged their paired teachers to grow as well. The Western teachers actively sought the Eastern teachers' opinions in department meetings with administrators so that the immersion teachers' concerns were heard.

In order to better navigate those cultural differences, rural Western teachers emphasized honest and open communication repeatedly and the need to know more about the Chinese culture. Within the framework for intercultural competence and cross-cultural communication (Howard & Loeb, 1998; Zhao, 2016), one of the Western teachers was adamant about not wanting to offend the teachers but felt that she had done so regardless. Another teacher spoke about taking the time to watch and observe how the Chinese teachers interacted among themselves in order to not offend his new paired teacher. Because the Western teachers had not previously had deep experiences with Chinese people and culture, the unfamiliarity seemed to breed insecurity. Again, the Western teachers' repeated recommendations for open and honest conversation indicates that this need may not have been met for them. Patterson's (2008) suggestion for allowing time for discussion to allow for cross-cultural understanding may have helped to decrease the frustrations and anxieties the teachers expressed. Furthermore, there is evidence that Chinese teachers' beliefs about education change with their experience teaching in U.S. schools (Wang, 2015). Therefore, part of resolving the difficulties with intercultural competence and cross-cultural communication in the teacher dyads seems to rely on pre-service and professional development (Calderon, 1995; Howard & Loeb, 1998) focused on sustained dialogue (Patterson, 2008), as well as the experience of teaching in the U.S. itself. Like the experiences of Chinese teachers in international schools in Hong Kong, exposure to different cultural beliefs and expectations can increase intercultural understanding (Lai et al., 2016).

Lastly, the Western teachers voiced that they needed more opportunities to observe and guide the paired teacher, particularly at the beginning, to fulfill their

mentoring role. They successfully advocated for their administrator's approval and hired substitute teachers to spend time in the immersion classroom to help guide the Eastern teachers with classroom management techniques. Many reported that they wanted the building and district administration to do more and to learn about the program. They felt that the difficulty of the implementation was handed off to them and often they were just trying to survive each day. They felt underappreciated by administration, especially regarding the incorporation of the Chinese instructors into their lives on nights, weekends, and holidays. The role they took on as host families to help build a strong relationship with the Chinese teachers was taxing but worthwhile. Moreover, the Western teachers also felt the weight of having twice the student load in the rotating morning/afternoon cohort model and navigated the need for twice as many parent-teacher conferences and reading assessments. They felt additional weight from the immersion parents as well because many parents solely addressed concerns to the U.S. teachers, regardless of content area. Some parents did not recognize the immersion teachers as full teachers and the Western teachers created days in which parents could visit the classrooms to learn more the process and to view the immersion teachers as teachers in their own right. The teachers lamented the elimination of the program and had found the Western teacher role to be a personally fulfilling and powerful experience and all indicated organically that they would participate in a similar program without hesitation.

### Implications for breaking barriers and building bridges

For schools considering implementation of a one-way Chinese immersion program, there are several implications from this study for district and building administrators, elementary school teachers (particularly those fulfilling the Western teacher role), community members, and partnering universities. It is paramount to understand the role that Western teachers play in the implementation of OWCDLPs in order to break down barriers to cross-cultural understanding and communication within the teacher dyads, as well as barriers between the immersion and traditional classrooms in the school and community. In this way, bridges can be built that fully support all staff and community members so that students will be successful in these programs.

To begin, school administration can help establish support for the Western-Eastern teacher pairs. Principals can create opportunities for sustained professional development for Western teachers focused on the Chinese culture. The Western teachers in this study found the summer training sessions they attended were useful to get to know and collaborate with the Eastern teachers. However, they stressed the need for a mediated cross-cultural understanding session led by a bilingual and bicultural expert who had nuanced understanding of both the Chinese and U.S. culture to help generate cross-cultural understanding. Furthermore, the participants who visited schools in China underscored how important a travel abroad experience was to understand Chinese schooling and how the role and expectations of teachers in China differed from those in Western culture (Zhao, 2016). U.S. school districts must commit to provide funding and

time off so Western-Eastern teacher pairs' specific needs are addressed. Schools might consider funding under Title II or target grants and incorporate this visit as an appropriate use of professional development funds.

Additionally, it is important for Western teachers to be able to co-teach with the Eastern teachers in their classrooms. School administration should consider hiring substitute teachers for the paired teachers for at least one day. Both the kindergarten and second grade teachers had opportunities to move between classrooms, but the first grade teacher did not. She admitted that she did not know what was going on in the Eastern teacher's classroom regarding instruction or classroom management. By providing opportunities to spend a half or full day in the Eastern teachers' classrooms, the Western teachers would be able to offer specific instructions to improve lesson delivery and classroom management. To decrease costs to the building, a substitute might replace a Western teacher at one grade level in the morning, and then replace a Western teacher from a different grade level in the afternoon. In this manner, two different Western teachers would be able to provide targeted assistance to the Chinese immersion teacher. This might improve communication between the pair that was desired by participants in this study as well as improve teacher effectiveness.

Educational leaders need to focus on a positive school climate by continuously building bridges between immersion and traditional programs that are housed within the same school. Howard and Loeb's (1998) discussion of "disagreements among staff" at the building level (p. 4) and Patterson's (2008) cautionary reflection and explicit focus on creating and maintaining a positive school climate is paramount for creating a successful program. Hood, Navarro, and Reynolds (2009) described a successful school climate with immersion and traditional teachers sharing the same goals for all students: bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism. In this way, the two-way immersion school did try to ensure an atmosphere of respect and equity for both languages, even with the immersion program embedded within a traditional program. Without buy-in from the entire staff, small erosions in school climate can lead to large divisions among teachers and buildings.

The participants in this study indicated that paired teachers want to feel needed and appreciated by their administrators and colleagues, desire autonomy, but also want to feel supported by school leadership, fellow staff, and the community. It is important for administrators to allow sufficient planning time before a program begins to determine building and district needs and to have materials available in Chinese that align with the curriculum. The Western teachers spent considerable time discussing the roles and responsibilities with those who already participated in the role, but it is important to create an environment that builds buy-in among the general staff as well. Anyone involved in the program needs to meet on a regular basis for a check-in or quick program evaluation. It was indicated that senior administration did not often attend these meetings, despite their vocal support for the program. Teachers are looking for school administration to ease some of the logistical concerns the Western teachers have and express gratitude for the extra hours many Western teachers provide to their Eastern pairs. In soliciting future

Western teacher positions, their role should be described in detail so expectations are clear.

Future research with similar immersion programs is needed to determine whether the findings in this study truly represent the essence of what it means to be the Western paired teacher in a rural one-way Chinese immersion elementary program. It also would be beneficial to investigate the Chinese immersion teachers' role navigation and understanding as they pair with the Western teacher. Chinese voices may express different opinions than their U.S. counterparts, and it would be beneficial to understand the experiences of both teachers. Their insights may help schools design better training programs and help prepare them for the realities of teaching in rural schools. Similarly, it would be beneficial to examine the experiences of teachers who live in urban or suburban settings. The isolation of the rural areas may provide a very distinct experience from a placement in an urban setting, and both the Western and Eastern teachers' experiences and role understanding in those settings need to be investigated. Equally, the extent to which students in a one-way or world language immersion program become bicultural has not been identified. Although the primary emphasis in this study was on one-way Chinese immersion programs with foreign national teachers, further research is necessary to determine similarities and differences across different program models and languages that utilize foreign teachers given the large expansion of immersion programs over the past decade.

## References

Arthur, G. (2004). Spanish immersion program expands by offering academic excellence for all. *The ACIE Newsletter*, *7*(2). Retrieved from https://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol7/Feb2004_Partial_Spanish.html

Baig, F. (2011). *Investigating the motivations of parents choosing language immersion education for their child* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (UMI 3461072)

Bennett, M. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *10*(2), 179-95.

Brzezinski, J. (2008). Amazing Grace: A parent reflects on her daughter's kindergarten year in Chinese immersion. *The ACIE Newsletter*, *11*(3). Retrieved from http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol11/no3/may08_pointsforparents.html

Calderon, M. (1995). *Dual language programs and team-teachers professional development*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED394274) Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED394274.pdf

Cammarata, L., & Tedick, D. J. (2012). Balancing content and language in instruction: The experience of immersion teachers. *The Modern Language Journal*, *96*(2), 251-269.

Center for Applied Linguistics. (2011). *Directory of foreign language immersion programs in U.S. schools.* Retrieved from http://webapp.cal.org/Immersion

Chan, T. C. (2014). Effective induction and mentoring programs for K-12 teachers and teacher education faculty: Perspectives of an operational model. *New Waves*, *17*(2), 45-55.

Correa, C. A., Perry, M., Sims, L. M., Miller, K. F., & Fang, G. (2008). Connected and culturally embedded beliefs: Chinese and U.S. teachers talk about how their students best learn mathematics. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *24*(1), 140-153. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.004

Culligan, K. (2010). *Pente* or slope? Using student voices to explore program choice and experiences in secondary French immersion mathematics. *The Canadian Modern Languages Review / La revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, *66*(3), 421-444.

DeJaeghere, J. G., & Cao, Y. (2009). Developing U.S. teachers' intercultural competence: Does professional development matter? *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *33*(5), 437-447. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.06.004

Ee, J. (2017). Understanding parents' expectations and concerns for a dual-language program through the lens of community cultural wealth. *The Korean Language in America*, *21*(2), 218-249. http://dx.doi.org/10.5325/korelangamer.21.2.2018

Fleming, M. (2007). Top ten things I wish I had known as an immersion teacher. *The ACIE Newsletter*, *10*(3). Retrieved from http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol10/may2007_ iwish.html

Fortune, T. W., & Tedick, D. J. (2003). *What parents want to know about foreign language immersion programs*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED482493) Retrieved from: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED482493

Gerena, L. (2011). Parental voice and involvement in cultural context: Understanding rationales, values, and motivational constructs in a dual immersion setting. *Urban Education*, *46*(3), 342-370. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042085910377512

Glaser, B. G. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems*, *12*(4), 436-445. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/798843

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Gómez, L., Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2005). Dual language education: A promising 50-50 model. *The Journal of the National Association for Bilingual Education*, *29*(1), 145-164. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2005.10162828

Haley, M. H., & Ferro, M. S. (2011). Understanding the perceptions of Arabic and Chinese teachers toward transitioning into U.S. schools. *Foreign Language Annals*, *44*(2), 289-307.  https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2011.01136.x

Haley, M. H., Steeley, S. L., & Salahshoor, M. (2013). Connecting twenty-first century skills and world language practices: A case study with teachers of critical need languages. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *3*(6), 865-876. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.6.865-876

Hood, S., Navarro, A., & Reynolds, D. (2009). Collaboration is key: Evaluation of a dual language immersion program in rural Oregon. *The ACIE Newsletter*, *14*(1). Retrieved from http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol14/no1/nov2010_rr.html

Howard, E. R., & Loeb, M. I. (1998). *In their own words: Two-way immersion teachers talk about their professional experiences*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED425656) Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED425656.pdf

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2013). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kavanagh, L., & Hickey, T. M. (2013). 'You're looking at this different language and it freezes you out straight away': identifying challenges to parental involvement among immersion parents. *Language and Education*, *27*(5), 432-450. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2012.714388

Karsenti, T., Collin, S., Villeneuve, S., Dumouchel, G., & Roy, N. (2008). *Why are new French immersion and French as a second language teachers leaving the profession? Results of a Canada-wide survey.* Ottawa, ON: Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers.  Retrieved from https://depot.erudit.org/id/003304dd

Kong, S., Hoare, P., & Yanping, C. (2011). Immersion education in China: Teachers' perspectives. *Frontiers of Education in China, 6*(1), 68-91. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11516-011-0122-6

Kissau, S., Yon, M., & Algozzine, B. (2011). The beliefs of international and domestic foreign language teachers. *Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages*, *10*, 21-55. Retrieved from http://www.ncolctl.org/files/belief-of-international.pdf

Lai, C., Li, Z., & Gong, Y. (2016). Teacher agency and professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts: Accounts of Chinese teachers from international schools in Hong Kong. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, *54*, 12-21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.11.007

Lee, J. S., & Jeong, E. (2013). Korean-English dual language immersion: perspectives of students, parents and teachers. *Language, Culture, and Curriculum*, *26*(1), 89-107. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2013.765890

Levesque, G. W. (2010). *Supporting anglophone parents of middle school French immersion students* (Unpublished master's thesis). Royal Roads University, Victoria, Canada.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mullen, C. (2011). New teacher mentoring: A mandated direction of states. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, *47*(2), 63-67.

Ó Ceallaigh, T. J. (2016). Second language acquisition and form-focused instruction in immersion: Teaching for learning. *World Journal of Educational Research*, *3*(2), 388-410.

Obadia, A. A., & Martin, M. (1995). French immersion teacher shortage: Seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *52*(1), 81-100. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.52.1.81

Padilla, A. M., Fan, L. Xu, X., & Silva, D. (2013). A Mandarin/English two-way immersion program: Language proficiency and academic achievement. *Foreign Language Annals*, *46*(4), 661-679. https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12060

Patterson, M. (2008). Reflections on administering an elementary school Mandarin immersion program. *The ACIE Newsletter*, *11*(3), 11-13. Retrieved from https://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/theme_issues/2008.pdf

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, *20*(1), 7-14. https://doi.org/10.14691/CPPJ.20.1.7

Pufahl, I., & Rhodes, N. C. (2011). Foreign language instruction in U.S. schools: Results of a national survey of elementary and secondary schools. *Foreign Language Annals*, *44*(2), 258-288. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2011.01130.x

Ramos Holguin, B. (2013). Towards the development of intercultural competence skills: A pedagogical experience with pre-service teachers. *HOW, 20*(1), 206-225.

Rubio, F. (2018). Language education in elementary schools: Meeting the needs of the nation. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*(1), 90-103. https:// doi.org /10.1111/ flan.12313

Speece, L. (2017). *Supporting immersion teachers: An autoethnography* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4067

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2007). Working in pairs: Top ten quotes from early French immersion student about their peer collaboration. *The ACIE Newsletter*, *10*(3). Retrieved from http://carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol10/may2007_studentvoice.html

Tedick, D. J., & Fortune, T. W. (2012). Bilingual/immersion teacher education. In C. A. Chapelle (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Chicester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. http://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431

Tolbert, S. (2015). "Because they want to teach you about their culture": Analyzing effective mentoring conversations between culturally responsible mentors and secondary science teachers of indigenous students in mainstream schools. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *52*(10), 1325-1361. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tea.21240

Van Houten, J. B. (2009). The state perspective on teacher shortage, certification, and recruitment. *The Modern Language Journal*, *93*(2), 274-277. https:// doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00860_5.x

Van Houten, J. B. (2013). A look at early language learning in Utah. *Learning Languages*, *18*(1), 54-56.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Walker, C. L., & Tedick, D. J. (2000). The complexity of immersion education: Teachers address the issues. *The Modern Language Journal*, *84*(1), 5-27. https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00049

Wang, L. (2015). Change in teaching beliefs when teaching abroad? A case study on Confucius Institute Chinese teachers' teaching experiences in the U.S. In F. Dervin (Ed.), *Chinese educational migration and student-teacher mobilities: Experiencing otherness* (pp. 144-165). London, England: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137492913_8

Williams, C. (2017, December 28). The intrusion of white families into bilingual schools. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/12/the-middle-class-takeover-of-bilingual-schools/549278/

Xu, X., Padilla, A., & Silva, D. M. (2015). Learner performance in Mandarin immersion and high school world language programs: A comparison. *Foreign Language Annals*, *48*(1), 26-38. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/flan.12123

Yue, Y. (2017). Teaching Chinese in K–12 schools in the United States: What are the challenges? *Foreign Language Annals*, *50*(3), 601-620, https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12277

Zhao, Y. (2016). A narrative inquiry into foreign teachers' perplexes in mixed-cultural classes. *Cogent Education*, *3*(1), 1-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1244027

Zhou, W., & Austin, S. (2017). Developing intercultural awareness within teacher preparation program. In L. Leavitt, S. Wisdom, & K. Leavitt (Eds.), *Cultural awareness and competency development in higher education* (pp. 189-206). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-5225-2145-7.ch011

Zhou, W., & Li, G. (2015). Chinese language teachers' expectations and perceptions of American students' behavior: Exploring the nexus of cultural differences and classroom management. *System*, *49*, 17-27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.10.011

**Appendix A: Semi-structured interview questions**

*Background information about participants*

1.  Where did you grow up?
2.  How long had you taught at this or other regional school by 2010?
3.  How would you describe your interactions with diverse populations (in the community, at college, at work) before the immersion program?
4.  Do you speak other languages?
5.  Have you studied or worked abroad?
6.  What experiences had you had with Chinese people or culture before the immersion program?
7.  How did you come to be involved in the immersion program?

*Program planning and implementation*

8.  Discuss your preparation for your role in planning and implementing the immersion program.
9.  How were you supported by administration? What supports were lacking?
10. How did you experience / feel about planning and implementing the program?
11. What organizational supports needed to be created and/or sustained?
12. What organizational supports did you feel you never received?
13. How did the trip to China help prepare you for working with Chinese teachers?

*Working as a paired teacher*

14. How would you describe your role as a paired teacher?
15. How did you come to understand/navigate yourself in the Western teacher role?
16. What surprised you about the role as a paired teacher?
17. How did the Chinese teacher see your role as the Western teacher?
18. What did you have to learn in order to interact with Chinese teachers?
19. How did administration help or hinder your role as the Western teacher?
20. What advice would you give to U.S. teachers that will soon be in the role of Western teachers / how did you prepare incoming Western teachers for each advancing grade level?
21. How did you navigate cultural differences in your paired role?
22. How did you come to navigate your role as the Western paired teacher?
23. What impact did you have on the program planning, implementation, and continuity?
24. What impact did you have on your students?
25. How has the experience of working as a paired teacher affect your current professional philosophy and actions?
26. Because of your involvement with the program, did you find yourself having to give up other activities, opportunities, etc. to support the program? What were they?

27. What advice would you give to Chinese teachers that will pair with U.S. teachers? What should they know about working with U.S. teachers?
28. How would you write a job description for the role of the Western paired teacher?

# Promoting Learner Engagement through Interactive Digital Tools

**Xianquan Liu**
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
**Aleidine J. Moeller**
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Abstract**

Interactive digital tools and virtual learning spaces can be effective in engaging learners with language, content, and culture that promote language proficiency. However, the mere utilization of technology tools does not guarantee learner growth in language proficiency without careful attention to research-informed learning strategies and standards-based instructional design. Learning objectives and language functions drive instruction, and digital learning tools can provide differentiated learning opportunities and learner support that scaffold the learning process. The authors provide a review of the literature on technology integration in world language education as well as examples of popular digital tools designed to facilitate meaningful, interactive communication. Three digital tools, WeChat, iBook Author, and Spark Video, were chosen as exemplars as they provide varied and multiple instructional functions in all three modes of communication.

*Keywords*: communicative proficiency, social cognitive approach, technology tools

**Introduction**

Technology is ubiquitous—digital media has transformed our lives, our interactions, and it has connected us globally. Digital media has changed the nature of education, most specifically how, when, and where we learn. This has led researchers to stress the need for theoretical and practical support for language

teachers in the effective use of technology in the classroom (Bax, 2011; Kessler, 2007). Effective integration of digital media guided by research-informed pedagogy can enhance learner motivation and engage language learners in the language learning process. While much research has been conducted on perceptions and the impact of effective technology integration in world language classrooms, there is limited research focused on effective integration of technology tools to engage language learners in meaningful interactions that promote language proficiency (Wu, Childs, & Hsu, 2018). In order to address this gap in the literature, this paper focuses on strategies designed to integrate digital tools to foster language proficiency.

**Technology integration and foreign language education: History, trends, and impact**

The evolution of language learning has shifted from learning about language, to communicating in the language, to using language as a tool to access content (Moeller, 2018). Due in large part to the digital age, access to authentic language sources and resources are available on demand through multimedia, social media, online conferencing, and a plethora of Web 2.0 apps and tools. The key to connecting the classroom and the global language community lies in incentivizing and motivating learners to pursue language practice and learning beyond the classroom walls where they can apply their acquired skills. When learners use language skills in authentic language contexts within language communities, motivation increases and purpose for language learning becomes real (Yu, 2016).

Much like the evolution of language teaching, technology integration in language instruction has undergone significant paradigm shifts. Often referred to as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), CALL has experienced three stages of development due to prevailing theoretical and pedagogical influences of second language acquisition in corresponding periods in history (Schmid, 2010). During the 1960s and 1970s, research and teaching practices related to CALL reflected a behavioristic approach that focused on providing drills and repetitive practice with minimal feedback. Cognitive approaches to CALL gradually emerged during the 1970s followed in the 1980s by strong emphases on communicative language teaching. Cognitive approaches to CALL strove for more learner control and interaction with technology in contextualized language learning practice and sought to engage students in non-drill formats with enriched feedback to support learner language development. Influenced by socio-cultural theory, a focus on meaning, negotiation, and learner interactions with materials, texts, and peers in authentic contexts was promoted (Schmid, 2010; Shrum & Glisan, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). Social-cognitive CALL aims to promote interactions among and between learners, as well as with native-speakers, instead of focusing solely on interactions between language learners and technologies. Effective integration of educational technologies for language learning aimed to provide or simulate authentic contexts to engage language learners through diverse learning tasks. This goal aligns with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) statement on the role of technology in language learning, which states that technology use engages

learners in interactive, meaningful, cognitive interactions with other speakers of the target language (ACTFL, 2017). The focus is on co-construction of knowledge of both culture and language to facilitate the development of language proficiency, intercultural communicative competence, and negotiation of evolving identity (Blyth, 2018; Kessler, 2018).

Educational technology has been used to create virtual and augmented learning spaces to strengthen learning communities through online interactions in semi-authentic contexts. Virtual and augmented learning spaces allow learners to participate in diverse learning tasks aimed at developing communicative skills through co-construction of knowledge (Kessler, 2018; Liu & Olmanson, 2016). According to the National Standards in Foreign Language Learning Project (2015), the three modes of communication include interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication. Interpersonal communication is the direct oral and written communication between individuals who are in personal contact. Interpretive communication is receptive oral and written communication via print and non-print materials, visual or recorded materials. And, presentational communication is the spoken or written communication for an audience where there is no direct, immediate, personal contact (National Standards in Foreign Language Learning Project, 2015)

**Three modes of communication and meaningful interaction**

Interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication skills develop independently based on varied factors such as opportunities for practice and interactions with native speakers and authentic materials. In their research on the integrated performance assessment, Glisan, Uribe, and Adair-Hauck (2007) examined students' performance in three modes of communication with advanced Spanish classes and reported that students performed better during presentational communication than interpersonal communication. Adair-Hauck and Troyan (2013) noted that language instructors use presentational tasks more frequently than the other two modes, making it the predominant mode assessed in language classrooms. The spontaneous nature of interpersonal tasks makes this mode challenging for language instructors to teach, model, and assess (Glisan, Uribe, & Adair-Hauck, 2007; Wu, Childs & Hsu, 2018). Glisan, Uribe, and Adair-Hauck (2007) reported that students failed to perform well in the interpretive mode due to comparatively limited exposure to listening input. Such findings indicated that more effective tools and instructional strategies were needed to support learners to develop interpretive and interpersonal communicative skills. In order to address these needs, this paper explores effective technology tools and provides real-classroom examples to assist language teachers in integrating innovative technology to ensure student engagement when developing communicative proficiency.

**Effective technology tools to promote language learning and intercultural communication**

In order to optimize language learning, learners must engage in interactions with speakers of the target language as they co-construct meaning in authentic contexts. Research has associated student engagement positively with task outcomes

and learner achievement (Peng, Song, Kim, & Day, 2016).   Social interaction, effective scaffolding of learning tasks, and student autonomy have been identified as promoting task engagement (Gao, Bai & Park, 2017). The technology tools described in this paper provide a virtual space for language practice designed to promote meaningful interaction, strengthen the social and language development of the learning community, involve learners in cognitively engaging learning tasks, and create authentic contexts to foster both language proficiency and intercultural competence. We have chosen three technology apps, WeChat, iBook, Spark Video, to illustrate effective use of technology that can develop language proficiency when "guided by viable educational and language development rationales" (Gonzalez-Lloret & Ortega, 2014, p. 3).

*Meaningful communication in authentic contexts with WeChat*

Social networking technologies have been identified by researchers and language practitioners as effective tools to support world language teaching and learning (Kessler, 2018). WeChat, a social networking technology tool, has been documented in the research literature as (a) positively fostering specific language skills (Liu, 2014; Wu, 2016); (b) contributing to learner community building (Cheng, 2016; Wang, Fang, Han, & Chen, 2016; Qi & Wang, 2018); (c) facilitating negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction in a low anxiety environment (Cheng, 2016; Tang, & Hew, 2017), and (d) engaging students in problem-solving tasks in authentic contexts (Kessler, 2018; Zhang, 2016). Research has shown that online chatting contributes to interpersonal communication with increased language production and improved language complexity (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson & Freynik, 2014).

**Interpersonal communication with teacher presence.** WeChat is a highly compatible social networking tool that can be used on mobiles, tablets, or computers (both Aroid and ISO systems). While this app originated in China, it is compatible with many languages, including English, German, Spanish, French, Arabic, and more. With its powerful functions ranging from instant messaging, to social interaction, and to online business, WeChat is the most popular social media app used in both China and Chinese communities outside of China. WeChat was not designed specifically for educational purposes, but due to its popularity and diverse functions, it can serve as a promising educational tool when used with appropriate instructional pedagogical design. Pedagogical considerations and instructional planning are pivotal to implementing non-pedagogically-designed technology tools like WeChat, since meaningful interaction in the target language among students via social media does not happen intuitively.

Wang, Fang, Han, and Chen (2016) examined teaching, social, and cognitive presence of WeChat-mediated language exchanges between two college language classes, an Australian third-year Mandarin class and a Taiwanese English class. In their study, they claimed that teacher presence, the role teachers played in the WeChat learning community, facilitated cognitive and social development for language learners. Wang and colleagues described teacher presence, or teacher role, in the WeChat community as a co-designer who creates tasks, facilitates

learning, and provides language support and feedback. Such findings regarding teachers' roles to monitor, facilitate, and provide feedback to support student language learning using technologies have been confirmed in multiple research studies (Moeller & McNulty, 2006; Moeller & Park, 2003).

The implementation of technology in teaching practice must begin with a pedagogical purpose based on the learning objectives and a general understanding of the affordances of technologies that are able to serve that purpose (Saudelli, & Ciampa, 2016). WeChat is a popular social media option among teachers as it provides asynchronous, semi-synchronous, and synchronous online communication (Liu, 2014; Tang & Hew, 2017; Qi & Wang, 2018) and its messaging function allows for interpersonal communication in different modalities (e.g. text, audio, and video messages) (Figure 1). In addition, its user-friendly grouping function allows language instructors to group learners the way that is most appropriate for achieving the intended learning objectives. This flexible grouping approach promotes engagement in online interpersonal communication either in pairs or in groups any time, any place. Students can ask for help whenever they have questions by sending a text or voice message to instructors, thus allowing instructors to monitor group work and provide individualized support and feedback. Both students and instructors can initiate synchronous communication via voice chat, video chat, and group conferencing. Asynchronous conversation provides more flexibility for interlocutors with less stress and increases willingness to communicate, since spontaneity is not required (Freiermuth, & Jarrell, 2006; Wu, Childs & Hsu, 2018).
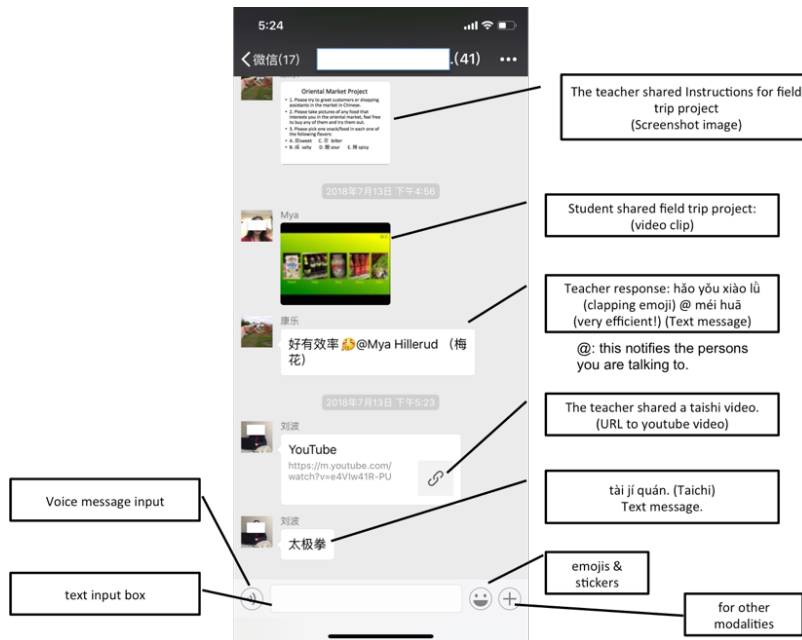


**Figure 1.** Screenshot of teacher and student communication via WeChat

WeChat projects and learning tasks are designed to guide and gauge meaningful interaction both at the teacher-student level and student-student level. Wang, Fang, Han, and Chen (2016) co-designed five tasks with classroom teachers based on the pedagogical needs and learning objectives determined by the teachers. Each task was shared with students with detailed directions to ensure meaningful, authentic communication via WeChat. The first icebreaker voice-messaging communication task allowed teachers to pair students and create WeChat groups for each pair of students. Each WeChat group included an English learner from Taiwan, a Chinese learner from Australia, and their respective teachers. Due to time differences, students were allowed to choose asynchronous, synchronous, or semi-synchronous modes of communication. In this way, WeChat provided a platform for language learners to communicate with native language speakers. First, learners were required to send an audio greeting and a short self-introduction in the target language to their language partner. Then, learners were to chat about their interests and hobbies in their chosen modality. The final step was to set up a schedule for further communication.

The Australian Mandarin and Taiwanese English teachers were able to witness student interaction, but did not participate in the conversation until students asked for help and support. The structured task served as an effective ice-breaker in that it provided language learners a topic, resources, and support. The pairing-up ensured that every student was involved in the task with equal participation and was individually accountable (Kagan, 1994; Shrum & Glisan, 2015). The flexibility for students to choose from symmetrical, semi-symmetrical, and asymmetrical formats to communicate involved all students in the task, including those with potentially less interactive personality traits (e.g. shyness). During the student interactions, the teachers monitored student learning and provided support or feedback if such a need emerged. A follow-up class discussion allowed participants to provide additional feedback in terms of language use. Factors such as time differences and the length of communication were considered while designing learning tasks. Students also used a variety of modalities (e.g. text, visual, voice, and video) to express themselves to accomplish the communicative task.

WeChat-mediated interpersonal communication tasks must integrate research informed pedagogy-driven curricular design that facilitates meaningful communication in authentic contexts (ACTFL, 2017; Kessler, 2018). Alternative technologies that facilitate interpersonal communication include, but are not limited to, popular social networking and instant messaging technologies such as WhatsApp, Skype, QQ, Google hangout, Messenger (with Facebook), and Flipgrid (asynchronous). No matter what technologies are used, it is important to consider the following criteria to ensure smooth integration and to achieve the identified learning outcome. Technology-mediated interpersonal communication should begin by:

- Identifying learner linguistic levels and the necessary scaffolded support needed for learners to achieve their learning goals (Moeller. & Yu, 2015).
- Aligning learning objectives with standards to determine the purpose for the communicative task (Ziegler & Moeller, 2012).

- Pairing and grouping students based on communicative purpose (Brandl, 2008).
- Identifying technology functions that support student learning based on learning purpose (Hughes, 2005).
- Preparing clear instructions for both task details and technology use for student reference (Brandl, 2008; Novodvorsky, & Weinstein, 2014).
- Composing rubrics to evaluate student language production.
- Identifying strategies for monitoring learning and providing feedback.

**Interpretive communication through guided exploration of authentic materials.** Instructors can share materials in various modalities with WeChat by using the individual chat or group chat function. WeChat also allows for integration of appropriate authentic materials in the form of text, images, audio, video, URL, and other formats that are appropriate for developing language proficiency. According to Glisan et al. (2007) and Kissau & Adams (2016), there is a need to focus on learning strategies that support the development of the interpretive mode of communication. WeChat provides easy access to authentic materials. There are more than 12 million public accounts that provide resources in all fields ranging from food to academic resources (Central Broadcasting Web, 2017, February 6). In addition, there are more than a hundred subscribable public accounts related to Chinese learning and Chinese culture materials alone. Official accounts are available for learners of other languages with more than 30 official accounts related to Arabic learning.

In order to promote interpretive communication skills, instructors should provide guiding questions and comprehension checks to help learners reflect on their reading and listening practice and to focus on main ideas and important details (Wu, Childs & Hsu, 2018). In the WeChat environment, instructors can assign materials with guiding questions to engage individuals in interpretive practice and provide individual support as needed. Instructors can also group learners strategically to negotiate meaning and discuss learning strategies to co-construct meaning (Shrum & Glisan, 2015). Instructors can assign different readings on the same topic to various groups based on their language proficiency and facilitate group presentations based on the reading content.

**Presentational communication within a learning community.** In order to promote learner autonomy, it is vital that learners demonstrate their language learning actively through performance-based tasks (Novodvorsky & Weinstein, 2014; Shrum & Glisan, 2018). WeChat allows learners to share learning evidence in different modalities with other language speakers of their own choice. There are two ways to share learning evidence: one is to post in a group chat, and the other is through WeChat Moment. Figure 2 is a screenshot of a student's WeChat Moment page. The student was a participant in the 2017 STARTALK residential Immersion Chinese program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for high school students with no prior experience learning Chinese. The theme of the immersion program was "Experiencing Chinese Festivals through the Five Senses." The curriculum included five Chinese festivals contextualized through authentic materials in multimodality to provide students with both cultural and language input. Students

were required to post a presentational assignment via WeChat moment as evidence of learning. Figure 2 provides an example of a presentational writing assignment that was posted at the end of the day after students had finished the Lantern Festival unit. Learners were asked to write about their understanding of the story, the related culture, and the language they had learned. Learners were provided with detailed instructions and a rubric to guide their presentational assignment (Appendix A). They shared their presentational writing assignment with the entire class via WeChat moments (Moments, July 13). The student participant retold the Lantern Festival story as if she were the goose in the story.
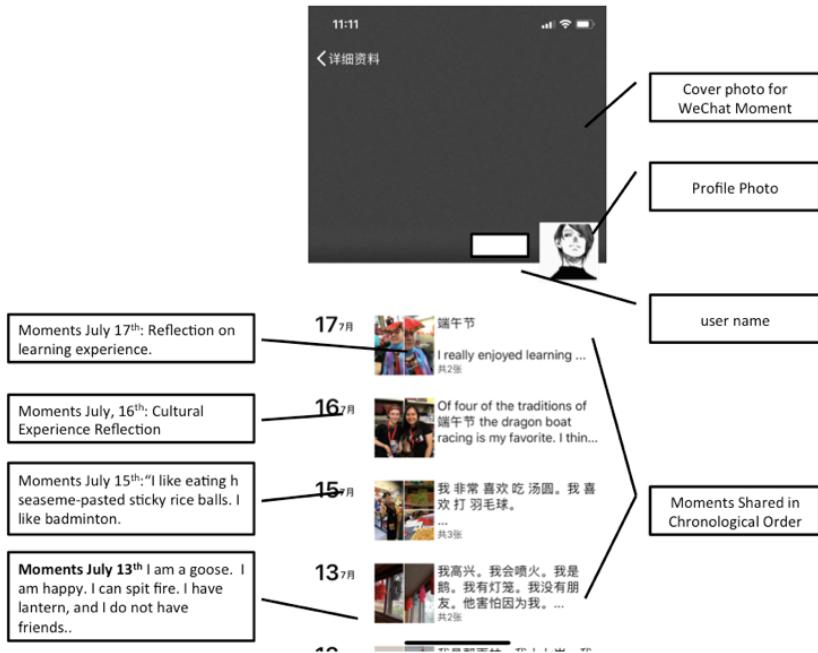


**Figure 2.** One Novice-level student's WeChat moment demonstrating presentational communication

All learners were required to use the commenting function to provide feedback on at least two of their peers' posts. Each student was required to respond to the peer comments and make revisions if needed based on peer reviews. For each peer comment, students provided constructive feedback on language use and content based on assignment rubrics. A sample comment from a student on the July 13 posting in Figure 1 is "Your story was told from the goose's perspective, and it is very interesting. I would recommend to start the story with *wǒ shì é* [I am a goose] instead of *wǒ hěn gāo xìng* [I am happy]." In this comment, the student acknowledges that the content of the story was good while providing suggestions about the opening of the story. Students were required to make revisions based on peer comments they received. The revised version of their WeChat moment posts served as a summative assessment for the Lantern Festival Unit.

Technology-supported presentational assignments offer diverse peer interaction and peer feedback facilitated by a variety of functions, such as the "commenting" function in WeChat and the "liking" function available in most social media technologies. Alternative technologies that foster presentational skills within learning communities include a variety of social media technologies that build learner community include Twitter, Facebook, Messenger, Google Classroom, and Seesaw.

Presentational communication skills do not develop without pedagogically designed learning tasks that facilitate the learning process. Wang, at al. (2016) and Brandl (2008) recommend that teachers be present in the virtual learning community to create an inviting learning environment, model language use, establish the structure, provide explicit instructions, monitor the learning process, and serve as a resource and be available to support learner needs. As demonstrated in the WeChat examples, the Australian and Taiwanese teachers designed the learning tasks, grouped the students, provided detailed instructions, rubrics, and provided examples to support student engagement. Teachers monitored the online interactions and provided support whenever there was a need during the learning process. After students finished the learning tasks, teachers facilitated peer reviews and provided feedback as described in the example from the Lantern Festival Unit. In addition, teachers were able to provide individualized support using WeChat messaging when needed. Teachers could send reminders via the messaging function when the deadline for the assignment approached.

In sum, social media technologies, such as WeChat, can engage learners in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication. The messaging function can extend interpersonal communication in the target language beyond the classroom while contributing to community building. In order to facilitate interpretive communication, teachers can screen for adequate authentic materials and design activities to elicit critical thinking while interacting with the material. Group chat, conferencing, and Moment features can facilitate presentational communication since they allow for different modalities for demonstrating language and cultural learning.  However, it is not the technology that drives the instruction, but the effective strategies guided by pedagogical considerations that optimize the learning experience and promote language proficiency.

*iBook: Learner-paced explorations that foster interpretive communication skills*

iBook offers interactive books that promote learner engagement and personalized learning (Baldwin, 2015; Johnston, & Marsh, 2014). iBook Author is an Apple, Inc. application that allows teachers to create iBooks to address learner needs. In order to illustrate the available functions iBook offers, we provide an example from Chinese language teaching, more specifically the teaching of pinyin and Chinese characters.

The debate over when and how characters should be introduced is ongoing among Chinese language educators; however, it is generally agreed that character learning should transition from pinyin (phonetic system for the Chinese language) to character learning to facilitate the learning process (Liu & Olmanson, 2016;

Zhao, 2014). iBook has the ability to make the transition from pinyin to characters more fluid and engaging for learners. The following examples are taken from an iBook, *Xun Mei Ji* [Looking for My Younger Sister] created by Xianquan Liu, one of the authors of this article. This iBook was designed specifically to support the transition from pinyin to character learning for Novice-low Chinese learners after they were acquainted with pinyin and exposed to some basic character knowledge.

The story is about a boy's trip to China to look for his younger sister. The book uses authentic materials to contextualize character recognition in an interactive story.
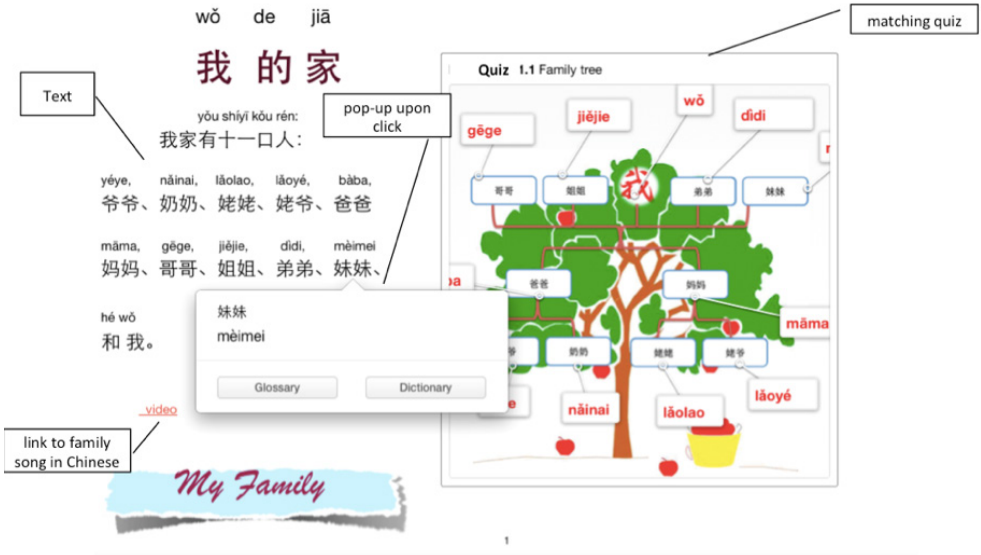


**Figure 3.** Reading with pop-up reference, video, and quizzes

Figure 3 is a screenshot of an introduction of the main character's family at the beginning of the book with pinyin annotation, the phonetic symbols above the characters. All new words in the text are clickable and are linked to a pop-up reference window. Learners can pick "glossary" or "dictionary" for reference. The image on the right is a two-page quiz based on the text that learners have read on the left side of the image. Other features offered by iBook Author include gallery, media, keynote, interactive image, 3D, scrolling sidebar, pop-over, and HTML. Each feature can be utilized to provide interactive interpretive practice for learners in different modalities. For example, a mini-presentation can be embedded with the "keynote" widget to provide additional cultural background that can be activated by a click if learners are interested in learning more about that cultural topic.

Different storylines are created to promote learner autonomy by offering choices in learning content. Each icon in the rectangle (Figure 4) is linked to a sub-storyline for learners to navigate a variety of storylines with similar content.

Authentic exit and entrance signs are used to ask learners to select the right entrance (Figure 5) after they have activated the sub-storyline by clicking on one of the icons (Figure 4). If they select the wrong sign, they will be led to the upper right page with feedback indicating "Sorry, you are now out of [the name of the place learners chose to explore]. The return icon will lead learners back to the previous page. Once the right choices are made, learners will be led to the lower right side of the slide picturing a boy holding a medal with *"Hao"* [Good] on it. In this way, learners are given the opportunity to learn and relearn what they have missed previously in a class in a personal learning environment in a low affective learning environment (Brandl, 2008).
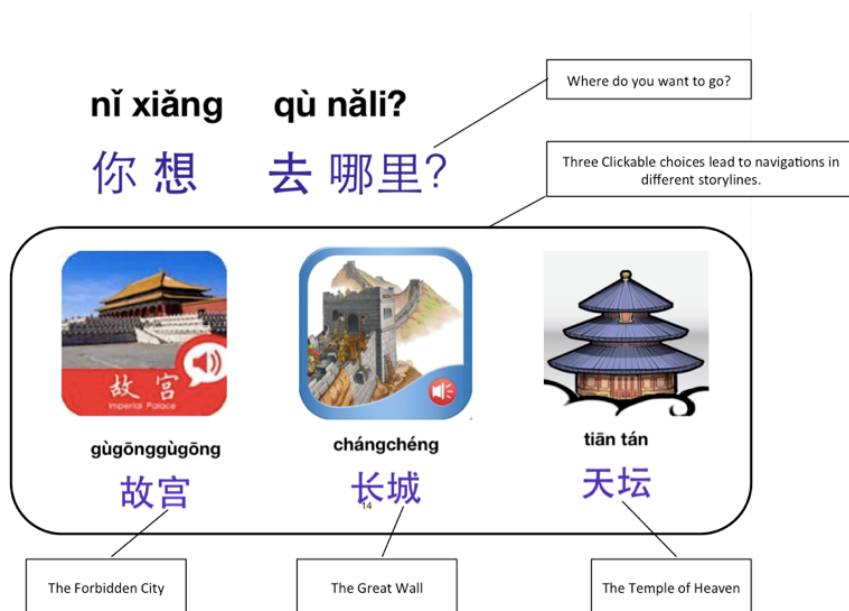


**Figure 4.** A question page with three clickable icons to activate different storylines

appropriate place for that action. Once again, the incorrect answers lead to the page indicating a return icon for a second try. A click on the correct answer leads to the page indicating the correct choice, the boy with a medal.

The intent is to remove pinyin support gradually as learners move deeper into the story. Learners are provided a simple short sentence and asked to make choices concerning what they have read. For example, routine actions appear repeatedly with decreasing pinyin support, thus familiarizing learners with characters as they build their character knowledge and confidence. Figure 6 demonstrates such an interactive, interpretive practice towards the end of the story when pinyin is completely removed from the text. On the left of the picture, a short sentence 我累了 [I am tired] using characters is presented with visual support, and learners are asked to pick the most appropriate action from the list. The wrong action words
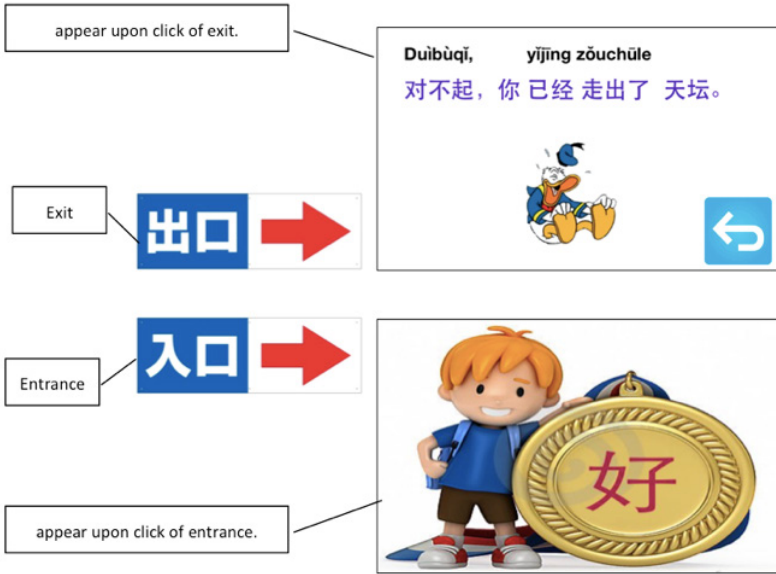
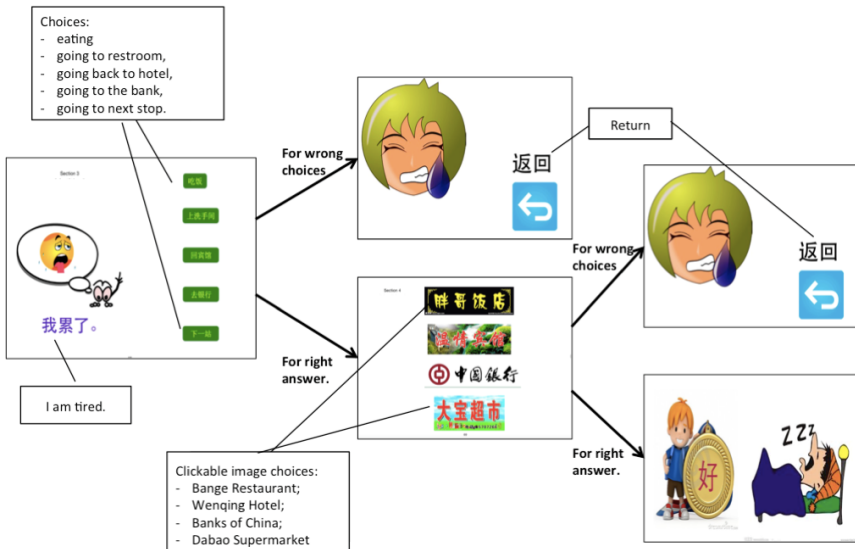**Figure 5.** Clickable contextualized character recognition practice with feedback



**Figure 6.** Interpreting with immediate feedback

are linked to a page indicating the answer is incorrect. Learners are provided with the opportunity to try again by clicking the return bottom (upper middle image in Figure 6). The right action word 回宾馆 [go back to the hotel], in this case leads to a page offering choices of places with authentic signs for students to pick the appropriate place for that action. Once again, the incorrect answers lead to the page indicating a return icon for a second try. A click on the correct answer leads to the page indicating the correct choice, the boy with a medal.

Using the iBook story described above, Liu & Olmanson (2016) found that scaffolded pinyin assistance and meaningful, repetitive practice in an authentic story based context with immediate feedback served as effective strategies. The technology supported high school Novice-level Chinese learners' transition from reading a pinyin-assisted text to reading a character-based text. The implementation process using digital tools that engage learners in interpretive communication is driven by pedagogical considerations to scaffold students' reading and listening practice with guiding questions, to facilitate negotiation of meaning, to provide feedback, and to demonstrate learning. Additional technologies that engage learners in interpretive communication and allow for a sharing of documents include Seesaw, Facebook, Twitter, and Edpuzzle. Edpuzzle allows for more scaffolding to guide students in individual listening interpretive practice. Edpuzzle allows instructors to edit online videos, to add voiceover, to insert questions in different formats (e.g. text, audio), and to integrate quizzes.

*Presentational communication with video-presentations via Spark Video*

Many technologies enable learners to demonstrate their presentational speaking, such as Sockpuppet, Flipgrid, Voicethread, and Voki. For both writing and speaking practice, Narrative PowerPoint, Sock Puppet, Little Bird Story are useful. For writing only, Pic Collage, Comic Life, Story Creator are optimal. Based on experimentation with, and input from Novice-level Chinese high school language learners in a residential immersion program, Sparkvideo was chosen as the preferred venue for demonstration of presentational communication skills. The free version of Spark Video allows learners to create videos with captions and voiceover to demonstrate both written and spoken presentational skills. Adobe Spark Video can be used on its website or downloaded as an app on mobile devices. The example below is student work from a STARTALK Chinese immersion language program for Novice-level high school learners. Prior to a field trip to an Oriental market, learners were introduced to a variety of foods and flavors specific to Chinese culture. Once at the market, students were assigned to take pictures of Chinese foods that contained a minimum of five different flavors. These pictures served as information and documentation for a presentation they prepared after the field trip focused on likes and dislikes of various flavors. Voiceover and written captions were required to demonstrate their presentational writing and speaking skills. Figure 7 (next page) shows a screenshot of the Spark Video presentation created by one of the students.

This assignment required students to describe to an audience what they liked and did not like using visuals, voice over, and subtitles. This allowed the learners to

**Figure 7.** Screenshot of a student's oral presentation 口味 [flavor]

practice their presentation skills (speaking, writing) as often as needed to exercise creativity in communicating their personal likes and dislikes. The familiarity of the topic allowed students to focus more on the language instead solely on the topic (McKeeman, & Oviedo, 2017). This individual assignment was designed to lower the affective filter and to include learners who were not comfortable presenting in front of class (Krashen, 1983; Shrum & Glisan, 2016). Learners were able to rehearse as many times as needed before they started recording. When students finished their presentation, they were required to post them through WeChat moments by the due date. Students then reviewed at least three peer presentation postings and provided constructive comments to help their peers to improve language, culture and presentational skills (Lundstrom, & Baker, 2009). After the peer review process, the teachers provided comments and feedback to students individually.

**Conclusion**

Educational technology tools provide opportunities to contextualize language learning, to address individual learner needs, and to increase both teacher presence and peer interaction in the language learning process inside and outside world language classrooms. This paper provides pedagogically-driven examples for language classrooms that exemplify how to make use of interactive digital tools effectively that create a positive virtual learning environment, provide authentic contexts, and promote interactive tasks that engage learners in communication. Integrating digital tools in world language education offers invaluable and multiple opportunities to promote language proficiency, but also offers new challenges (Kessler, 2018; Warner & Dupuy, 2018). In order to navigate technology integration successfully in classrooms, teachers are faced with the challenge of learning about the latest and ever changing technology tools as well as how to integrate these digital tools effectively to promote language and intercultural proficiency. By integrating a few technology tools that offer a variety of functions, such as those

that are described in this article, teachers and learners can become proficient in the use of these tools and experiment with the various options for engaging learners in meaningful language practice inside and outside world language classrooms.

### References

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (2017). Statement on the role of technology in language learning. Retrieved from https://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/statement-the-role-technologylanguage-learning.

Adair-Hauck, B., & Troyan, F. J. (2013). A descriptive and co-constructive approach to integrated performance  assessment feedback. *Foreign Language Annals*, *46*(1), 23-44.

Baldwin, A. A. (2015). Developing an interactive textbook using iBooks Author. *Federation of Business Disciplines Journal*, *3*, 1-12.

Bax, S. (2011). Normalisation revisited: The effective use of technology in language education. *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching, 1*(2), 1–15. doi:10.4018/ijcallt.2011040101

Blyth, C. (2018). Immersive technologies and language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*(1), 225-232.

Brandl, K. (2008). *Communicative language teaching in action: Putting principles to work*. Upper Saddle River, NJ:  Pearson Prentice Hall.

Central Broad Casting Web,（2017, February 6). *Only 10% of the tens of thousands of WeChat offical counts were regularly subscribed: Moving into integration phase*. Retrieved from http://www.xinhuanet.com/2017-02/06/c_1120420229.htm.

Cheng, L. (2016). A study of Chinese engineering students' communication strategies in a mobile-assisted professional development course. *The EuroCALL Review*, *24*(2), 24-31.

Freiermuth, M., & Jarrell, D. (2006). Willingness to communicate: Can online chat help? *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 16*(2), 189-212.

Gao, L., Bai, X., & Park, A. (2017). Understanding sustained participation in virtual travel communities from the perspectives of IS success model and flow theory. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 41*(4), 475–509. doi:10.1177/1096348014563397

Glisan, E. W., Uribe, D., & Adair-Hauck, B. (2007). Research on integrated performance assessment at the post-secondary level: Student performance across the modes of communication. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 64*(1), 39-67.

Golonka, E. M., Bowles, A. R., Frank, V. M., Richardson, D. L., & Freynik, S. (2014). Technologies for foreign language  learning: a review of technology types and their effectiveness. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *27*(1), 70-105.

Gonzalez-Lloret, & & Ortega, M. (2014). Technology for task-based language teaching. In C. Chapelle & S. Sauro (Eds.), *The handbook of technology and second language teaching and learning* (pp. 193–205). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-02237-6

Hughes, J. (2005). The role of teacher knowledge and learning experiences in forming technology-integrated pedagogy. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *13*(2), 277-302.

Johnston, N., & Marsh, S. (2014). Using iBooks and iPad apps to embed information literacy into an EFL foundations course. *New Library World*, *115*(1/2), 51-60.

Kagan, S., & Kagan, S. (1994). *Cooperative learning* (Vol. 2). San Juan Capistrano, CA: Kagan Cooperative Learning.

Kissau, S., & Adams, M. J. (2016). Instructional decision making and IPAs: Assessing the modes of communication. *Foreign Language Annals*, *49*(1), 105-123.

Kessler, G. (2007). Formal and informal CALL preparation and teacher attitude toward technology. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 20*(2), 173–188. doi:10.1080/09588220701331394

Kessler, G. (2018). Technology and the future of language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*(1), 205-218.

Krahnke, K. J. (1983). Principles and practice in second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, *17*(2), 300-305.

Liu, X., & Olmanson, J. (2016). A technology-supported experience to facilitate Chinese character acquisition. *The Nebraska Educator*, *3*(1), 87–107.

Liu, Z. (2014). A study on the application of WeChat in ESP Training. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *4*(12), 2549-2554.

Lundstrom, K., & Baker, W. (2009). To give is better than to receive: The benefits of peer review to the reviewer's own writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *18*(1), 30-43.

McKeeman, L., & Oviedo, B. (2017). Designing performance-based assessments within digital L2 environments. *2017 Report of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages*, 37-52.

Moeller, A. J, & McNulty, A. (2006). WebQuests, teacher preparation and language learning: Theory into practice. *2006 Report of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages,* 63-74.

Moeller, A. J. & Park, H. (2003). Foreign language teacher education and technology: Bridging the gap. *2003 Report of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages,* 53-70. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Moeller, A.J. (2018). President's message. *Foreign Language Annals. 51*:5–8. DOI:10.1111/flan.12330.DOI: 10.1111/flan.12330

Moeller, A. J., & Yu, F. (2015). NCSSFL-ACTFL can-do statements: An effective tool for improving language learning within and outside the classroom. *Dimension*, *50*, 69.

National Standards in Foreign Language Learning Project. (2015). *World-readiness standards for learning languages* (4th ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Novodvorsky, I., & Weinstein, C. S. (2014). *Middle and secondary classroom management: Lessons from research and practice*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Peng, W., Song, H., Kim, J., & Day, T. (2016). The influence of task demand and social categorization diversity on performance and enjoyment in a language learning game. *Computers & Education*, *95*, 285–295. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2016.01.004

Qi, G. Y., & Wang, Y. (2018). Investigating the building of a WeChat-based community of practice for language teachers' professional development. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *12*(1), 72-88.

Saudelli, M. G., & Ciampa, K. (2016). Exploring the role of TPACK and teacher self-efficacy: An ethnographic case study of three iPad language arts classes. *Technology, Pedagogy, and Education*, *25*(2), 227-247.

Schmid, E. C. (2010). Developing competencies for using the interactive whiteboard to implement communicative language teaching in the English as a foreign language classroom. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, *19*(2), 159-172.

Shrum, J. & Glisan, E. (2016). *Teacher's handbook: Contextualized language instruction* (4th edition). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Tang, Y., & Hew, K. F. (2017). Is mobile instant messaging (MIM) useful in education? Examining its technological, pedagogical, and social affordances. *Educational Research Review*, *21*, 85-104.

Warner, C., & Dupuy, B. (2018). Moving toward multiliteracies in foreign language teaching: Past and present perspectives…and beyond. *Foreign Language Annals*, *51*(1), 116-128.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wang, Y., Fang, W. C., Han, J., & Chen, N. S. (2016). Exploring the affordances of WeChat for facilitating teaching, social and cognitive presence in semi-synchronous language exchange. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *32*(4), 18-37.

Wu, C. H., Childs, L., & Hsu, I. (2018). Using educational technology to enhance the three modes of communication. *Journal of Technology and Chinese Language Teaching*, *9*(1), 62-77.

Wu, Y. (2016). Technology in CFL education. In J. Ruan, J. Zhang, & C.B. Lueng (Eds.), *Chinese language education in the United States* (pp. 97-122). New York, NY: Springer.

Yu, F. (2016). *Motivation of high school students in a STARTALK Chinese immersion program: A mixed methods case study*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE.

Ziegler, N. A., & Moeller, A. J. (2012). Increasing self-regulated learning through the LinguaFolio. *Foreign Language Annals*, *45*(3), 330-348.

Zhang, S. (2016). Learning through a CMC-Based tandem project with native speakers: A descriptive study of beginning CFL learners. *Journal of Technology and Chinese Language Teaching*, *7*(2), 58-81.

Zhao, J. (2014). Internalization and localization of Chinese as foreign language education. *Yunan Normal University Academic Journal, 12*(3). 24-29.

**Appendix A: Rubric for recreating Lantern Festival story**

Use what we have learned and create your own Lantern Festival story in Chinese. You are encouraged to use all that we have learned in this unit and the previous unit. Please post your story via WeChat moment by 10:00 pm on July 13.

| Category | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Content** | The learner has a strong understanding of the Lantern Festival legend and is able to retell the story | The learner reveals a fair understanding of the Lantern Festival legend and is able to retell most parts of the story | The learner misses some major information of the Lantern Festival legend, and some meaning is lost in the retelling of the story | The learner has not understood the story of the Lantern Festival legend, and is not able to retell the story |
| **Culture** | The writing contains descriptions of many cultural elements related to Lantern Festival, including artifacts, customs, and perspectives. | The writing contains descriptions of some of the cultural elements related to Lantern Festival, including two of the following: artifacts, customs, and perspectives. | The writing contains limited descriptions of the cultural elements related to Lantern Festival, including only one of the following: artifacts, customs, and perspectives. | The writing contains no descriptions of the cultural elements related to Lantern Festival. |
| **Language** | No errors in grammatical structures | There are some minor grammatical mistakes that do not interfere with meaning | There are some grammatical mistakes, which slightly interfere with meaning | There are major grammatical mistakes, which interfere with comprehension of the writing. |
| **Creativity** | The story contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The learner has really used imagination. | The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The learner has used imagination. | The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but not all are related to the story. The learner has tried to use his imagination. | There is little evidence of creativity in the story. The learner does not seem to have used much imagination. |

# Crossing the Border: Connecting Middle and High School Language Programs

**Lisa J. Greenman**
Giles Elementary School
**Monica Hansen**
Ridgewood High School

## Abstract

Research indicates that middle school students fare better in high school when the two academic levels collaborate closely. Collaboration is particularly important for language learners transitioning from middle to high school world language classrooms in order to succeed in the secondary school setting. A smooth transition between language levels minimizes fear and gives students the confidence to continue in their study of a world language. Crossing the border between school districts and school walls is crucial to this process, with teachers and students collaborating between middle and high schools in local school districts. This paper discusses how a unique and effective partnership between a middle and high school exists because of teacher collaboration, increased communication, multi-grade student learning experiences, and curriculum alignment. Our continued efforts to provide clear communication, shared experiences, as well as common expectations, have given students the tools for sustained success in language learning. It is important for school districts to continue to develop cross-district collaborative relationships in order to improve world language teaching and learning for teachers and students. Teachers must review best practices, brainstorm and pursue new ideas and activities, and reflect on their effectiveness. These efforts will create effective, sustainable programs where students thrive and want to continue their study of world languages.

*Keywords*:  curriculum, partnerships, professional development, service learning

**Introduction**

Success in high school begins in middle school, particularly in world language classrooms. According to Rosin (2011), high performing middle schools design curriculum and instruction to set the stage for high school and beyond. Teachers also make it clear to students and parents that academic success in middle grades matters to students' futures after high school (Rosin, 2011). Rubio (2018) states, "Reaching the levels of proficiency... requires a long and continuous exposure to the language in the form of well-articulated sequences that start at the elementary level and reach into postsecondary programs of studies" (p. 100). He further explains students should have "a well-defined path that will allow them not only to sustain but also to continue making progress toward higher and more nuanced linguistic and proficiency" (p. 100). Ellerbrock (2012) believes there are many ways that schools can help students succeed in the secondary school arena. Some suggestions include teaching students more rigorous academics to mirror high school work, have high school students interact with younger students, share academic information, and create a vertical team of elementary and high school teachers to streamline the two curricula.

We have found that many articles exist on the successful adjustment of students from middle school to high school, but very few focus specifically on world language classrooms (Mizzelle, 1999; Scanfeld, Robertson, Weintraub, & Dotoli, 2018). In Illinois, where we teach, approximately 13% of all high school students take a world language. Nationally, more than 15% of students enrolled in high school are currently enrolled in a Spanish course (American Councils for International Education, 2017). We believe students perform better in high school world language courses when they feel more confident and comfortable in their elementary world language courses. Crossing the border between school districts and school walls is crucial to this process, with teachers and students collaborating between middle and high schools in local school districts. This paper discusses how a unique and effective partnership between Giles Elementary School and Ridgewood High School in Illinois exists because of teacher collaboration, increased communication, multi-grade student learning experiences, and curriculum alignment.

**Teacher collaboration**

Cross collaboration among teachers in partner schools is not new, but oftentimes is neglected in world language programs (Bawden, 2014). Bawden (2014) believes the best way to ensure that language learners gain confidence and continue language study is for middle and high school teachers to coordinate their curriculum closely with one another. Cross collaboration, in part, ensures that students are not daunted by world languages and that secondary schools can build on what has been learned (Bawden, 2014).

In the case of District 80 and District 234 in Illinois, the communication between K-12 schools began when Spanish was first offered at the middle school as a core course a few years ago. The high school teachers saw the need to learn more

about the middle school program in order to determine if students entering the high school could enroll immediately into Spanish II (second year). Giles Elementary School and Ridgewood High School are two suburban schools located directly on the border of Chicago, Illinois. Ridgewood High School had 846 students in 2017 (grades 9-12) and Giles Elementary School had 623 students (grades 5-8). Giles Elementary School is part of a two school districts, and Ridgewood High School is a single school district. Spanish and Italian is offered at the high school level. Spanish is currently a required core subject at the elementary school. Both schools are unique in the fact that many students taking Spanish at both schools already speak an additional second language at home.

After participating in articulation meetings for other content areas such as language arts and math, we saw the need for similar meetings for world language departments. Our collaboration began with a tour of the classrooms at Giles Elementary School. We then discussed our respective curricula and compared them to see where there might be some gaps. Based on our findings, we determined that many students finishing their eighth grade year had been introduced to more than half of the high school Spanish I curriculum (first year). It was decided then, in order to keep the momentum going and to encourage ongoing language learning, the Spanish department at Ridgewood High School would offer an intensive three-week (12 four-hour sessions) summer course for students looking to transition into Spanish II. This course, called *¡Vámonos a Dos!* [Let's go to Two], provided the content for Spanish I second semester and allowed students to transition into the high school Spanish II course in the fall. Since the middle school was in the process of expanding the amount of time students spent in Spanish class, it was determined that *¡Vámonos a Dos!* [Let's go to Two], only needed to be offered the first summer of our collaboration. As a result of the curriculum alignment between school districts, the following year's eighth graders completed the entire Spanish I curriculum during the academic school year.

As we moved forward, we continued to hold meetings at both schools each semester to discuss student readiness, curricular changes, and types of testing. The collaboration between the middle school and high school has had very positive effects on course offerings and enrollments. The number of sections of Spanish I at the high school has decreased by half while the number of sections of Spanish II has doubled. The number of students completing the entire sequence of Spanish courses has increased and more students are taking exams in order to earn the State Seal of Biliteracy.

After our initial collaboration, we saw the benefit of working together within the realm of professional development. Articulation had been common in the district among partner schools, but rarely were the two districts taking similar professional development courses. As we continued to articulate our goals, we moved toward a common alignment of curriculum using the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Guidelines (2012) to inform our work. We attended the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, our first regional world language conference, together in order to become informed on best practices. Not long after, Ridgewood High School

invited two additional world language teachers at partner schools, including Giles Elementary School, to attend a national certified training on APPL (Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Language) and OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) familiarization workshops.

Due to the partnership between school districts, another form of collaboration took place through two societies sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). The *Sociedad Honoraria de Amistad* [Honorary Friendship Society] (SHA) is an activities-based society for elementary and middle school students designed to promote interest in learning about the Spanish language and Hispanic culture. The *Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica* [Honorary Hispanic Society] (SHH) is an honor society for high school students enrolled in Spanish courses. Qualifying students must be at least at the sophomore level, have completed a minimum of three semesters of high school Spanish, and have a grade point average of 3.5 or higher in Spanish. Often students in SHA transfer to SHH when possible. Every year the SHA group at Giles Elementary School participates in the oral recitation (poetry) contest as well as a regional poster contest. Last year, the teachers at Ridgewood High School assisted in judging the contest. We plan to have SHH students attend both contests in the future. The SHA students also participated in the SHH induction at Ridgewood High School by learning the song *Almost Like Praying* along with the SHA participants. Funds were then collected for victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

**Increased communication**

Constant communication is essential to connect elementary to secondary school programs and align curriculum and instruction (Bawden, 2014). As both world language programs are quite small, it was not difficult to connect the two programs. Ridgewood High School has only two Spanish teachers and two Italian teachers, while Giles Elementary School has one Spanish teacher for fifth and sixth grades and one for seventh and eighth grades. Teachers are in constant contact, particularly when changes occur within programs or districts. Articulation meetings are scheduled two to three times per year and occur during the school day.  Substitute teachers are provided for half-days and meetings have expanded to include both high school Spanish teachers. The agenda is developed by the high school division head for curriculum and instruction with input from the teachers as well as the elementary school principal.

More recently we have attempted to foster more communication between students at the elementary secondary levels. One successful communication exchange was bringing Spanish III (third year) and IV (fourth year) students together to talk to seventh and eighth grade students from Giles Elementary School to Ridgewood High School. Younger students had the chance to ask older students questions in English relating to high school experiences, focusing on language learning. The most popular questions were related to content, difficulty, and teaching techniques.

Teachers from both the elementary and secondary levels have reached out to the local community to foster ongoing partnerships and advocacy for learning

a world language. Students participating in the AATSP Poster Contest have had their works displayed at the local library. Spanish-speaking community members, parents, and older siblings have assisted world language teachers in assessing the speaking skills of the Spanish language learners. Representatives from the local newspaper attended various events such as the AATSP Oral Recitation Contest.

**Multi-grade student learning experiences**

Beyond providing events for middle and high school students to discuss various components of high school Spanish courses, teachers have collaborated to promote students' proficiency during multi-grade student learning experiences. We have observed younger students gain confidence in the Spanish language by working with older students. During school hours, the Ridgewood High School Spanish II students came to Giles Elementary School to partake in a lesson with eighth grade Spanish I students. Students were mixed in groups of four and had to speak in only Spanish to one another for 10 minutes about themselves. Both groups wanted to perform well and were challenged to use their interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational skills in an authentic manner.

In order to incorporate the community service requirement for students who participate in SHA, we have been working with The Pulsera Project for a number of years (The Pulsera Project, 2018). The Pulsera Project is a non-profit organization that sells *pulseras* [bracelets] and purses made by hand from people who live in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Proceeds go directly to those people making the bracelets and purses and their rural communities. Last year, for the first time, Ridgewood High School assisted the middle school students with their service work. Younger students went to the high school and spoke to the Spanish language classes about the project and the countries they represented. Students then sold *pulseras* [bracelets] to the high school students, donating more than $2,000 within a two-year period.

The high school also hosted a *Fiesta Latina* [Latin Festival] to celebrate Hispanic language and culture. This event, held at the high school in February, was open to both elementary and high school Spanish students and their families. A variety of activities were available to all participants. Students from Giles Elementary School joined the high school students in preparing a musical presentation. Monetary donations were accepted to aid in relief work for victims of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. High school students studying about the Columbian Exchange prepared and shared food samples native to the Americas and new students were inducted into the SHH. Elementary students also shared their projects on Latin American Spanish-speaking countries. Students and family members participated in making various crafts including decorating sugar skull cookies in honor of the Day of the Dead.

One other multi-grade learning experience that students participated in was a Spanish language concert. The concert took place in the auditorium of Ridgewood High School. The Justo Lamas Group is a non-profit program that assists the teaching of world language through song (United Cultures, Inc., 2015). A list of songs were sent to teachers ahead of time so they could teach a variety of lessons

through the song format. Students learned the songs before the concert, and the Justo Lamas Group set up a live two-hour concert. Students were excited to be able to meet the singer(s) in person and sing the songs in Spanish. It helped create an environment where the students were excited to be part of the Spanish-speaking community.

Each year, SHA students who plan on continuing in either Spanish I or II in high school are invited to attend a Spanish class at Ridgewood High School. Middle school students are introduced to the teachers and experience the classroom environment. Students also are familiarized with the Seal of Biliteracy and other advanced course opportunities, such as the College Board's College-Level Examination Program.

### Curriculum alignment

During professional development meetings, Ridgewood High School and Giles Elementary School examine their respective curriculum and assessment. Lundgaard (2015) recommends world language teachers "redefine the articulation and alignment from one level to the next based on the performance progression found in the proficiency guidelines" (p. 34). Lungaard (2015) found in her work with world language teachers in Plano Independent School District in Texas that there were five priorities in forming a performance-based learning plan, which influenced our approach to curriculum alignment. Teachers in the Texas school district (1) adopted the backwards design mindset to curriculum planning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005); (2) believed and attended to educational research; (3) chose effectiveness over efficiency, teaching 'less for more'; (4) defined vertical alignment and articulation in proficiency terms using the ACTFL 2012 Proficiency Guidelines; and (5) emphasized learning over teaching (pp. 33-35).

Utilizing the ACTFL 2012 Proficiency Guidelines, certain curricular changes have been made at both Giles Elementary School and Ridgewood High School. The topic of *La Familia* [family], for example, was added to the elementary program in order to mirror the high school Spanish I curriculum. The high school teachers provide online grammar and vocabulary tools in order to support the ninth grade Spanish II students who need to review some topics. During one curriculum mapping meeting, we added the instruction of the preterit tense to the Spanish I curriculum in order for students to begin practicing narration in the past to align with the NCSSFL-ACTFL 2017 Can-Do statements for Novice-High students. Teachers discuss the ACTFL 2012 Proficiency Guidelines with their middle and high school students. Students understand what they are expected to do as Novice and Intermediate-level world language students.

Teachers from the partner schools have been flexible and open to change rules and regulations as the curriculum changes. In the beginning, placement exams were used to determine which students should transition from the elementary program directly into Spanish II. However, in later years, it was determined that a placement exam was not necessary. Teachers from Ridgewood High School met to determine the minimum performance level for advancement into Spanish II, as described in Table 1. Middle school teachers assess students throughout the

year and make recommendations for future placement based upon the agreed guidelines, which are based on the NCSSFL-ACTFL 2017 Can-Do Statements for Novice-Mid and Novice-High students. Student proficiency and teacher recommendation have been a sufficient predictor of student success in high school courses.

**Table 1.** Performance Benchmarks for Advancement into Spanish II at Ridgewood High School

| Course | Presentational (Spoken) | Presentational (Written) | Interpretive (Oral) | Interpretive (Written) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| To enter | Novice Mid | Novice Mid | Novice Mid | Novice High |
| Spanish II | I can present information about myself and some other very familiar topics using a variety of words, phrases, and memorized expressions.<br><br>I can communicate on very familiar topics using a variety of words and phrases that I have practiced and memorized. | I can write lists and memorized phrases on familiar topics. | I can often understand words, phrases, and simple sentences related to everyday life.<br><br>I can recognize pieces of information and sometimes understand the main topic of what is being said. | I can understand familiar words, phrases, and sentences within short and simple texts related to everyday life.<br><br>I can sometimes understand the main idea of what I have read. |

At curriculum meetings, teachers consistently compare textbooks, materials, videos, and novels used in class to avoid duplication. If teachers at the secondary level read the book *Tumba* [Tomb] for *Día de los Muertos* [Day of the Dead], teachers at the middle school level introduce the Day of the Dead holiday, but they find different materials to use.

**Program growth and student success**

The connecting of language programs with partner schools was not a single event, but an ongoing process that included a set of activities and support to

ensure student success. Bottoms and Young (2008) from the Southern Regional Education Board believe that there are four components that align with student success: providing information, supporting social success, addressing academic preparation, and collaboration. These four components are important to the future of world language students moving from one partner school to the next. Our continued efforts to provide clear communication, shared experiences, and common expectations have given students the tools for sustained success in language learning.

In the case of connecting language programs from Giles Elementary School and Ridgewood High School, we have observed an overall positive effect for both world language programs. The number of students taking Spanish continues to grow. In the 2017-2018 school year, there were 90 students from Giles Elementary School taking Spanish. The 2018-2019 numbers show that there are a total of 114 students at the high school who graduated from Giles Elementary School taking Spanish, which is an increase of 24 students.

Overall course grades also have increased. Sixty-one percent of students taking Spanish earned a B or higher in 2017-2018. This number increased by 5% (66%) so far in the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, there have been fewer high school students changing levels and/or dropping their Spanish class. During 2017-2018, at Ridgewood High School, there were three Spanish I classes, two Spanish II classes, two Spanish III classes, and one Spanish Advanced Placement class. This year, in order to accommodate the growing number of Spanish II or higher language students, the classes changed to two Spanish I classes, four Spanish II classes, two Spanish III classes, one of each Spanish IV class, and one Spanish Advanced Placement class. This shows a larger amount of students were ready for Spanish II and an increase in students wanting to continue studying the Spanish language.

**Future plans for collaboration**

A strong partnership among districts is imperative for the improvement of students and teachers alike. Teachers need to recognize that open dialogue can occur even when face-to-face meetings are not always possible. The availability of online, real-time collaboration tools such as Google G Suite and Microsoft Office 365 have assisted in our communication. In the case of Districts 80 and 234 in Illinois, the strong partnerships among teachers have helped students become better, stronger language learners in part by creating stronger teachers and programs. This robust partnership encompasses continued and sustained articulation meetings, which include continued review of curriculum, proficiency benchmarks, and placement recommendations. We engage in classroom visits (real-time or online), share access to national Spanish exams, collaborate for extracurricular activities and community-wide events, and attend professional development and training together.

Moving forward, the two school districts have made plans to develop a mentoring program in which more advanced language students partner with novice students to provide guidance and knowledge of effective language learning

and cultural norms. Students will communicate with one another through writing as pen-pals, and speaking through live-video chats and in-person visits. We are exploring an out of state language immersion experience weekend for novice middle school students so that they may be more likely to participate in an international language trip their junior or senior year in high school. A combined SHH/SHA webpage also is being planned to promote fundraisers, social activities, and community language events such as the *Fiesta Latina* [Latin Festival] and special guest speakers.

It is important for school districts to continue to develop cross-district collaborative relationships in order to improve world language teaching and learning for teachers and students. Teachers must review best practices, brainstorm and pursue new ideas and activities, and reflect on their effectiveness. These efforts will create effective, sustainable programs where students thrive and want to continue their study of world languages.

## References

American Councils for International Education (2017). *The national K-12 foreign language enrollment survey report.* Retrieved from https://www.americancouncils.org/sites/default/files/FLE-report-June17.pdf

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (2012). *ACTFL proficiency guidelines.* Retrieved from https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (2017). *NCSSFL-ACTFL can-do statements.* Retrieved from https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/ncssfl-actfl-can-do-statements

Bawden, A. (2014, September 2). Primary school language lessons not translating to secondaries. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/02/primary-school-language-lessons-not-translating

Bottoms, G. & Young, M. (2008). *Lost in transition: Building a better path from school to college and careers.* Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Education Board. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED500479)

Ellerbrock, C.R. (2012). Help students transition to high school smoothly. *AMLE.* Retrieved from https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/117/Help-Students-Transition-to-High-School-Smoothly.aspx

Lundgaard, G. (2015). The A-B-Cs to a performance based learning plan. *The Language Educator, 10*(1), 32-35. Retrieved from https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/TLE_pdf/TLE_JanFeb15_Article.pdf.

Mizelle, N. (1999). *Helping middle school students make the transition into high school.* Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED432411)

Poppick, S. (2014). Want to boost your salary? *Time.* Retrieved from http://time.com/money/137042/foreign-language-fluency-pay-salary/

Rosin, M. (2011). Study: Collaboration with middle schools key to student success in high school. *EdSource.* Retrieved from edsource.org/2011/study-collaboration-with-middle-schools-key-to-student-success-in-high-schools/3715

Rubio, F. (2018). Language education in elementary schools: Meeting the needs of the nation. *Foreign Language Annals, 51*(1), 90-103.

Scanfeld, V., Robertson, S., Weintraub, L., & Dotoli, V. (2018). Preparing students for the transition to high school. *AMLE Magazine.* Retrieved from: https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/916/Preparing-Students-for-the-Transition-to-High-School.aspx

The Pulsera Project. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.pulseraproject.org/

United Cultures, Inc. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.justolamasgroup.com

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2nd edition). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

# Beyond Input: Promoting Interpersonal Communication with Task-Based Language Teaching

**David Beard**
Miami University
**Martha E. Castañeda**
Miami University

## Abstract

Teaching world languages in today's classrooms requires going beyond providing students only with input (Blake & Zyzik, 2016). Learners must produce meaningful output, and teachers need to design tasks to facilitate this language production (Swain, 1985). Teachers can accomplish this by following a task-based instructional framework (Ellis R., 2003). In doing so, teachers design activities that engage students in interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication. For this article, the authors focus on teaching strategies and classroom tasks that promote interpersonal communication, which entail two-way spontaneous spoken, signed, or written interactions that often necessitate negotiation of meaning. During interpersonal tasks, students can share information, react to conversations, express feelings, and give opinions. The purpose of this article is to discuss the theory behind task-based language teaching. We present communication tasks for a unit on global change with annotations linking theory to practice. We discuss how theory can inform classroom instruction to help break down communication barriers, how authentic materials can be used to bridge content and language learning and teaching, and how interpersonal communication tasks can be used to promote performance.

*Keywords*: input, interpersonal communication, output, task-based language teaching

**Introduction**

The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2015) have a long and rich history. The purpose of the Standards was, and still is, to create a visionary goal for all of those teaching languages, to reflect best practices in the profession, as well as to provide common language in the field. The standards reflect five educational goal areas: communication skills; understanding the cultures associated with languages; interconnectedness of language and other bodies of knowledge; comparisons that offer insight into the nature of language and culture; and participation in multilingual communities. In other words, the 5 Cs: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities, guide educators with what the content of world language classrooms should be, and how language learning can be facilitated and encouraged.

While certain teachers view communication using the four skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, the Standards help place communication "at the heart of second language study, whether the communication takes place face-to-face, in writing, or across centuries through the reading of literature" (National Standards, 1999, p. 2). To emphasize the context and purpose of communication, the World-Readiness Standards (2015) offer a communicative framework of language considering three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, presentational. The interpretive mode of communication is centered around learners' understanding, interpretation, and analysis of what is heard, read, or viewed. This one-way communication may not lend itself to negotiating meaning or cultural interpretation. The presentational mode of communication also can rely on one-way communication, but in this case, the learners themselves produce language. Students are tasked with presenting information, concepts, and ideas, explaining, persuading, or narrating using an appropriate venue and adapting the text to their audience. The interpersonal mode of communication, the focus of this article, mimics, or entails, real-world communication where learners interact to share information, react to information heard, express their feelings, and share their opinions. Interpersonal communication necessitates spontaneous interaction where two or more speakers negotiate meaning.

In this article, we present communication tasks for a unit on global change with annotations linking theory to practice. We discuss how theory can inform classroom instruction to help break down communication barriers, how authentic materials can be used to bridge content and language learning and teaching, and how interpersonal communication tasks can be used to promote performance.

**History and background of input in world language classrooms**

Since Krashen (1981, 1994) developed the input hypothesis, there has been a shift in the research of teaching and learning world languages. Researchers have focused on the theory that providing natural input to students will lead to the development of their grammatical competence in a second language, and ultimately improve their proficiency (Blake & Zyzik, 2016; Lightbown, 2000; Tragant & Muñoz, 2004). This shift was affirmed in the profession when ACTFL

published the position statement recommending "that language educators and their students use the target language as exclusively as possible (90% plus) at all levels of instruction during instructional time and, when feasible, beyond the classroom" (ACTFL, 2010, para. 1).

Krashen's notion on how a learner can acquire a second language arose in part from the existing first language linguistic theory at the time, namely universal grammar, (Chomsky, 1957, 1965). Universal grammar theory postulates that as humans we have an innate ability to acquire language and all we need is to receive sufficient linguistic input to learn languages. To contextualize this, Chomsky's ideas came about in reaction to how researchers and teachers were treating language learning at the time, mainly as the formation of complex habits, accomplished through practice, repetition, and positive and negative reinforcement. Chomsky critiqued the assumptions of behaviorists theories at the time when he demonstrated that children use their knowledge of language creatively to understand and produce novel sentences, sentences they have never heard before, thus showing that the learning of language cannot simply come from just repetition and practice as it was understood at the time. Krashen then went on to apply Chomsky's ideas of first language learning and teaching to a second language context. It is important to note that Chomsky was specifically concerned with children acquiring their first language in a natural setting and did not pursue an investigation of, say, adolescents or adults learning a second language in a classroom setting. Moreover, Chomsky's proposal was also a theoretical approach with no explicit aim to create a useable product for applied linguists or language teachers.

Modeled on the principles of Krashen's input hypothesis, and influenced by the theory of universal grammar Krashen and Terrell (1983) developed the natural approach. The intention of the natural approach was to provide guidance on how to teach second languages naturally in the classroom. Within the natural approach, teachers understand that language needs to be comprehensible, delivered to students at a difficulty level just one step beyond their current language abilities, (i.e. i+1), and that learners only acquire and internalize language when they hear large quantities of input that is comprehensible (Krashen, 1982). The natural approach was well received by some teachers and learners alike, especially from veteran teachers who rejected the audiolingual method, sometimes referred to as the "drill and kill" style of teaching and learning, that was prevalent at the time (Lightbown, 2000; Mitchell, 2000). Still, the natural approach to language learning did not come without issues and critiques. By the middle of the 1980's, it became evident that two significant limitations to the natural approach were that (1) students did not use the language enough (i.e. there is a lack of output or production of the target language (Blake & Zyzik, 2016; McLaughlin, 1990) and that, (2) even with plenty of input, some high frequency structures in the input go unnoticed by students (Schmidt, 1994).

To address the limitations of the natural approach, researchers began to modify and expand their conception of what it was to know a second language, (e.g. communicative competency, proficiency). Additions to the understanding of

how languages were learned and taught included: focus on form (Long, 1991), input processing (Van Patten, 1996) comprehensible output, (Swain, 1985), and task-based language instruction (Ellis R., 2003). All of these researchers share the belief that noticing features while receiving input is prerequisite to learning. They vary, however, on the degree of explicit teaching that is required to aid learners in effectively noticing these unnoticed forms in the input.

With second language acquisition researchers focusing more on input, two complementary hypotheses were made: the comprehensible output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) and the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1994). The comprehensible output hypothesis states that input alone is not sufficient for learners to acquire a second language, and that learners acquire language when they encounter a breakdown in communication, realize what grammatical structure caused the breakdown, and then eventually produce the correct grammatical structure (Swain, 1985). The noticing hypothesis states that learners must consciously notice grammatical features in the input to acquire them. Once noticed, learners then can go about attending to them, internalizing them into long-term memory, and eventually producing them (Schmidt, 1994). Both hypotheses postulate that explicit attention to specific forms in the input or output lead to acquisition of that form. Thus, they contradict Krashen's input hypothesis because both postulate that learning (i.e. the explicit) can inform acquisition (i.e. the implicit) (Ellis, N., 2005; Krashen, 1981, 1994; MacWhinney, 1997).

### Focus on form and input processing

The techniques of focus on form and input processing prioritize meaning over form, which we believe adhere to contemporary notions of language learning. Focus on form, distinct from focus on forms, aims to use a combination of implicit and explicit techniques to help learners notice structures in the input and help them realize gaps in their second language knowledge output (Long, 1991). Long (1991) suggests techniques like input flood, input enhancement, and corrective feedback.

Input flood has the goal of raising learners' attention by increasing the frequency of targeted structures in the input. For example, while focusing on sentences with an OVS (object-verb-subject) word order, (e.g. *Me gustan las flores* [I like flowers]), the instructor would increase the usage or frequency of these structures in the input of that lesson well above their normal occurrence, utilizing repetition as a technique to raise the saliency of the structure. Input enhancement involves using visual and/or auditory cues to draw learners' attention to targeted structures. For instance, when teaching grammatical gender in Spanish, an instructor could have a picture of a boy and a girl with *niño* [boy] and *niña* [girl] written underneath the images. As the letter "o" marks the masculine gender and the "a" marks the feminine gender, a linguistic property absent in English and a known problematic structure for second language learners of Spanish, the instructor could write these letters in a different color as the root of the words. Finally, corrective feedback involves engaging the learners' output to help learners realize where there are gaps in their knowledge. For example, upon hearing a subject and verb agreement mistake like "*Yo fue a Salamanca.*" [I she went to Salamanca] where one expects "*Yo fui a Salamanca*" [I went to Salamanca],

the instructor can correct the student implicitly by offering a recast. This entails demonstrating the expected structure, "*ah… Tú fuiste a Salamanca, yo también fui a Salamanca*." [You went to Salamanca, I also went to Salamanca], without explicitly declaring the student's output incorrect and while still maintaining focus on meaning.

Input processing, like focus on form, aims to modify the input learners receive (Van Patten, 1996). It emphasizes that instructors modify the input based on how learners process it. In a theoretical manner, input processing employs research-based knowledge of language processing to construct principles about how students learning a second language processes that language. For instance, the first noun principle states that second language learners will assign the role of subject to the first noun they encounter in the input. In the sentence *María me lo dijo* [María said it to me], "María" is the first noun encountered, and thus learners will think that María is the person doing the saying and that "me", the second noun encountered in the sentence, refers to the person to whom the information is said. Given the above example, this sentence causes no problems for the learner with respect to assigning subject and object roles. The word order is Subject-Verb-Object, and it accords to an expected word order an English-speaking student would encounter. However, due to their morphology, many languages, Spanish included, have a more flexible word order than English. These languages rely heavily on information found in verb endings as opposed to word order to assign subject and object roles. So, we can take the above example "*María me lo dijo*" [María said it to me] and change the order of the words without re-assigning subject and object roles like "*Me lo dijo María*" translating literally to "To me it said María." Now we see how the first noun principle functions. In the last example, "*Me lo dijo María*" the first noun encountered "*me*" is again interpreted as the subject, but this is not the correct interpretation as the verb endings in Spanish dictate the role of subject and object over word order. This is an important principle to be aware of because research has shown that students do not always correctly interpret sentences of OVS word order until their fourth year of university level studies and after studying abroad (Lee & Malovrh, 2009).

**Task-based language teaching**

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a framework for teachers that integrates the techniques of focus on form and input processing, and it allows students opportunities to produce meaningful output. TBLT aims to help students to learn by doing. Students complete real-world tasks as the objective of a lesson, (e.g. introduce oneself and others, purchase airline tickets, give directions to someone), and they know that they have succeeded in learning when they can complete the entire task (Ellis, 2003). Emphasis is on communication and completion of the task, not on grammatical accuracy of prescribed language forms. In other words, students measure their success of completing the task based on how effectively they use their language and communicative skills, not on how fast and accurately they conjugate verbs in a given tense and mood.

Defining a task is difficult because both researchers and teachers use multiple definitions. Nonetheless, we identify most with Ellis's (2003) definition of task,

which consists of six criteria. The first criterion identifies a task as a workplan. The workplan is the intention of the task and it is inherently non-linguistic. For example, with the task of purchasing a train ticket and everything that it entails, the workplan itself is to purchase a train ticket. Therefore, instructors will prepare their students to complete this real-world endeavor by ensuring that their students have the vocabulary and grammar necessary to do so in a pre-task stage. However, it is worth noting that grammatical structures and vocabulary are not included in the workplan. This is because specific grammatical structures and vocabulary rank second to successful completion of the task. Students are permitted to use the grammar and vocabulary that they can spontaneously access in completing the task, and instructors should expect and accept variation in how students negotiate meaning and complete the task. When instructors are looking for more specific uses of language, they can encourage this through additional preparation in the pre-task stage. Again though, using the workplan view, the emphasis and outcome of the task is non-linguistic, (e.g. ordering food, introducing someone, telling a story, etc.). Thus, at the end of the task we have delicious food to eat, a new friend, or the ability to share our lives with others.

Second, a task involves primary focus on meaning. As TBLT aims to develop proficiency, communicating one's message is a necessary aspect of a task. This mimics how we use language in the real world as we usually direct our attention to the meaning of what we hear over the form. Therefore, learners are able to choose the linguistic and non-linguistic resources needed to complete the task while attending to meaning and a successful communicative experience. For example, in completing the task of purchasing a train ticket, students may select unique ways of securing their ticket. They may select colloquial or formal words to use, they may point at a map and state the day and time they need to travel, or they may even have an extended conversation with the attendant. Regardless of the words, gestures and how grammatically correct they are, the learners never lose focus that the purpose of the task is to focus on meaning, ultimately securing a train ticket to their desired destination at the appropriate time and day.

Third, a task involves real-world processes of language use. Real-world processes of language use include asking and answering questions, making statements and comments, giving commands, and so on. A classroom-based task may involve authentic tasks such as filling out a form, speed dating, or resolving a miscommunication. They also may involve artificial tasks like comparing the similarity of two images.

Fourth, a task can involve any of the four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and any of the three modes of communication (i.e. interpersonal, interpretive, or presentational). For instance, our previous example of purchasing a train ticket primarily involves speaking and listening, but a certain amount of reading is inevitable as well in order to prepare for the interpersonal exchange with the ticket attendant. The task could be modified to be completed during an online chat if the instructor wanted to emphasize reading and writing.

Fifth, a task engages cognitive processes. The workplan requires learners to use cognitive processes such as selecting, classifying, ordering, reasoning, and

evaluating information in order to carry out the task. In purchasing a train ticket, we engage all of these cognitive processes. Someone interested in traveling to a destination by train needs to evaluate trip prices, routes, and durations, eventually selecting one ticket out of many options. In doing so, they classify and rank their options based on specific features and this requires cognitive focus.

Sixth, a task has a clearly defined communicative outcome. It is clear when learners have completed the task because the non-linguistic outcome is achieved. For example, once travelers have made their purchase and have their tickets in hand, they have completed the task successfully. They were able to communicate a message and their goal. The focus of a task does not revolve around use of "correct" linguistic forms; students are able to express their thoughts and accomplish what they want.

TBLT follows a sequence that includes at least a pre-task followed by a task (Ellis, 2003). In the pre-task stage, instructors present the task that students will complete. They also may include explicit grammatical and/or vocabulary assistance to students. During enhanced applications of TBLT, teachers explain the non-linguistic outcome (i.e. the task) to students and allow for them to decide which linguistic structures and non-linguistic resources they need to use to complete the task. In the task stage, learners work to complete the task and know that they are successful in doing so when they reach their non-linguistic outcome. Instructors serve more as observers since the task is completed by students, making this stage of TBLT a student-centered one. In larger tasks or projects, which can span weeks or months, instructors can implement a review stage in which students and the instructor review the final product and offer feedback. This format can be applied to any type of task. Types of tasks include, but are not limited to, information-gaps, reasoning-gaps, and opinion-gaps. Prabhu (1987) outlines and describes these three types of tasks (1987).

### Information-gap

According to Prabhu (1987), an information gap means that students lack some piece of information that they must seek out during the task. For instance, if the task is to schedule a meeting among two people with busy schedules, John will not know Mary's schedule and vice versa. Therefore, the information gap that students need to fill is an available time for the both of them to meet. Some linguistic functions that students utilize are as follows: asking questions, asking for clarification, and negotiating meaning, especially when misunderstandings occur.

### Reasoning-gap

Prabhu (1987) explains that a reasoning gap is similar to an information gap in that students lack something and need to complete a task to find it, but they differ because reasoning gaps require students to induce or deduce something from the materials that the instructor provides. For example, in a task where students plan a trip, they are presented with various travel packages, a limited budget and some travel constraints. They must then reason through the various options and figure out which package is best for them given the context.

*Opinion-gap*

Opinion-gaps require students to find out their peers' opinions (Prabhu, 1987). They allow students to express their personal preferences, feelings, and ideas. Examples of tasks could include story completion, discussion of social/political issues, and really any activity in which students find out their peers' opinions and share their own.

TBLT is effective particularly when students use the world language and participate in the negotiation of meaning. This occurs when there are breakdowns in communication while completing the task, leading learners to notice gaps in their knowledge, attend to them, and produce spontaneous meaningful output within a communicative setting.

### TBLT unit on global change

Using a TBLT unit we created on global change, we present and describe four tasks that can be used in world language classrooms to promote interpersonal communication (Figure 1). The unit can be used at the Novice, Intermediate, and pre-Advanced levels of proficiency. According to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), at the Novice level, students can provide lists of words, while students at the Intermediate and pre-Advanced levels can create with language and provide sentence and paragraph length discourse respectively. For more ideas on planning

---

**Unit Theme**

Global Change and Our Impact on the Earth

**Enduring Understandings**

Various ecosystems interact on Earth to support global change
Growing human population and consumption impact the environment
Humans and natural causes impact the Earth
Laws and treaties exist to protect the Earth and its resources

**Standards Met**

*Interpersonal Communication:* Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions
*Interpretive Communication:* Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics
*Presentational Communication:* Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate to various audiences of listeners

---

**Figure 1.** Enduring understandings, and World-Readiness Standards for TBLT unit on global change

TBLT units, we encourage readers to use a more comprehensive resource such as Clementi & Terrill (2018) and Curtain & Dahlberg (2008). Moreover, specific connections to students' background knowledge and interests can be made using a social justice approach to discuss environmental justice (Glynn, Wesely, & Wassell, 2014). By making the unit relevant to students' lives, asking them to focus on what they do that impacts the Earth, teaching and learning should become engaging and meaningful in the classroom. In Figure 1, we describe the unit theme, enduring understandings, and World-Readiness Standards (2015) addressed in this unit.

*Task One (pre-task): Think, pair, and share*

Task One serves as a pre-task as it builds and accesses student background knowledge. The task is comprised of three parts: think, pair, and share. Students first access background knowledge on the meaning of "environment" and define this word individually. Students then pair up with a partner and discuss their definition. Finally, students share their partner's definition with the class. This pre-task requires students to focus primarily on meaning as students consider their beliefs and understandings about the environment, share these understandings with a partner, and present to the class what they learned from their partner. When students are placed in a situation where they must complete the task with a communicative outcome rather than a linguistic outcome, teachers are setting them up with a workplan where the outcome of the task is non-linguistic, and in this case, focuses on communicating their and their partner's definitions of environment. According to the ACTFL proficiency Guidelines (2012), Novice-level students should be able to define the environment using a list of words while Intermediate-level, and pre-Advanced students should be able to create a definition using sentences and emerging paragraph discourse.

> **Rationale:** Many students perceive, and often define the environment as "nature", and they believe what people do in the environment is typically recreational. To dispel this stereotypical definition and explore the broader definition of environment, we first will ask students to define environment.
>
> **Instructions for students:** What do we mean by the word "environment." First, you will think about the question yourself. Then, you choose a partner and share with what you know and understand about the `environment. Finally, you will share what you learned from your partner with the class.
>
> **Think:** First, take a moment to think about how you define the word "environment." (Novice-level students list the words that come to mind when they hear the word environment. Intermediate and pre-Advanced learners can create sentences of what they believe "environment" means.)
>
> **Pair:** Pair up with a partner and share how you define "environment."
>
> **Share:** Share with the class how your partner defines "environment."

The primary focus of Task One is for students to share beliefs and understandings with each other. As such, the task focuses on meaning as students engage in interpersonal communication. In order to complete the task, students must engage in two-way spontaneous communication and are likely to encounter moments in their conversation where they must negotiate meaning to be understood and to understand (Long, 1991). When students engage in two-way communication and negotiate meaning, they are participating in interpersonal communication (World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, 2015).

*Task Two: Peer survey on the issue*

Task Two involves a class survey where students survey their peers using the questions they develop and report their findings. Much like the task above, Task Two asks students to focus on meaning. The workplan here involves analyzing and reporting of data, which ensures students engage in cognitive processes for a defined communicative purpose (Ellis, 2013). After students collect peer data, they must classify and evaluate the data in order to report to the class. For this task, according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), Novice-level students should be able to create basic questions and answer questions with yes or no, while Intermediate and pre-Advanced students should be able to create more complex sentences and answer questions using sentences and emerging paragraph discourse.

> **Rationale:** Surveying peers and reporting results from class surveys can help learners gain valuable survey skills. Students must create unbiased questions, communicate with peers to obtain information, and use critical thinking skills to report results from the survey.
>
> **Instructions for students:** You have been asked to report to the principal what your classmates are already doing to help with the effects of global change. First, you need to author a survey you will administer to your peers. Questions should center on what peers might be doing, or not doing, to combat the effects of global change. Author a survey you will administer to your peers to discover what they are doing (e.g., Do they have solar panels at home? Do they recycle?). (The questions can vary depending on the students' level of proficiency. For the Novice level, the teacher can help students author, or even provide, yes/no type of questions the students use in the survey.) Next, you will administer your survey to the class to obtain data. Finally, you will compile and analyze your data to report to the class.

Task Two asks students to consider their beliefs and understandings, share these understandings with a partner, and share what they learned from their partners while always focusing on meaning. As such, this task engages students in interpersonal and presentational communication.

*Task Three: Role play*

For Task Three, students are given a real-world role-plan task and workplan. Students play the role of an environmental and a field agent who must communicate

over the phone to solve a problem. According to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), Novice-level students should be able to list what they see in the picture, while Intermediate and pre-Advanced students should be able to describe the picture using sentences and emerging paragraph discourse.

>**Rationale:** When students see images that arouse emotions, they are more likely to discuss the issue.

>**Instructions for students**: *Partner A-* You work for an Environmental Agency and are at the home office, but need to write a report of what is going on in the field. Call the field agent and ask him/her to describe what s/he sees. *Partner B-* You are a field agent and you receive a phone call from an Environmental Agency. You need to describe to the field agent what you are seeing in the field in terms of environmental issues.

Task Three requires students to describe something the partner cannot see. Not only is this a role play, but it also serves as an information-gap task (Prabhu, 1987). Since only one student can see the image, completing the task requires negotiation of meaning, and in turn this activity promotes interpersonal communication.

*Task four: Jigsaw with expert and presenting groups*

For Task Four, students complete a jigsaw task. This type of cooperative learning task breaks the class into groups and divides the content into smaller chunks. A jigsaw requires students to become experts in particular content and teach this content to their peers. Since all students are required to comprehend all the content at the end, the task forces students to depend on each other for teaching and learning. Jigsaw activities inherently and naturally meet and acknowledge all of the TBLT criteria. There is a focus on meaning so that students can get their point across while communicating. And, students likely will encounter these types of tasks in the real word. Jigsaw activities are most successful with Intermediate and pre-Advanced learners as students need to understand the main idea and supporting details in authentic narratives with connected texts (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, 2012).

>**Rationale and teacher instructions:** When students are involved in peer teaching, and must help each other learn, they are able to carry out tasks that require synthesis and analysis. You will first divide the class into "expert" groups (the number of members in this group can range from 4-6, so use your roster to divide the class or you can ask the class to self-number.). Each group will read the results of the section of the survey you assign to that group. All in this group will read that section and become experts. The "expert" group will ensure that all its members can go present this information to "teaching" groups. Once the "expert" group has read and learned the material, and ensured everyone can present, they will form "teaching" groups where one person from each "expert" group will share what s/he learned with the rest of the group. Each teaching group should only have one expert from the various readings.

**Instructions for students:** You have limited time to learn new information before you present this information about the author's opinions, actions, and major concerns about the environment to a group of concerned citizens. You will divide the task so that you can maximize the time you have and learn all the material before the presentation. Your teacher will first divide the class into "expert" groups. Each "expert" group will read the results of the section assigned to that group. All in this group will read that section and become experts. Your "expert" group needs to ensure that all its members can present the information to "teaching" groups. Once the "expert" group has read and learned the material, and ensured everyone can present, your teacher will divide you into "teaching" groups where one person from each "expert" group will share what s/he learned with the rest of the "teaching" group.

**Expert group:** Your teacher will assign you to an "expert" group. In your "expert" group, you will become an expert on what you read, and you will ensure everyone in your group is an expert and can present on the section of the reading your teacher gives you. (For example, we have used the following reading: http://portal.mma.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Encuesta-cambio-climatico-2016.pdf and divided the group into five expert groups: *Creencias* [Beliefs], *Importancia y sentimientos* [Importance and sentiments], *Nivel de preparación y acciones* [Level of preparation and actions], *Información* [Information], and *Liderazgo* [Leadership].

**Teaching group:** Your teacher will divide you into "teaching" groups where you will be the only one from your group. You will be in charge of teaching others about what you read in your expert group.

The jigsaw activity during Task Four requires students to read the assigned text for comprehension and then discuss their understanding of the text with their expert group. As the students complete these two tasks, they engage in interpretive and interpersonal communication respectively. Finally, when "expert" students teach their content to their "learning" peers, they engage in presentational communication (ACTFL World Readiness Standards, 2015).

**Conclusion**

Language teachers today should go beyond providing students solely with input by creating and integrating TBLT in classrooms so students are engaged in interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication. The interpersonal tasks during TBLT require that students share information, react to conversations, express feelings, and give opinions, which encourage two-way spontaneous spoken interactions that necessitate negotiation of meaning. When designing TBLT, teachers utilize theoretical understandings, keep the standards in mind, and focus on the three modes of communication. The intention and outcome of the task should be inherently non-linguistic as students complete the task (e.g. sharing their definition, describing a picture, surveying their peers, presenting

survey results, etc.), and students should be permitted to use the grammar and vocabulary they see necessary to complete the task successfully. If instructors want students to use specific language during the task, they can encourage this through preparation of specific language in the pre-task stage. TBLT ensures that communication in world language classrooms goes beyond teachers solely providing input to students. It breaks down communication barriers and requires the use of authentic materials to build bridges between content and language learning and teaching, which promotes students' proficiency.

## References

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2012). *ACTFL proficiency guidelines.* Retrieved from https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/public/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines2012_FINAL.pdf

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2012). *ACTFL performance descriptors for language learners.* Retrieved from https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/PerformanceDescriptorsLanguageLearners.pdf

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2010). *Use of the target language in the classroom position statement.* Retrieved from: https://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/use-the-target-language-the-classroom

Blake, R. J. & Zyzik, E. C. (2016). *El español y la lingüística aplicada.* Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic structures.* The Hague: Mouton.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Clementi, D. & Terrill., L. (20l7). *The keys to planning for learning: Effective curriculum, unit, and lesson design.* Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Curtain, H. & Dahlberg, C.A. (2008). *Languages and children: Making the match, new languages for young learners, grades K-8* (4th Edition). New York, NY: Pearson.

Ellis, N. C. (2005). At the interface: Dynamic interactions of explicit and implicit language knowledge. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *27*(2), 305-352.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Glynn, C., Wesely, P., & Wassell, B. (2014). *Words and actions: Teaching languages through the lens of social justice.* Alexandria, VA: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition.* Oxford, UK: Pergamon.

Krashen, S. D. (1994). The input hypothesis and its rivals. In Ellis, N. (Ed.) *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 45-77). London, UK: Academic Press.

Krashen, S. D. & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom.* Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.

Lee, J. F., & Malovrh, P. A. (2009). Linguistic and non-linguistic factors affecting OVS processing of accusative and dative case pronouns by advanced L2 learners of Spanish. In *Selected Proceedings of the 11th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* (pp. 105-116). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

Lightbown, P. M. (2000). Classroom SLA research and second language teaching. *Applied Linguistics, 21*(4), 431-462.

Long, M. (1991). Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology. In K. De Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.) *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspectives* (39-52). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

MacWhinney, B. (1997). Implicit and explicit processes. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19*, 277-281.

McLaughlin, B. (1990). Restructuring. *Applied linguistics, 11*(2), 113-128.

Mitchell, R. (2000). Applied linguistics and evidence-based classroom practice: The case of foreign language grammar pedagogy. *Applied Linguistics, 21*(3), 281-303.

National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project. (1999). *Standards for foreign language learning in the 21st century.* Yonkers, NY: National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project.

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy* (Vol. 20). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schmidt, R. (1994). Deconstructing consciousness in search of useful definitions for applied linguistics. *AILA Review, 11*, 11-26.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253), Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

The National Standards Collaborative Board. (2015). *World-readiness standards for learning languages* (4th ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

Tragant, E., & Muñoz, C. (2004). Second language acquisition and language teaching. *International Journal of English Studies, 4*(1), 197-219.

Van Patten, B. (1996). *Input processing and grammar instruction: Theory and research.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

# Telling My Digital Story: Using Multimedia to Integrate the Student Teaching Experience

**Rebecca L. Chism**
Kent State University

**Abstract**

Constructivist theory holds that the development of understanding requires the learner to engage actively in meaning-making through language. The telling of one's story can play a crucial role in determining how certain life events are framed and contextualized. Multimedia offers numerous possibilities for the construction and sharing of such stories. The present study explores the use of digital stories by pre-service world language teachers as a means to integrate more fully their student teaching experience. They used multimedia to create their narrative in the language of their choice. The framework of the narrative offered a chance for student teachers to review their story objectively and share it with their peers within a community of practice. Responses to a pre-service teacher questionnaire as well as general observation notes were analyzed using grounded theory to identify emergent patterns and themes. The data indicated that, while the exercise provided opportunities for reflection and insight, a more structured approach is needed for deeper learning and pedagogical development.

*Keywords*:  digital stories, multimedia, pre-service teaching, teacher reflection

## Introduction

Storytelling is the most basic form of human expression. It provides the means through which humans understand their own lives and the lives of others. The telling of one's story involves more than just a recount of certain events; it constitutes the shaping of a narrative. From a constructivist approach, language serves as the primary means used to create, negotiate, and solidify meaning.

According to Vygotsky (1978), language is seen as a key tool for the integration of thought and practice. As noted by Biggs (1996), "learners arrive at meaning by actively selecting, and cumulatively constructing, their own knowledge, through both individual and social activity" (p. 348).

Eliciting stories from pre-service teachers at the end of their student teaching internship can help them make meaning, thus more fully integrating the experience. The telling of one's story gives objectivity by providing a framework for the events; the exercise itself promotes reflection on one's professional growth and pedagogical insights. In addition, the sharing of one's story with an audience of peers creates a community of practice that can further one's development. The ubiquity and variety of multimedia in the 21st century offer a creative and personal means of expression. The present study investigated the experience of pre-service world language teachers who created digital stories at the conclusion of their student teaching internship. The study considered the following research questions: (1) How do the participants experience digital storytelling as a reflective tool? (2) In what ways does digital storytelling reveal pedagogical insights? (3) How do the participants frame their stories? (4) What are the implications of sharing digital stories with peers? It is the hope that the results from the study will contribute to ongoing research on teacher education preparation programs by investigating the viability of digital stories as a means for pre-service world language teachers to integrate their student teaching experience more fully and engage in a community of practice.

## Review of Literature

Reflective practices have long been encouraged in teacher education preparation programs and have been found to be an important element in instructional and personal development (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Geyer, 2008; Sellars, 2012). Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson (2005) found the construction of world language teacher identity to be a complex, multilayered, and shifting phenomenon influenced by its context and environment. Citing the work of Gee (1996) and MacLure (1993), they asserted "identity is constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse" (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005, p. 23). Lee (2013) investigated how four English as a foreign language teachers constructed and negotiated their identities as they became teachers of writing. She, too, concluded that identity was discursively constructed and operationalized in daily tasks and practices, constituting identity as discourse and practice.

Giving student teachers the opportunity to relay their story at the end of their internship can serve as a reflective practice by helping them to discursively make sense of the experience and its place in their lives (Binks, Smith, Smith, & Joshi, 2009). Binks et al. (2009) delineated the benefits of using storytelling in pre-service teacher programs as a tool for reflection. The assignment, part of a curriculum leadership class, was to relate a story involving a situation from the student teaching experience. The pre-service teachers then were paired and instructed to tell one another their story. The stories were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed

for patterns and themes. Participants in their study indicated that storytelling gave them a "formal means of engaging in the reflective process" and "placed more emphasis on growth, unlike other reflective practices" (Binks et al., 2009, p. 153). The culminating activity of constructing their stories and the insights that they yielded helped to identify "the most important events of student teaching" as well as the areas where they needed the most support (p. 153). Additionally, the sharing of their stories with peers encouraged the collaborative process. The constructing and sharing of the stories gave them the framework to compose a self that was positive in relation to their experience. As noted by Genishi & Dyson (1994), "stories help us construct ourselves who used to be one way and are now another" (p. 242). As such, stories can bear witness to our development over time and can play a role in our identity (Adams, 2017).

A study by Sancar-Tokmak & Yanpar-Yelkin (2015) examined the effects of creating digital stories on the self-confidence of world language education pre-service teachers with regard to technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK). Seventy-one pre-service teachers created digital stories on a topic from the Turkish national foreign language program. Data was collected through a self-confidence TPACK scale, a demographic questionnaire, open-ended questions, and observations. Results showed positive, significant differences between TPACK self-confidence scores before and after the creation of the digital stories. The pre-service teachers found the exercise to be "instructive, consistent with aims, appropriate for target students, thought-provoking and creative" (Sancar-Tokmak & Yanpar-Yelkin, 2015, p. 444).

Additionally, Britzman (1991) found the sharing of one's story to be a highly personal exercise and able to serve as a means to give voice to one's experience.

> Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community...finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process...Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of her/his experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process (p. 23).

The sharing of one's story with peers is a way to bring this voice to a broader audience (Kocaman-Karoglu, 2014). Kocaman-Karoglu (2014) examined the use of digital storytelling with pre-service teachers as part of a university course. The participants created personal digital stories about their careers based on real-life experiences and thoughts about the future. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, she found digital storytelling to be valuable to pre-service teachers as a forum for sharing ideas and feelings and as a practical learning tool.

Chigona (2013) showed how the use of multimedia played a role in the development of a community of practice. A group of diverse pre-service teachers in South Africa worked together to complete their individual digital stories. Data was gathered using focus group interviews and written reflections which confirmed that the sharing of digital stories fostered respect and understanding within the cohort.

**Methodology**

As a world language education methods instructor and university supervisor always seeking ways to develop reflective practice and critical thinking in my students, I was interested in further exploring the viability of digital stories as a means for pre-service world language teachers to integrate their student teaching experience more fully and to engage in a community of practice. Since 2014, I have concluded the student teaching semester by having pre-service world language teachers create and share the story of their internship experience as a final project. In order to garner additional information for the purpose of research, I recruited participants for the study who filled out a brief pre-service teacher questionnaire after the presentation of their digital stories (Appendix A). The responses to this questionnaire, as well as general observation notes recorded by the research-instructor, were reviewed according to grounded theory. Grounded theory is a type of research methodology that involves observing and investigating a collection of data for emergent patterns, themes, and other outstanding aspects (Charmez, 2006).

The present study considers the following research questions: (1) How do the participants experience digital storytelling as a reflective tool? (2) In what ways does digital storytelling reveal pedagogical insights? (3) How do the participants frame their stories? (4) What are the implications of sharing digital stories with peers? The study seeks to gain additional understanding of the impact of pre-service world language teachers telling their story in a multimedia format.

*Participants and context*

The participants (n=30) consisted of pre-service world language teachers from a three-hour, weekly cohort seminar taken in conjunction with student teaching. The seminar focuses on practical and professional issues in the field of world language education. All of the seminar students from the academic years 2014-2018 agreed to participate in the research study. The seminar takes place over a fifteen-week period in the spring semester at a large, Midwestern state university with full national accreditation. Of the 30 candidates, six were male and 24 were female. Ten (33%) were studying to become teachers of American Sign Language, eight (27%) of Spanish, seven (23%) of English as a Second Language, four (13 %) of French, and one (3%) of Latin. Nine of the 30 were native speakers of the world language, and all but one student were undergraduates in their final semester of study. Prior to their internship, the pre-service teachers completed approximately 100 hours of observation at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels and had already met language proficiency standards as required by the state. During the internship itself, each pre-service teacher was paired with an experienced in-service teacher and underwent evaluation by a university supervisor.

The digital story assignment was previewed during the seminar course as the final project to be completed at the end of the semester. The overall goal of the assignment was to provide pre-service teachers with the chance to summarize their experience, share with their peers, and gain practice using multimedia. The

objective was for students to make meaning of their student teaching experience by constructing and sharing their stories using the language of their choice. In order to assist the pre-service teachers in developing their stories, I provided them with a story map graphic organizer that included title and author, setting (time and place), characters and traits, important events, conflict, resolution, and themes. Participants were advised to consider their evolution and progression as teachers for the context of their stories. Since they could use a multimedia format of their choice, several possibilities were suggested, such as iMovie, Touchcast, and Flipagram. Participants also were encouraged to consult with the university's multimedia center for additional assistance.

Participants were shown an example of a type of digital story, 30-Second Bunnies Theatre (Angry Alien Productions, 2018). This story consists of short animated film segments where cartoon bunnies reenact famous movie plots at record speed. Though not an explicit model of the assignment, the clips were shown to demonstrate how the main ideas of a story can be effectively condensed and relayed. On the final day of the semester, each student presented his or her story to the class. The researcher-instructor took general notes on the presentations, namely on the multimedia used, the framework of the story, the presenters' tone and attitude, and any other outstanding features. The presentations averaged ten minutes in length with an additional five minutes set aside for follow-up questions and comments. Participants then completed a brief questionnaire (Appendix A).

### Data collection and analysis

The pre-service teacher questionnaire consisted of a total of ten questions; one Likert-scale question and nine open-ended question (Appendix A). The Likert-scale question asked participants to rate their comfort level with technology. The resulting numbers were averaged and converted into percentages. The participants were asked to indicate the multimedia form they used and why. The responses were counted and converted into percentages. The questionnaire was used to explore participants' general feelings and reactions to the digital story telling assignment. These open-ended comments, in addition to the general observation notes taken by the researcher-instructor during the presentations, were reviewed for any relevant information, patterns, or themes.

Since the primary goal of the assignment was to encourage reflection, the responses to questions 3, 4, 7, as well as the observation notes, were scanned for discursive indicators of reflection. The use of discourse analysis is supported in constructivist theory as a means to gain insight into thought and practice (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Sparks-Langer & Colton (1991), reflective thinking in teachers can be categorized in three ways: cognitive, critical, and narrative. Cognitive thinking refers to the ways that information is processed and decisions are made, while critical reflection focuses on the experiences and implications of events, and narrative reflection deals with the teachers' own interpretations (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). The responses to the pre-service teacher questionnaire and the general observation notes were reviewed and categorized according to these three categories. For instance, the following sample statement was categorized as

cognitive reflection: "you had to think about all aspects from start to finish. Not only the story itself, but how to best tell it. Then you had to think about how to put it all together." This statement was categorized as cognitive since it dealt with the pre-service teacher's decisions about the completion of the assignment. Critical indicators were selected based on references to the student teaching experience. For instance, the following sample statement was categorized as critical reflection: "For me, I was able to look back at what I had done and really look into why things went the way that they did." This statement was categorized as critical since it deals with the experience and practice. Narrative indicators were selected based on references to the pre-service teachers' interpretations of the events. The stories themselves were considered narrative in nature if they included elements from the story map graphic organizer. Data that addressed characters and traits, important events, conflict, resolution, and other emergent themes were used to organize the frameworks of their stories.

Additionally, the pre-service teacher questionnaires and the general observation notes were reviewed for patterns and themes using the story map graphic organizer as a guide. Lastly, responses to questions 5 and 9 from the pre-service teacher questionnaire, were surveyed to ascertain the participants thoughts on sharing their stories with their peers. The comments were qualified as either positive or negative.

**Results and discussion**

The first question from the pre-service teacher questionnaire sought to add additional information to the participants' overall profile in regard to the use of technology. Not surprisingly, the Likert-scale question revealed that 21$^{st}$ century students are quite comfortable using technology. The participants were asked to list the multimedia format they used and the reason for their choice. Video was the most popular medium (57%), followed by PowerPoint and/or Prezi (23%). Some students used VoiceThread (6%) while others took advantage of other options, including Storybird (6%), PowToon (4%), and Pixton (4%). The popularity of video is worth noting; it could be because of its common use as a story-telling forum. Students mentioned ease and familiarity as the primary reason for using video and power point, while others wanted to try newer applications. The average amount of time spend on the digital story project was one week. Their comfort level with technology, use of multimedia, and time spent on their digital stories are indicative of the relative ease of the assignment itself.

The pre-service teacher questionnaires, plus the general observation notes, were reviewed for Sparks-Langer & Colton's (1991) indicators. The table on the following page summarizes the number of questionnaires and stories that included cognitive, critical, and narrative reflections.

Examples of cognitive reflection were highest on the pre-service teacher questionnaires and lowest in the general observation notes. This is likely due to the difference in the form of data collection. That is, the questionnaire elicited more commentary on the process of putting the project together while the telling of the digital story focused more on the event. Not surprising, narrative reflection

**Table 1.** Indicators of pre-service teachers' reflection (n=30)

| Pre-service teacher questionnaire | | General notes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive | 24 | Cognitive | 10 |
| Critical | 10 | Critical | 14 |
| Narrative | 2 | Narrative | 29 |

was highest in the general observation notes and lowest on the pre-service teacher questionnaire. Again, this shows the two instruments focused on two different categories of reflection. Notably examples of critical reflection were in the middle range on both instruments. The results suggest that more needs to be done to elicit critical reflection. This could be accomplished in a number of ways. First, the questionnaire can be structured in such a way as to place more focus on critical reflection. For instance, it could ask participants to specifically write about a problem they experienced and how they solved it. Their stories could also be the basis for investigative inquiry (Binks et al., 2009; Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). Overall, ninety-five percent (95%) indicated on the pre-service teacher questionnaires that they found the telling of their story in a digital format to be more effective than other reflective tools such as blogs or journals, echoing the findings of Binks et al. (2009).

In order to gain more insight into their narratives, general observation notes taken during the presentations were scanned according to the story map graphic organizer, including characters and traits, important events, conflict, resolution, and other emergent themes. Results showed that the pre-service teachers presented themselves as the main character of the story; they either used first person or third person in their role as protagonist. Supportive figures included the methods instructor, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor. The peer cohort was frequently mentioned as well. The pre-service teachers described themselves as inexperienced and fearful in the beginning of their narratives. As they told their stories, they mentioned important events as key to their increasing their feelings of confidence. For example, when students did well on an assignment, one pre-service teacher realized: "My goal of inspiring young minds was coming to life in unexpected and miraculous ways." They often framed their story as one of a challenge to be met. Narratives began with feelings of uncertainty: "I wasn't sure if I could do it." However, by facing their fears and moving through the experience, they gained self-confidence: "I found that I could do whatever I set my mind to."

The framing of the story facilitated objectivity, enabling them to gain insights and witness their own growth (Adams, 2017). One pre-service teacher wrote, "I was able to be more objective and take my own feelings out of it and look through the eyes of someone who had a little bit more experience. It was helpful to take myself out of the equation." This objectivity also helped them to see the impact they had on students. The participants learned that "they can work through challenges" and that "they loved teaching." As such, telling their stories helped them see themselves in a more positive light (Binks et al., 2009). While the story

map graphic organizer was useful in providing structure for the stories; it could be modified to encourage deeper reflection. Binks et al. (2009) asked more probing questions such as "What is the motivating dilemma, conflict, or central problem of the story?", and "What is the story's moral? What would you like for the audience to learn?" (p. 145).

While the telling of their stories constituted one interpretation, sharing it with others offered another. A participant mentioned on the questionnaire that sharing her story "helped me to see it from another perspective." The questionnaire also revealed that the sharing of digital stories with peers changed the experience for them; forty-three percent (43%) of the respondents indicated as much. They liked hearing one another's stories and understanding their classmates' experiences. When asked what they learned about others, several noted that they "no longer felt like the only one" going through student teaching, and that they felt closer to their classmates as a result (Kocaman-Karoglu, 2014); they were grateful to have gone through the experience with their cohort. The sharing of their stories was seen as positive experience.

When considering the first research question, (1) How do the participants experience digital storytelling as a reflective tool, the data revealed that, while the pre-service teachers found the assignment to be effective for reflection, the questionnaire elicited more cognitive reflection while the stories themselves constituted more narrative reflection. When considering the second research question (2) In what ways does digital storytelling reveal pedagogical insights, the stories gave the pre-service teachers the opportunity to identify important events, conflict, and resolution. However, indicators of critical reflection were the least represented. As critical reflection is more indicative of pedagogical insight, more attention needs to be given to that aspect of the exercise.

When looking at the third research question, (3) How do the participants frame their stories, the pre-service teachers mainly followed the story map graphic organizer, which touched upon character and traits, important events, and conflict and resolution. As stated in the introduction, the telling of one's story involves more than recounting events. As such, positive elements, such as success, influence, and insight, arose as overriding themes, supporting their trajectory of growth. Lastly, when addressing the final research question (4), the implications of sharing digital stories with peers gave the students the opportunity for growing a community of practice; one that will hopefully continue once they enter the profession.

## Conclusion and implications for future research

Multimedia in the form of digital storytelling has the potential to integrate more fully the student teaching experience. First, it provides practice in the use of technology for rising world language teachers. As such, they can employ digital stories with their future students to personalize, motivate, and practice everyday language. This type of project can expose learners to new ideas and perspectives while empowering them to take more responsibility for their learning. By telling their digital stories, pre-service world language teachers can make meaning of the internship; as such, they can reflect on its impact, bridging the connection between

theory and practice. However, the results of the study revealed more needs to be done to go to a deeper level, particularly in terms of critical reflection. A more structured approach to the assignment is needed. Guiding questions can lead inquiry into practice. Rubin (1989) highlighted "it is not what expert teachers do, but rather the ways in which they decide what to do that makes the difference in instructional effectiveness" (p. 31). Digital stories provide a framework where pre-service teachers can investigate their teaching and reflect on their instructional decisions. Through the telling of their stories, they learn about themselves within a community of practice, building a bridge to a successful next chapter.

The telling of digital stories by pre-service teachers has multiple possibilities for future investigations. As the present study was primarily exploratory, a more structured inquiry can be implemented. As previously mentioned, the project has the potential to elicit deeper reflection and critical thinking should be implemented as such. For example, teacher candidates could tell their story in three parts (beginning, middle, end) to better track their progress and growth. They also could tell their story in conjunction with their cooperating teacher as a means of building bridges between the university and secondary schools. Additionally, it would be interesting to explore how various technologies impact the story and its meaning. For instance, do those who use one type of media construct their story differently than those who use another? How they disseminate their story could influence their interpretation of the event. The language used to tell their story also could impact its integration. The grounded theory approach to the data analysis indicated that the telling of digital stories by pre-service world language teachers did provide opportunities for reflection and pedagogical insights. Nevertheless, the data gleaned from the pre-service teacher questionnaire and general observation notes were not necessarily those of deep reflection or critical thinking. As such, future research suggests a construct that further fosters these skills.

## References

Adams, G. (2017). Using a narrative approach to illuminate teacher professional learning in an era of accountability. *Teaching and Teacher Education Journal, 67*, 161-170.

Angry Alien Productions (2018). *30-second bunnies theatre library.* Retrieved from http://www.angryalien.com

Biggs, J. (1996). Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. *Higher Education, 32*(3), 347-364.

Binks, E., Smith, D., Smith, L., & Joshi, R.M. (2009). Tell me your story: A reflection strategy for pre-service teachers. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *36*(4), 141-156.

Britzman, D. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A practical study of learning to teach.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bullough, R. & Gitlin, A. (1995). *Becoming a student of teaching: Methodologies for exploring self and school context.* New York, NY: Garland Publishing.

Charmez, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* London, England: Sage Publications.

Chigona, A. (2013). Using multimedia technology to build a community of practice: Pre-service teachers' and digital storytelling in South Africa. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology, 9*(3), 17-27.

Gee, J.P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (2nd ed.). London: Taylor & Francis.

Genishi, C. & Dyson, A.H. (1994). Conclusion: Fulfilling the need for story. In A.H Dyson & C. Genishi (Eds.), *The need for story* (pp. 237-243). Urbana, Illinois: NCTE.

Geyer, N. (2008). Reflective practices in foreign language teacher education: A view through micro and macro windows. *Foreign Language Annals, 41*(4), 627-638.

Kocaman-Karoglu, A. (2016). Personal voices in higher education: A digital storyteliing experience for pre-service teachers. *Education Information Technology, 21*(5), 1153-1168.

Lee, I. (2013). Becoming a writing teacher: Using "identity" as an analytic lens to understand EFL writing teachers' development. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 22*(3), 330-345.

MacLure, M. (1993). Arguing for your self: Identity as an organizing principle in teachers' jobs and lives. *British  Educational Research Journal, 19*(4)*,* 311-322.

Rubin, L. (1989). The thinking teacher: Cultivating pedagogical intelligence. *Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(6), 31-34.

Sancar-Tokmak, H. & Yanpar-Yelken, T. (2015) Effects of creating digital stories on foreign language education pre-service teachers' TPACK self-confidence. *Educational Studies, 41*(4), 444-461.

Sellars, M. (2012). Teachers and change: the role of reflective practice. *Procedia--Social and Behavioral Sciences, 55*(5), 461-469.

Sparks-Langer, G.M. & Colton, A.B. (1991). Synthesis of research on teachers' reflective thinking. *Educational Leadership, 48*(6), 37-44.

Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 4*(1), 21–44.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society. The development of higher psychological processes. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.*

*Yost, D., Sentner, S., & Forlenza-Bailey, A. (2000). An examination of the construct of critical reflection: Implications for teacher education programming in the 21st century. Journal of Teacher Education, 51(1), 39-49.*

**Appendix A: Pre-service teacher questionnaire**

Complete the following to the best of your ability.

1. On a scale between 1-5, rate your overall comfort level with technology/ multimedia
2. What multimedia resource did you use? Why?
3. How, in your opinion, is the telling of the story in this format different from other reflective tools (i.e. blogs, journals, etc.?)
4. Did the telling of your story change your experience of the story? How so?
5. Did the sharing of your story change your experience of the story? How so?
6. How much time did you spend on this project?
7. What were the benefits of this assignment? Challenges?
8. What did you learn about yourself from this experience?
9. What did you learn about others from this experience?
10. Would you have been able to do this in your world language? What would be the benefits of doing this in the world language? Challenges? Explain.

Any additional comments?