Picturing Another Culture: Developing Language Proficiency, Empathy, and Visual Literacy through Art

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Abstract

Integrating art (paintings, sculptures, photography, and other types of images) into second language (L2) instruction، can have a positive effect on language acquisition and developing intercultural understanding. As the instructor provides visual scaffolding, learners at all proficiency levels have the opportunity to engage more deeply with L2 course materials. Not only can students learn to interpret imagery and create their own effective combinations of visuals and texts, they also develop some familiarity with seminal artwork from the target culture. This article outlines how spiraling art through a language curriculum can aid vocabulary retention, illustrate poetic language, and raise awareness of diversity and inclusion. As a result, learners investigate and interact with the products, practices, and perspectives of the L2 culture while simultaneously developing visual analysis skills—the latter essential in an age in which both authentic and digitally manipulated imagery dominate the media and social discourse.

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from its intercultural and interdisciplinary nature, art can inspire creativity and help students develop their interpretive abilities. While students with auditory and verbal learning preferences fare better in traditional, text-based L2 classes than those who need to create visual connections to a text in order to understand it better (Grandin, 2006; Silverman, 2002), many learners benefit from the inclusion of visual dimensions into language instruction. Furthermore, according to Knapp (2012), paintings provide a meaningful cultural context in which students produce language ranging from the use of "concrete vocabulary to the illustration of grammatical concepts" as the "interpretation of the image requires the students to engage language," even though the information is not linguistic (pp. 20-21). In addition to acquiring knowledge about the target culture's artistic legacy, Ortuño (1994) found that "the use of visually engaging, authentic materials in the classroom has a definite, positive effect in acquiring language and forming cultural attitudes" (p. 500). Best of all, neither L2 instructors nor their students need artistic abilities or knowledge of art history to engage with art.

More than ever, students need to become visually literate and learn to make sense of the proliferation of authentic and digitally manipulated imagery and combinations of visuals and texts (Farrell, 2015; Felten, 2008). They need to be able to access images and visual media effectively and efficiently, interpret and analyze their meanings, evaluate images and their sources, import meaningful images into visual media, and understand the ethical, legal, social and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media (Ervine, 2016; Visual Literacy Task Force, 2012). Since students do not necessarily already possess the skills to engage effectively in multiple modes of communication or make meaning visually (i.e., visual literacy), targeted literacy instruction should be integrated into the curriculum at all levels.

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Systematically interweaving visual analysis should be a fundamental goal of a liberal education, "whether conceptualized as a distinct set of capacities or as part of a larger multimodal literacy,"—which also includes interpreting music, movement, and text (Felten, 2008, p. 60). In an L2 curriculum, that means language learners practice all three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, presentational) as they learn to analyze not only art but also interpret and create—among other visually-based work— charts, graphs, timelines, photographs, cartoons, illustrations, digital narratives, maps, memes, signs, symbols, and logos.

The following examples come mostly from German classes, but are applicable to all languages and proficiency levels. They provide strategies and templates for oral and written art-based assignments, which demonstrate how to (1) integrate images at all levels of the L2 curriculum and in different types of courses; (2) guide students toward developing visual analysis capabilities (visual literacy); (3) help students become more reflective and engaged communicators, orally and in writing; (4) create inclusive classrooms and communities of practice; and (5) enable learners to become more adept at analyzing and prepare them for combining written and visual information.

From the very beginning: Spiraling art through the language curriculum

A well-scaffolded curriculum planned around the principles of backward design requires that L2 instructors identify the desired results first, then determine acceptable evidence of student learning, and finally plan learning experiences (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). Such a curricular structure also allows teachers to spiral certain themes, texts, and images through various proficiency levels so students engage and re-engage with specific topics throughout their studies and develop a deeper understanding of L2 material (Swaffar & Arens, 2005). Additionally, as they design multiple thematic and literacy-focused strands for their program, instructors take into account a progression of language functions that integrate textual thinking with language development across all levels of the language program (Maxim, Höyng, Lancaster, Schaumann, & Aue, 2013; Paesani, Allen, & Dupuy, 2016).

In a curriculum centered on developing visual analysis abilities as well as the vocabulary and linguistic structures needed to develop them, instructors ensure that lesson plans move students from simple to complex activities in every class meeting, every unit, and every term throughout the entire program. Guiding questions, driven by content, not grammar, help learners make meaning "through the acts of interpreting and creating written, oral, visual, audiovisual, and digital texts" (Paesani et al., 2016, p. 23). This means that learners acquire the grammar structures necessary to communicate when they need them, requiring them to narrate at the lower proficiency level, shift to explanation, and conclude with argumentation in the most advanced classes (Maxim et al., 2013, pp. 6-8).

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Since novice learners can identify shapes and create simple titles in addition to naming colors, figures, and objects, an effective activity for beginning L2 students is to color various shapes in a black-and-white version of a Cubist painting, such as Franz Marc's cubist painting *Rehe im Walde* [Deer in the forest] (1914). At this basic level, the instructor provides a rudimentary introduction to color theory (Goethe, 1810/1994), as students determine how mixing primary colors creates others in very basic language (e.g., *blau und gelb ist grün* [blue and yellow make green]). They also discuss what they think each color could mean through providing basic nouns or adjectives (e.g., *rot symbolisiert Liebe, gelb ist hell und froh* [red symbolizes love, yellow is light and happy]. As they first identify and list shapes, figures, and colors and then explain their color choices by adding adjectives, comparing their versions to the original allows them to create a very basic interpretation of the image.

As Knapp (2012) demonstrates, beginners can discuss a painting like August Macke's Expressionist *Dame in grüner Jacke* [Woman in a green jacket] (1913), which depicts five people in a park-like setting. They first explain what they associate with the specific colors and then connect them to basic items of clothing. As students describe the other people in the painting, they also position them at the front, back,

side of, beneath, or wherever in relation to the park, river, and the trees. This lends itself to introducing and practicing prepositions. While this is still a very basic task, novice-level students begin to formulate hypotheses and justifications as they move from identifying to contrasting and describing. At this point, they also determine spatial relationships of objects to one another. While engaging with the works of two of the most famous German Expressionist painters, a short research assignment ensures that they also glean some biographical information and learn that both died during World War I.

At the intermediate proficiency level, an activity that moves L2 learners from simple to more complex language is based on a painting and a sculpture of an important cultural icon. At this point in a German class, students may have acquired some knowledge of Martin Luther's role in the Reformation through simple readings and discussions. Applying what they have learned, they first describe Lucas Cranach the Elder's portrait of Luther (1529) and then take turns playing the role of the rather stern-looking Luther in the portrait to ask and answer questions about his activities. This allows the instructor to assess what the students have learned about Luther and the Reformation, as well as providing opportunities for describing the portrait. In order to move the discussion from portraiture to statues in public spaces, students compare the painting to a photo of Rietschel's 1885 Luther statue in front of Dresden's restored *Frauenkirche* [Church of Our Lady]. Without giving them information about the statue's date of creation, students are also asked to determine whether the painting or the statue is more recent and try to justify their answers.

Analyzing three-dimensional art situated in a public space also provides learners with an opportunity to apply a series of questions that help them understand which "historical discourses are represented and given authority via the landscape" (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008, p. 170). Using the Luther statue, students try to determine what kind of memorial it is, describe the surroundings and its position in relation to the church, ascertain what it memorializes, describe who and what they can see, who or what is at the center or periphery, and who or what is missing, and decide if the memorial is intended to remind the viewer of a loss, gain, or victory. Students then transfer this approach to analyzing a memorial in their home or school community, apply this same set of questions, take a picture of the monument, and create a short digital presentation or poster explaining the historical and cultural significance of the monument.

The final example describes how introducing and revisiting an iconic painting throughout their studies will enable learners to re-engage with a particular work of art and apply what they have previously seen to a new, different context. At the novice level, students describe what they see in a painting and compare it to a different, but similar image. If a language program has a study abroad component, choosing a culturally significant image students might encounter in the original prepares them for more in-depth engagement in a museum. Revisiting a work of art at a higher proficiency level also helps students develop a more multi-dimensional understanding of an artist's work, a cultural event, artistic style, or time period.

Syllabus matters

Novice-level German students may learn to describe rooms and furniture with Carl Spitzweg's *Der arme Poet* [The poor poet] (1839). They can easily identify and list objects and compare the painting of a shabby little attic bedroom to other images of rooms. Learners can also employ basic color theory to ascertain the mood the painter wanted to convey. As they add adjectives, they move on to simple descriptions and toward asking and answering what, when, how, where, and why questions to provide details that require some basic interpretation. When they re-encounter the painting—either in a museum when on their exchange with a school abroad or in an advanced literature and culture course—they engage with it in greater depth. In an advanced literature course, learners understand that the painting of a destitute poet who is burning his life's work to stay warm, functions as an ironic commentary on the state of the humanities in the nineteenth century. As they investigate the painter, students find out that the man in this image is often identified as a well-known court poet who fell into royal disfavor and died in poverty (Schultes, 2002). This, in turn, allows them to understand the often-precarious situation of writers, artists, composers, and even scientists and the role wealthy sponsors played in making or breaking them.

The activities above illustrate that art can function as a stimulus for practicing all three modes of communication at different proficiency levels. Becoming familiar with and then revisiting specific works of art or artistic representations of cultural icons at different junctures in the curriculum also allows instructors to introduce analysis strategies like the ones applied to memorials.

Techniques and approaches that hone students' visual analysis and interpretive communication abilities

Even if students regularly analyze and produce visual materials, they do not automatically read or evaluate them critically (Ervine, 2016). Since some learners also feel anxious when asked to interpret a work of art, icebreakers and hands-on activities that slowly help develop visual analysis capabilities can serve to relax learners and teach them to trust their instincts and life experiences. These range from collaborative activities and trying to create a visual message, understanding how images convey bias, moving from details to the whole, involving all senses when interpreting an image to in-depth analyses of historical monuments in their surroundings.

Scaffolding the activities to ensure that students engage in all three levels of the interpretive mode (comprehension, interpretation, analysis) means that they first demonstrate comprehension of the content, then examine, compare, and reflect on the products and practices of culture, and finally make connections to new or different content areas. Visual analysis of an image requires similar steps: understanding, interpreting, and finally explaining its significance within a specific cultural context. As learners engage with the visual artifact, they first note composition elements, color, placement, before determining how the artistic elements of the image

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might communicate artistic intent to the viewer, and then explain interpretation by backing it up with elements from the image. If it is a multimodal image, they also consider sound and text.

While students interpret art and other visuals through these activities, they also learn that there is not one objective interpretation, but that analyses are subjective and are only persuasive if they are backed up with justifications. Diaz (2016) suggests an icebreaker that shows students how art and its interpretation are subjective. She provides learners with a piece of paper and asks them to close their eyes and draw something. They then pass their paper to a classmate who finishes the drawing with open eyes but without asking for explanations. Students then randomly explain the art they finished. Diaz ascertains that the humorous results lower anxiety levels and prepare learners to work with specific pieces of art.

In one exercise, which can easily be used at various proficiency levels, students reflect on the nature of visual communication by communicating through images. As they take a picture with their cell phones, the photographers decide what their pictures mean, think of a title, and write a short interpretation. Then, they e-mail the image only to a partner, who writes an interpretation and also creates a title. Either online or at the next class meeting, the partners exchange their interpretations, compare them to the images, and decide how they could have communicated their intent more clearly.

In another low-anxiety technique that prepares students for more in-depth visual analysis, the instructor provides them with a section of an entire painting or photograph. This activity is designed to get them to trust their mind's eye and helps learners realize that they apply what they already know about the world around them to fill in empty spaces. The example Wicke (2016a) uses is the bottom part of a photograph depicting two parrots sitting on a perch. The students only see two sets of claws, some colored feathers, and part of a branch. At the top of the blank image they read the words *der Baum* [the tree] and *der Himmel* [the sky]. With a partner, they fill in a collage of words and try to explain what else might be in the picture. Before they see the complete photograph, they share their collages with the class.

In a variation on this activity, Wicke (2016b) uses Marc's painting *Tiger* (1912) to train students to pay attention to details and familiarize them with Cubist art. In this type of activity, students pay attention to the use of color, so they apply some of their ideas on color theory. The class first sees a detail of the painting—in this case part of the face with an eye. Students brainstorm, and the instructor collects their suggestions and justifications. Then they see the rest of the painting and decide how both sections they have fit together. They discuss what they think the painting depicts and think of a title. Finally, as they see the entire painting, they discuss their guesses and adjust the title, if necessary.

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way to raise awareness is to help them understand how illustrations can influence the way readers acquire vocabulary or interpret a story. If, for example, instructors ask learners to create image-based vocabulary flashcards or a picture dictionary, they should pick some words that seem straightforward, but tend to evoke strong emotions —both positive and negative. Learners' choice of image for words like "politician" or "police officer" will easily convey their own, often unconscious and cultural, bias and lends itself to a fruitful class discussion of the power of images.

In a class in which students have discussed a fairy tale—say, *Little Red Riding Hood* —they form groups. One receives Brewtnall's (n.d.) and the other Doré's (1867) illustration in the form of a wanted poster [see Appendix A]. Without showing the images to members of the other group, students create narratives explaining why the police would want to give a €20,000 reward for Red Riding Hood. Since both illustrations suggest very different personalities, the stories turn out quite dissimilar. As the first group, whose image shows a very innocent-looking young girl, reads their version to the class, the other students, whose Red Riding Hood is more self-assured and skeptical, are trying to understand how their classmates could have come up with such a story and vice versa. After asking some follow-up questions, the groups finally show each other their respective illustrations and discuss how they have influenced their stories.

To help students engage more deeply with a specific work of art, the instructors ask them to involve all their senses as they interpret. A photograph that lends itself to that approach at a variety of proficiency levels is Graciela Iturbide's *Mujer angel* [Angel woman] (1979). Without knowing anything about the image, the artist, or title, students work in groups to describe what they see, hear, feel, smell, and taste as they view the photograph. Approaching an image this way engenders vivid descriptions. As each group justifies their descriptions, they try to explain the location, identify the gender of the figure as well as the photographer's intent for creating the image in the first place. After a lively discussion, the instructor provides the title (in our case, in German) and explains that the photographer-cum-activist was trying to document the vanishing culture of the Zapotec people in Mexico's Sonoran Desert. The subsequent discussion, in which students decide whether they believe the image is effective or not, also prepares them to create a poster presentation involving images and text on ethnic minorities from the target culture. For a German class, students present textual and visual information on the Sorbs, a Slavic minority in East Germany, ethnic Germans in Rumania, or German-speaking minorities in Italy's Trento and Bolzano regions.

A final example, adapted from Wicke (2016c), involves analyzing a sculpture group in a public space. This type of memorial not only reveals historically relevant information about a specific place, but the three-dimensionality also enables students to pay closer attention to facial expressions and body language. As they move from details to a greater geographic context, learners form and test hypotheses. One such memorial is Franz Meisler's sculpture group *Kindertransport. Züge ins Leben- Züge in den Tod* [Children's transport. Trains to life—trains to death] (2008) near the Friedrichsstraße railway station in Berlin. It depicts two groups of young people who are heading in opposite directions. A boy and a girl

in a lighter bronze color represent the children who were saved, the other, greyer group of five, stands for those who were sent to the gas chambers. Between both groups is a stack of empty luggage. Train tracks flank the entire sculpture.

Before analyzing the entire sculpture, students are divided into groups A and B. Group A receives a close-up of one of the faces from the "trains to death" section; the others study the facial expression of one of the "trains to life" statues. As they study the faces, they discuss who the person is, what s/he sees, what the expression says about the person's feelings, and hypothesize what could be happening. The next image of the memorial zooms out to provide some more spatial context for each of the two figures. Students analyze the body language and discuss if they still have the same impressions they initially formed. The last image is the same for both groups: depicting the entire sculpture in its urban surroundings [for group A's handout, see Appendix B]. Students then find a partner from the other group to compare the different close-up images and see whether they can determine what is being memorialized. Without knowing the title or location, students spend significant time hypothesizing, justifying, and adjusting their opinions before providing an interpretation of the group sculpture. The instructor provides the title after in-depth discussion and assigns students to find out more information about children's transports from Nazi Germany for the following class period. This activity also provides more texture to literary analyses: In an intermediate-level course in which students read a short story about a Jewish boy who is smuggled out of Germany after his parents get picked up by the Nazis (Kordon, 1999) or an advanced-level course in which students read German-Jewish exile poetry (Ausländer, 1978; Kaléko, 1977a, 1977b).

The examples above illustrate how one might scaffold and engage learners in different types of visual analysis, while providing opportunities for practicing all three levels of the interpretive mode. Students describe and demonstrate comprehension of the content, then compare, reflect, and determine cultural dimensions, and finally connect their findings to different content areas or apply them to another context.

Art-based activities for interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational oral communication

The authors have developed or adapted several art-based activities that allow students to practice all three modes of communication at various proficiency levels. One activity that allows students to move around the classroom involves using portions of artworks. Images are used only as partial pictures and might contain a part of a face, a section of a building, or part of an animal's body. Students circulate to find other portions of the image and recreate it. They then describe the completed images to one another describing colors, emotions created by the colors, and theories of what the completed artwork might mean. The instructor may deliberately choose to use several cut up versions of the same image so that the students can compare their hypotheses once they find their partners. Throughout the activity, learners interact with one another and negotiate meaning, react to what they hear from others, and present their opinions. They might also try to decide which artistic style the work

represents, applying cultural information they may have previously acquired or bring to the language classroom from other subject areas.

A second task that allows novice-high learners to practice describing and analyzing images while also listening carefully and asking follow-up questions involves describing an image to a partner. Again, the class divides into two groups. In each pair, one student describes the image with as many details as possible to his/her partner who listens carefully, sketches what she or he hears, and asks clarifying questions. After the conclusion of the activity, pairs compare images to sketches and discuss what they need to correct. For additional practice, pairs switch roles and repeat the activity with a different image. A variation on this exercise requires students to sit back-to-back and describe similar looking images to one another, verbally trying to elicit what the differences are through follow-up questions. Once they believe that they have found the answer, they turn around and compare their images.

In a third activity, intermediate-low L2 students conduct research into a specific portrait. The instructor assigns a painting or photograph, provides a title, date, and/or the name of the artist. At home, students find out the story behind the image and prepare short oral group presentations for the next class period. One such painting is *Preussisches Liebesglück* [Prussian Love] by Doerstling (1890), which shows a young man in a Prussian soldier's uniform with his arms around a smiling young woman. What makes the painting unusual is the fact that it is the portrait of an interracial couple at the end of the nineteenth century. Students will find out that the painting depicts the Afro-German bandmaster Gustav Sabac-al-Cher and his wife Gertrud. A brief Internet search will reveal a fascinating family history and allows students to create intriguing oral presentations. The image can also form a starting point for discussing the history of ethnic and racial minorities in German-speaking Europe and legacies of colonialism in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries.

Finally, in a course focused on fairy tales, instructors could further develop the Little Red Riding Hood-based activity described previously: After students have interpreted a second fairy tale, they find illustrations they believe best justify their interpretations—either in an essay explaining their choices or by preparing a short presentation.

The activities outlined in this section—while also relying on visual analysis skills—provide different ways of using images to practice interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational communication. At the novice level, the activities require responses such as naming, listing, identifying, and asking some basic questions, while students at the intermediate level describe spatial relationships in an image, explain its meaning, and create short presentations. Students also learn to explain how images can support comprehension of a text or subvert it in their L2.

Art in the diverse and inclusive L2 classroom

Activities that encourage students to explore multiple perspectives enable them to better understand ethnic, cultural, racial, gender, class, physical, and mental diversity. They also seek to prepare both students from culturally and linguistically divergent backgrounds as well as those with

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and without disabilities for the real world with a wide range of human variance (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010). In such classrooms, art allows L2 instructors to create learning environments that foster students' positive self-concepts and attitudes toward others and facilitate conversations about differences. Given that Americans with disabilities make up around 20% of the population (Garland-Thomson, 2005), the examples provided here are designed to raise students' awareness and understanding of physical and mental diversity. As instructors and students understand that some classmates may process information differently, or, as Grandin (2006) put it for autistic learners—have detailed spatial visualization abilities but not always the words to convey them— an inclusive classroom will also allow everyone to accept them as different, not less (Grandin, 2012).

As the activities described below are illustrative of diverse visions of the world, they provide opportunities for critical thought on cultural representations of diversity—over time and across places—and are therefore easily adaptable to other kinds of diversity. Consciously integrating awareness-raising activities into the curriculum allows L2 programs to contribute to a healthier instructional atmosphere surrounding difference. They contribute "to the success and lifelong learning of students with disabilities" and also ensure that all students understand that "discussions of lives lived fully (with impairments) should not be left to specialists" (Berberi, 2008, p. 4). As a result, students come to recognize disability as a social category rather than individual characteristic (Kudlick, 2003) and understand that disabilities are not something to "overcome," but actually enable "artistic evolution" (Garland-Thomson, 2005, pp. 523-24).

First, however, students need to become aware of their own biases and learn to reimagine disability. To this end, they might analyze paintings of people who are visibly different as well as images created by a disabled artist, in some cases with ancillary textual information. In a course in which students read fairy tales, the instructor could consider including a werewolf legend and, after discussing the story, ask students to find information about hypertrichosis (excessive hair growth, often referred to as werewolf syndrome), porphyria (extreme photosensitivity, which makes it hard for sufferers to function in broad daylight), and people who have been called werewolves. Following their short presentations, students discuss the viability of theories that such tales may be, in fact, describing those who suffered from one of these congenital disorders.

Learners then analyze an image of someone who suffered from hypertrichosis: Lavinia Fontana's portrait of Antonietta Gonzalez (1595). Because of their congenital condition, Antonietta and other members of Gonzalez family were welcomed at the courts of Europe and received considerable social and scientific attention. Questions, learners may seek to answer as they view the portrait are: Given that portraits of Gonzalez family members are found in several European castles as part

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1. Images that work well for this comparative activity include Frida Kahlo's 1946 painting *Árbol de la esperanza, mantente firme* [Tree of Hope, keep firm], Diego Velázquez *El bufón don Sebastián de Morra* [Portrait of Sebastián de Morra] from 1646, or Jake and Dinos Chapman's 1995 sculpture of Stephen Hawking, *Übermensch* [Superman].

of curiosity collections, what sort of life may Antonietta have led? Is the portrait sincere and sensitive or does it depict the girl as an abnormal being or dehumanized object? Which emotions is the artist trying to conjure in the viewer? Students who have been prepared for nuanced visual analysis are likely to see that Fontana's work is insightful, depicting a self-assured, intelligent young girl, not a freak.

Even if the painting is not approached through reading and discussion of a werewolf legend, it can form the entry point to a discussion of depictions of visible diversity in art and prompt comparisons to other artistic renderings of disability.[1] Students apply the same questions they used to analyze Fontana's portrait and, through comparing both images, reflect on the divergent ways disability has been constructed and represented. In groups, they decide what that could mean for the historical and cultural context, in which they were created.

Next, students compare two of Claude Monet's intensely impressionistic images, *Le bassin aux nymphéas* [The Water Lily Pond] (1899) *Le pont japonais* [The Japanese footbridge] (ca. 1920), from his garden in Giverny and describe the differences between the pastel hues of the first to the darker reds and browns of the latter. They read a short text that explains how color perceptions change with progressive macular degeneration and may be shocked to discover that some of the artist's most famous paintings resulted directly from his growing visual impairment. They also discuss that artists who have painted most of their lives can continue doing so from memory or investigate the contributions of other disabled artists, writers, composers or scientists they may know of.

Finally, students analyze *Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth (1948). Initially, most students do not recognize the painting as the depiction of a disabled woman crawling through the grass toward her house on a hill. However, working back from the title, and again applying the kinds of questions they have asked before, students take a closer look and see the atrophied and twisted limbs, discuss that Christina in the painting, rather than serving as a passive visual object, is not someone to be pitied or feared, but is actively engaged with her world. This preparatory activity has primed students to think about disabilities in a more differentiated way. At the intermediate-low level or above, students are now better prepared to investigate works of art—either created by a disabled artist or depicting difference—and write or present more nuanced interpretations.

While the activities described above could be used in the K-16 setting, given the appropriate proficiency level, the following exercise is better suited for students at the college level. Before analyzing a set of paintings depicting the aftermath of World War I, students in an advanced literature and culture class first discuss how information technologies, scientific discoveries, bioengineering, plastic surgery, and prosthetics impact the lives of people with disabilities and provide current or historic examples they might know of. In this particular course, they have read statistical information about losses and injuries in World War I, short texts about life in 1920s Berlin, and biographical information about artists who perished (Marc, Macke—mentioned earlier), before interpreting images created by war veteran Otto Dix. Students divide into three groups, each analyzing one painting of severely disabled veterans: *Kriegskrüppel* [war cripples], *Prager Straße*

[Prague street], and *Die Skatspieler* [card players], all from 1920. The groups work on descriptions: The first image depicts a war veteran who sustained severe facial disfigurement; the second shows deformed men begging; and the third gravely disfigured veterans playing cards, one with his feet, another with his mouth because they no longer have arms or hands.

When students come back together as a class, the instructor projects each image as the groups present their descriptions. Then, they compare all three images with one another. Having applied the kinds of questions previously outlined for Fontana's and Wyeth's paintings, combining them with information they have gleaned from their readings, learners may describe how the veterans' damaged, incomplete bodies are held together by crude prosthetics and imagine what their lives might have been like.

As they discuss the artist's possible reasons for creating these particular images, they might find that Dix uses his art to illustrate the human cost of nationalism and mechanized warfare. Students are also likely to see the veterans as victims and outsiders who hide in back rooms or are ignored on the street. Given the background information they bring to the images, most students notice the iron cross for bravery pinned to one of the broken bodies, the crude letter device, which allows the jawless veteran to communicate, and the anti-Semitic flier next to the cripple on the street as the artist's denunciation of resurging nationalism in post-War Germany. Some also tend to interpret Dix's recurring depiction of mangled bodies as evidence his own mental anguish as a veteran and able-bodied survivor, while others might make comparisons to the situation of veterans in their own communities.

This section has provided examples of how visual analysis might help learners develop more nuanced thinking about visible and invisible disabilities. By interpreting representations of diversity through art and investigating an artist's possible intention, students may also be better prepared to engage with notions of difference in folklore, literary texts, and even film. As they apply similar types of questions to different works of art, they not only engage in all three modes of communication, but might also demonstrate that they comprehend, interpret, and analyze an image within its cultural context.

The role of images in L2 courses for professional purposes

Conference sessions, textbooks, and university course catalogs show that language courses for specific purposes are increasingly part of college curricula and generally incorporate business with geographical and cultural content (Doyle, 2012). Since they typically appeal to a mix of majors from Business, Economics, Engineering, Public Health, and the Humanities, integrating art and other types of imagery helps support, as Anderson (2017) states, both conventional literacy skills and learners' abilities to access divergent concepts and information.

A first example for including art in a business-focused language course comes from Diaz (2016), whose Spanish program also incorporates art from the elementary level on. While her instructional setting allows her students to physically visit a museum, a virtual art gallery can stand-in as students research how museums make decisions as to which types of art are displayed, how art is acquired, and how it is

marketed. She provides students with several skit scenarios ranging from discussions in an artist's studio with art critics, agents, a gallery owner, to an opening reception or art auction at a gallery with the artist, a wealthy art collector, and an overseas investor to an art museum, where employees discuss marketing strategies for newly acquired art and how to tie it to the museum's mission.

In a second advanced language course that focuses on sustainable food production, among other topics, students begin by analyzing and comparing several labels and logos for food products from German-speaking countries and the US. They discuss what the logos and colors try to communicate to the consumer about the products. Then the class works with two specific logos (here: Wyman's blueberries and Sun Maid raisins), some statistical information on blueberry and raisin production in Maine and California, and a photograph of a migrant worker village. They relate all of the information to the lithograph *Sun Mad* (Hernández, 1998) which unmasks the dangers agro-industry poses to migrant laborers' health, and further compare it to the painting *Asparagus Picker* (Soto Murphy, n.d.), which reveals the worker as faceless parts of the landscape [see Appendix C].

Adding an arts dimension to the discussion of food production and sustainability results in more thoughtful subsequent engagement with media reports on migrant labor in Switzerland's and the EU's agro-industry. Students are more prepared to analyze both positive and negative bias in reports and user comments in the current debate on recruiting migrant workers versus employing registered refugees (Deter, 2015; Sommerkamp, 2016). The final debate on sustainable food production, migrant labor, and corporate social responsibility is much richer and nuanced as a result.

Art and poetry

As outlined earlier, visual analyses of the *Kindertransport* [children's transport] sculpture preceding engagement with literary texts about the Holocaust and Exile can contribute to students' deeper understanding of both the texts and art. At the intermediate-low proficiency level and higher, this pairing of image with text provides learners with multiple opportunities for interpersonal, interpretive and presentational communication practice. Since poetry, like art, employs imagery and symbolism, using both simultaneously further help students develop both their visual and textual interpretation skills.

In one activity, students read the poem "*Sachliche Romanze*" [Objective Romance] (Kästner, 1929) about a couple that breaks up in a café after an eight-year relationship. With a partner, they receive three images of couples in cafés and decide which one best illustrates the poem. Learners not only justify their choice through quotes from the poem, but since the poem is also one of the most famous examples of the German artistic movement referred to as *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity], they also have to take the images' style into consideration.

A second image-based activity helps students better understand Petrarchist love poems, in which a beloved's body parts are likened to plants, fruits, minerals, and gemstones. Given the subject matter, this activity is better suited for college-level language students, who, before reading a sonnet by Hoffmannswaldau (1670/2012), analyze a painting of Hapsburg emperor Rudolf II as the god of seasons by Giuseppe

Arcimboldo (1590). On their cell phones, they look up what the specific vegetables, fruits, and flowers the painter uses as body parts could mean and develop a hypothesis. As they then analyze the poem they might understand that the listing of delectable body parts suggests male consumption of the female body and explain how the choice of food, plants, or minerals also exemplifies the beloved's character. When students then read Ziegler's (1739/1994) poetic refusal to describe her appearance, listing only qualities of mind, they are more likely to understand her female protest against her male contemporaries' work.

The students' final assignment requires them to create their own allegorical food portraits referencing food items they feel best symbolize their identities. They either draw the portrait or arrange food in shape of an image, take a photo on their cell phones, and pass it on to a classmate who is tasked with interpreting the image. Students have a choice of writing a characterization, adapting the poem they have read to fit the image, or creating an original poem about the type of person they think their partner is. The resulting conversations about the images and interpretations tend to be lively and nuanced.

Conclusion

Adding art-based dimensions to all kinds of activities at various proficiency and instructional levels allows students to develop substantial visual interpretation abilities in their L2. As students analyze, locate, and create images, some learners find it easier to understand textual information, whereas others become less apprehensive when they analyze a painting, photograph, or film. Warm-up activities based on art may also help lower learners' anxiety before they interpret paintings or complex texts. Asking students to describe a painting and apply the basics of color theory can move even novice learners toward more complex language use. They are more likely to understand how images convey bias and influence textual interpretation. As they create their own thoughtful combinations of text and images through digital narratives, slide presentations, and posters, learners think more deeply about the nature of visual communication. Finally, the principled inclusion of art also allows students to understand that visual representations deeply influence the construction of societal values. In other words, the students might better understand how the L2 cultural products reflect specific perspectives, values, beliefs, and influence cultural practices. Since the analytic skills acquired in an image-rich L2 curriculum transfer to the students' L1, the abilities they develop are essential for navigating world awash in authentic and modified visual information.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

Appendix A

Gruppe [group] 1:

Was ist passiert? Bitte erklären Sie, warum Rotkäppchen gesucht wird. Was hat sie getan? Schreiben Sie kurze Pressenotiz und erklären Sie! [What happened? Please explain, why Little Red Riding Hood is wanted by the police. What did she do? Write a short news report an explain!]

MÖRDERIN GESUCHT! [Murderess wanted!]

€200,000 BELOHNUNG! [reward] *INFORMATION: 089-64 45 99 EMAIL: Polizei@waldhausen.de*

Gruppe 2:

Was ist passiert? Bitte erklären Sie, warum Rotkäppchen gesucht wird. Was hat sie getan? Schreiben Sie kurze Pressenotiz und erklären Sie!

Syllabus matters

MÖRDERIN GESUCHT!

€200,000 BELOHNUNG! INFORMATION: 089-64 45 99 EMAIL: Polizei@ waldhausen.de

Appendix B

A. *Analyse einer Skulpturengruppe* [analysis of a group sculpture]

1. *Finden Sie Kommilitonen aus Gruppe A und beantworten Sie die Fragen zusammen* [Find classmates from group A and answer the questions together]:

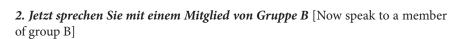   *a. Hier ist ein kleiner Ausschnitt einer Skulpturengruppe: Was für eine Person ist das? / Wohin sieht sie? / Was fühlt sie?* [Here is a small section of a group sculpture: what kind of a person is ist? /What is s/he looking at? /What does s/he feel?]

b. Hier ist ein größerer Ausschnitt - Achten Sie auf die Körpersprache: Wo sind die Personen? / Wohin gehen sie? / Wie fühlen sie sich? Warum? [Here is a larger section—observe the body language: Where are the people?/ Where are they going? / How do they feel? Why?]

c.   Beschreiben   Sie   die   ganze Skulpturengruppe: Wo ist die Skulptur vielleicht?/ Wer soll sie sehen?/ Wer sind die Personen?/ Wohin gehen beide Gruppen?/ Woran erinnert das Monument vielleicht (warum)? [Describe the entire group sculpture: Where could it be? / Who should see it? / Who are the people in the sculpture? / What could this monument memorialize (why)?]

2. Jetzt sprechen Sie mit einem Mitglied von Gruppe B [Now speak to a member of group B]

Vergleichen Sie die Bilder und finden Sie einen Titel für die Skulptur. [Compare your images with hers/his and find a title for the sculpture.]

Syllabus matters

3. *Hausaufgabe:* *Recherchieren Sie "Kindertranporte aus Nazi Deutschland" —schreiben Sie einen kurzen Aufsatz und bereiten Sie ein kurzes Referat vor.* [Homework: Research "childrens' transports from Nazi Germany"—write a short essay and prepare a brief oral presentation.]

Appendix C

1. *Vergleichen Sie die Logos für Blaubeeren und Rosinen mit den statistischen Informationen.* [Compare the logos for blueberries and raisins with the statistical information.]

(a) *2015 wurden in Maine 101 Millionen Pfund Blaubeeren geerntet. Der Staat hatte 62 Millionen Dollar Einkommen und*

10,062 Erntehelfer, vor allem aus Mexiko, Guatemala und der Karibik. Ganze Familien leben während der Erntezeit in Hütten, die weder fließendes Wasser noch Heizung haben, dafür aber einen zentral gelegenen Wasch- und Kochraum. [In 2015, 101 million pounds of blueberries were harvested in Maine. The state made 62 million dollars and employed 10.062 agricultural workers, mainly from Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean. Whole families live in cabins without running water or heat during harvesting season, but they have access to centrally located cooking areas and group bathrooms.]

(b) *Fast alle Rosinen in den USA werden in Amerika produziert. Amerikaner konsumieren bis zu 2 Pfund Rosinen pro Kopf. Pro Jahr werden ca. 484,000 Tonnen von ca. 3,500 Farmen produziert.* [The majority of raisins available in the U.S. are locally produced. Americans consume up to two pounds of raisins per person. Every year approximately 484,000 tons are produced on about 3.500 farms.]

2. *Was sollen die Logos über die Produkte (=Blaubeeren/Rosinen) aussagen und wie passen sie mit den Produkten (nicht) zusammen?* [What do the logos intend to convey about the products (=blueberries/raisins) und what do they (not) convey?]

3. Sehen Sie das Foto von der Unterkunft für Blaubeerpflücker an und vergleichen Sie die Lebensbedingungen der Erntehelfer in dem Dorf mit der Lithographie Sun Mad *von Ester Hernández und dem Gemälde von Consuela Soto Murphy* Asparagus picker *(Spargelpflücker). Wie stehen die Lebensbedingungen der Arbeiter im Kontrast zu dem Image, das die Firma über ihr Logo kommunizieren möchte?* [Look at the foto of the migrant workers' cabins and compare the living circumstances to Ester Hernández' lithograpy "Sun Mad" and the painting "Asparagus picker" by Consuela Soto Murphy. How do art and the workers' cabins contrast with the companys' logos?]