Media literacy at all levels: Making the humanities more inclusive

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Abstract

The decline of the humanities, combined with the arrival of students focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), represent an opportunity for the development of innovative approaches to teaching languages and literatures. Expanding the instructional focus from traditional humanities students, who are naturally more text-focused, to address the needs of more application-oriented STEM learners ensures that language instructors prepare all students to become analytical and critical consumers and producers of digital media. Training students to question motives both in their own and authentic media messages and to justify their own interpretations results in more sophisticated second language (L2) communication. Even where institutional structures impede comprehensive curriculum reform, individual instructors can integrate media literacy training into their own classes. This article demonstrates ways of reaching and retaining larger numbers of students at all levels—if necessary, one course at a time.

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Today's students routinely spend more than seven hours a day consuming media, creating their own digital documents, and making virtual social connections across the globe (Graber and Mendoza, 2012). Although world language should "be the most real subject" for these "digital natives," since it is about communication as well as virtual and potentially real travel (Prensky, 2010, p. 77), interest in pursuing second language (L2) literature-based majors at the university-level is steadily declining (Glenn, 2011). In order to remain relevant, language educators have added visual media to literature and other text-based material to their courses to provide their students with diverse insights into a target culture's value systems. Increasingly, teachers at all instructional levels innovate courses with technologies outlined in ACTFL's 21st Century Skills Map (2011), such as promoting varied language practice through presentational media (Castañeda, 2013), or providing immersive intercultural experiences through communication technologies (Liaw, 2006). As a result, K-12 language instruction is now linked to "college- and career-readiness" (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, p. 1) and the recognition of culturally distinctive viewpoints (California Department of Education, 2010) by reading on-line print and viewing visual media (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2009). At the college level, too, language classes have seen a wide array of technology use, while literature faculty engaged in digital humanities have, as Pannapacker (2013) states, integrated digitally enhanced scholarly work, literature, or historical documents into their courses.

Technologies and access to information are changing at an unprecedented pace. Educators teach in a reality where the visual and verbal messages—in print, image, and sound—are "so persuasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered" (McLuhan, 1967, p. 26). Since the "world's volume of information will soon be doubling every few hours" (Prensky, 2010, p. 1), the ability to analyze information from all angles is more vital than ever. As language teachers help their students gain functional linguistic proficiency and cultural competence through media and literature, they must also ensure that students develop critical analysis capabilities in their L2. This raises some pertinent questions: (a) How do students, who engage with, understand, and use digital media, gain a differentiated understanding of culturally-based humanistic values in their own and the target language? (b) How can educators integrate the core principles of media literacy into their teaching to ensure that students develop "habits of inquiry and skills of expression needed by critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world" (National Association of Media Literacy Education, 2013)? (c) Could a substantive change in pedagogical approach provide a crucial link between critical thinking skills embedded in the humanities and reverse the steady decline in humanities enrollments, thus attracting students to upper-level L2 literature courses, which purport to teach innovative, creative, and analytic thinking?

Media literacy at all levels

As we seek to answer these questions, we will discuss how to adjust more traditionally text-based courses to accommodate the growing number of visual-spatial learners, while still reaching other types of students. We recognize that institutional structures can stifle comprehensive language program reform and will demonstrate how individual instructors can explicitly link language instruction to communication, media analysis, literary interpretation, and visual literacy. We will provide examples of how to train students to "understand how media reflect and influence language and culture" as they "use appropriate technologies when interpreting messages, interacting with others and producing written, oral and visual messages" (ACTFL, 2011; Ohio Department of Education, 2012, p. 2).

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Overcoming institutional constraints to curriculum reform

Burgeoning technologies, shifting national security priorities, and waning interest in pursuing traditional literature-based language studies combine to create a sense of crisis for many established K-16 language programs. To meet the challenges, language faculty at all levels integrate a variety of media with study of exemplary texts in order to help students "develop habits of mind, to develop a sense of how to reason rigorously, how to express ideas in a compelling way, and how to write well" (Sorenson, 2013, para. 3). Initiatives range from creating courses on film, translation, history of the language, specialized language —taught in the target language—to literature in translation. Where non-literary L2 courses are not *ad hoc* offerings, but rather form a clearly defined pathway toward a degree, programs have attracted non-humanities majors to pursue secondary language BAs. Because they are also given the opportunity to receive specific non-literary training that counts toward their language degree, these students enroll in L2 literature courses and, in addition to reading and listening, develop versatile and effective writing and speaking abilities. Literature courses in translation, however, regardless of their importance to the institution's general education mission, do not appear to function as viable feeder courses for L2 literature classes. On the contrary, they could very well sound the death knell of any literature-based language program, if it fails to prepare its students to "cope with the more sophisticated forms of literary registers" in the target language and do little to further language proficiency (Blake & Kramsch, 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, if perceived progress is what makes continued L2 learning attractive (Macaro, 2008), separating L2 use and content teaching through English not only impedes advanced L2 acquisition, but might actually, as Coleman (2005) surmises, undermine motivation for further language study.

Humanities faculty undertake curricular reforms because they believe two things: first, a liberal arts education will be as transformative for digital natives as it was for them (Bowen, 2012, p. 20) and, second, it promotes "skills in communication, interpretation, linking and synthesizing domains of knowledge,

and imbuing facts with meaning and value" (Commission on the Humanities, 2013, p. 35). Within the liberal arts, however, language programs have to contend with the tenacious institutional bifurcation of the language and literature faculty, who teach "curricula, in which a two- or three-year language sequence feeds into a set of core courses primarily focused on canonical literature" (MLA, 2007, p. 2). Academic programs in which "humanists do research while language specialists provide technical support and basic training" (MLA, 2007, p. 3) usually hamper cross-departmental discussions on issues of language acquisition and approaches to teaching literature (Donato & Brooks, 2004). Because there is no discussion, younger instructors from both sides of the aisle, who already come to their jobs with considerable technological expertise, can find a more traditionally structured department stifling. As a result, virtual non-communication on program goals, objectives, outcomes assessments, and pedagogical approaches impede the development of a well-articulated language and content curriculum.

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Doubtless, both language and literature faculty agree that they strive to help students reach advanced-level language proficiency but can only achieve this goal, so Swain (2001) argues, if grammar is consistently integrated into content instruction and not "disconnected from the content it conveys and the functions it serves (p. 59)," and all courses systematically build upon and complement each other. While it is understandable that administrative pressure for enrollments in upper-level literature classes can motivate faculty to offer literature courses in translation, Blake and Kramsch (2013) assign some blame for not providing more integrated L2 instruction to "literature professors solely concerned with teaching content," (p. 6) who, in a bisected department, have the power to dictate the curriculum.

Clearly, some institutions' wholesale curricular overhauls have successfully addressed the language-literature divide. Their faculty vociferously "stress instruction in content and language from start to finish" (MLA, 2009, p.5) and have shared their strategies with the academic community (see, for example: Maxim, Höyng, Lancaster, Schaumann, & Aue, 2013; Byrnes, Maxim, & Norris, 2010; Pfeiffer & Byrnes, 2009). Other curriculum revision projects (e.g., Sorenson, 2013), while not expressly endorsing the prevailing narrow model for undergraduate language programs (MLA, 2007), do not acknowledge the impediment it presents to substantive change. The fact remains that students are not clamoring to take upper-level literature courses in traditionally structured language programs, and if faculty and administrators continue to ignore the institutional and curricular divide, they might further exacerbate the very humanities crisis they are seeking to address. Thus, where departments or institutions are remiss, innovative individuals on both sides of the aisle must begin by making changes in their own courses and by creating a space for discussing the development of suitable goals, assessments, and pedagogies.

Teaching approaches and learning styles

Cross-aisle collaboration takes on added urgency with the influx of students focused on science, engineering, technology, and mathematics (STEM), especially in those departments in which the approach to teaching upper-level L2 literature courses has remained remarkably static. Like those who typically pursue humanities majors, STEM students, who gravitate toward advanced language courses at the university level, do so because they want to develop their global communication skills. Busse and Walter (2013) have identified the language/content and faculty divide as well as diminished opportunities to build task-relevant proficiency as detrimental to student motivation. This would explain why very few STEM students enroll in advanced L2 literature courses, even if they are interested in the target language culture. Since students' abilities and prior preparation are as important to academic success as is the compatibility of their individual learning styles with the instructor's approach to teaching (Felder & Henriques, 1995), we argue it is not necessarily lack of interest in L2 literature per se that keeps students out of upper-level courses. Instead, the changing make-up of the student body has created a mismatch between the traditional teacher-centered, text-focused approach to literature instruction and the strategies students use to learn.

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Each type of learner preferentially focuses on different types of information, operates on perceived information in different ways, and achieves understanding at different rates (Felder, 1993). While learners might have particularly strong logical, spatial, verbal, or other abilities, they use multiple intelligences or a variety of strategies to acquire the material (Gardner, 1983, 1999), and develop learning preferences along two dimensions, ranging from reflective observation to active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). STEM students, for example, tend to have well-developed visual-spatial abilities (Coxon, 2013), and generally fare better in film-based language classes or those that provide immersive experiences and real-life applications of language (Silverman, 2002). On the other hand, students whose proclivities already tend toward humanities subjects generally have well-developed verbal abilities, and it is not surprising that they thrive in more traditional, literature-based language programs. According to Silverman (2002), their strongly developed auditory-sequential abilities enable them to think in words, follow oral cues, retain information through repetition, learn from explicit instruction, memorize effectively, sound out words, focus on details, be comfortable with one solution, and easily develop verbal fluency (p. 59). Visual-spatial learners, on the other hand, learn by doing. They tend to read and think in images, develop their own methods for problem-solving, learn best by seeing connections, are big-picture thinkers, arrive at unusual solutions, accept ambiguity, and have to visualize words before spelling them (Silverman, 2002, p. iv).

Teachers in more traditional L2 literature courses primarily discuss texts orally and ask students to find details to support an interpretation, often without prior scaffolding. They may not be aware that auditory, text-based teaching is challenging for learners who acquire the material more effectively if they can create visual connections to a text. For some students, this approach also creates a high-anxiety class atmosphere and is not conducive to sustained and original student responses (Hoecherl-Alden, 2006). When seen in the context of C.P. Snow's (1959/2012) "two cultures" paradigm, the fundamentally different communication and learning styles in a class composed of humanists and scientists resembles that of a multicultural student body, for which Banks (2012) also recommends differentiated instruction. We argue that language educators who find new ways of engaging diverse types of learners (Felder & Henriques, 1995) can attract STEM students to L2 literature classes so that they benefit from "the humanistic aspects of science and social science—the imaginative, creative aspect, and the aspect of rigorous critical thought" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 2).

Where technology and student-centered learning intersect

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What looms even larger than pressure created by STEM majors in language programs is, as Bloom and Johnston (2010) have shown, the fact that students come to college with well-developed collaborative networking skills, which they already use extensively outside of the educational establishment (p. 115). This leaves no doubt that the "digital revolution is also a social revolution" which has ushered in "new ways of viewing knowledge, the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, and the very relation between teachers and their students and between students themselves" (Kramsch, 2013, p. xii). As a result, successful language instruction at all levels should rely more on student-driven learning and be "the very opposite of teaching by telling" (Prensky, 2010, p. 13). Relinquishing sole control over content and delivery mode in favor of more student-centered teaching means that the "most important changes required of educators are not technological, but rather conceptual" (Prensky, 2010, p. 13).

Educators, who espouse this shift toward a student-centered pedagogy, find themselves gravitating toward project-based approaches to learning—a contemporary iteration of the Socratic method. In fact, precisely because Socratic thinking is a social practice, it cannot be taught well "unless it informs the spirit of classroom pedagogy" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 55). From a language acquisition point of view, real-life applications of students' language skills in addition to appropriate input are essential for sustained comprehension and production (Swain, 2000), while well-designed collaborative tasks allow students to reflect on gaps in their knowledge and work out "possible solutions through hypothesis formation and testing, relying on their joint linguistic resources" (Swain, 2001, p. 56). This also allows the instructor to create a space where all types of learners have opportunities to draw on differentiated mental processes as they convert

information to knowledge, both through active experimentation and reflective observation (Kolb, 1984). Curricula that carefully integrate project-based learning with Socratic teaching approaches require students to become more self-directed, even co-creators of course content, while teachers serve as coaches rather than the sole purveyors of knowledge.

In this type of instructional setting, the teacher sustains learner participation by providing instructive feedback on both language and content, allowing learners time to express themselves and by creating a class atmosphere that is governed by clear rules for speaking and listening and in which everyone's communicative needs and intentions are respected (Knezic, 2013). Class projects are centrally integrated into the curriculum, organized around key questions, involve inquiry and knowledge building, allow students to design and manage their work, focus on real world solutions, and include effective communication of results to an audience (Newmann, 1996; Thomas, 2000). The teacher facilitates learning by listening to intended meanings, helping students reformulate, and, above all, asking open-ended questions to check for comprehension and sustain students' L2 communication (Knezic, 2013). As a result, students learn about the L2 culture and literature in and through the language and have multiple opportunities to practice their language in interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive modes of communication. Eslami and Garver (2013) confirm that visual-spatial learners, who tend to be hands-on problem-solvers, have more successful language learning experiences, where real-life language and content-learning projects deepen the language acquisition process through active engagement, purpose-driven collaboration, interaction, and clear assessment parameters (for suggestions on how to implement project-based assignments in the language classroom, see Alan & Stoller, 2005).

Well-designed language projects naturally lend themselves to meaningful technology integration. Castañeda's (2013) digital storytelling project, for example, highlights how high school Spanish students produce multimodal personal narratives using sound, text, and images through process-oriented writing and multiple revisions, and then communicate their stories to a broader audience through social media. At the college level, digital humanists are also adopting project-based approaches to enhance the core methods of a liberal arts curriculum creating teacher-student research teams, collaboration among cohorts, and online presentations of results (Pannapacker, 2013)—certainly a viable model for advanced-level L2 literature courses.

Considering that student-centered projects and other assignments require learners to obtain knowledge in ways that are guided, but not controlled by the teacher, technology serves as "an important tool to prepare students for classroom discussion and to increase class time available for those discussions and other active learning" rather than to deliver content (Bowen, 2012, p. 21). In its logical consequence, student-driven learning through technology can lead even instructors of novice-level classes to explore ways of "flipping the classroom" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012), allowing learners to acquire facts by watching lectures, reading explanations of a particular grammar point, or hearing conversation

starters online, outside of the classroom, and at their own pace (p. 48). Teachers then utilize class time more effectively for communicative practice, collaboration, and analytical tasks.

Taking steps toward becoming multi-literate

In our fluid and ever-changing digital landscape technological capability is inextricably intertwined with information, visual and media literacy, and, when L2 media are involved, intercultural literacy. In fact, well-articulated language programs are often the only places on campus which systematically train students to become interculturally proficient.

In our fluid and ever-changing digital landscape technological capability is inextricably intertwined with information, visual and media literacy, and, when L2 media are involved, intercultural literacy. In fact, well-articulated language programs are often the only places on campus which systematically train students to become interculturally proficient (Maxim, 2000; Swaffar & Arens, 2005). In order to provide insights into culturally specific behaviors, language educators at all instructional levels habitually use films, commercials, music videos, or other authentic media. They select media appropriate to the students' proficiency level, the task at hand, and for the purpose of illustrating particular cultural or linguistic concepts. The media-based materials also engage their students visually and emotionally while paralinguistic features help clarify communication. As they integrate media into their lesson plans, teachers structure assignments to facilitate and test student comprehension. Various instructional techniques, ranging from uninterrupted viewing, freeze frame, and soundless viewing to viewing with sound only, help learners manage multimodal target language information. Multiple viewings, each guided by different sets of activities, simultaneously focus students' attention on various aspects of the digital document. Conversely, asking students to analyze a script or a movie still before viewing or listening, facilitates comprehension and deepens discussions during or after the viewing or listening process. Despite the fact that these and other techniques help students comprehend L2 communication, they do not necessarily ensure that students develop sophisticated analytical capabilities.

Indeed, despite the ubiquitous use of technology and media to enhance even those courses based on a narrowly defined literary canon, Baker (2012) finds that educators often do not explicitly teach about media and visual literacy. In some cases, they even resist integrating literacy training into the curriculum (Scheibe, 2009). In order to ensure that students learn to isolate and recognize stereotypes or separate factual from propagandistic information in their L2, media-based assignments must be designed to help students build on "traditional literacy skills to include the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information" (Naiditch, 2013, p. 337). Moving from L2 comprehension to understanding how media influences beliefs, behaviors, and points of view therefore requires, as Blake and Kramsch (2013) state, that both students and teachers obtain "a basic degree of functional computer literacy" and learn "to exercise a critical literacy as

consumers of technology, and, eventually, a rhetorical literacy as future producers of technology" (p. 23).

In a classroom, where teachers and students already form a learning community and employ open-ended Socratic questioning methods, this is not such a big step. In addition to creating comprehension questions, instructors design their assignments to guide students toward accessing information effectively and efficiently. Rather than posing content questions, which the instructor generally formulates with specific outcomes in mind, more open-ended activities enable students to explore what type of media it is, determine for whom it was produced, what the message is, and analyze how it provokes emotional responses. In language teaching, "it is all in the way the activities are implemented so as to engage and foster a student's own sense of agency" and constant reflection on intercultural themes (Blake & Kramsch, 2013, p. xvii). Savvy technology users do not only have "the ability to use, manage, assess, and understand technology" (International Technology Education Association, 2007, p. 17) but can also "use digital media critically as a way of improving learning, instruction, and intercultural communication" (Naiditch, 2013, p. 337).

Since critical media use involves the ability to analyze visual information, the first step is the development of actively engaged viewing habits. Providing students with opportunities to discuss disjunctive images is one avenue for reflection on the nature of visual communication. Magritte's painting *La trahison des images* [The Treachery of Images] (1929), which depicts a pipe with a written subtitle informing the beholder *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* [This is not a pipe], for example, functions as a perfect metaphor for multi-modal media communication and illustrates the complex relationship between words, images, and real objects. Even at lower proficiency levels, learners can discuss what is and what appears to be and determine how this painting relates to communication through film and other media. Iturbide's photograph *Mujer angel* [Angel woman] (1979), on the other hand, lends itself to a different, multi-sensory approach to image analysis, if the instructor first asks students to describe and justify how the picture evokes smells, sounds, temperatures, and textures. This photograph of an indigenous woman in traditional Seri dress walking into the Sonoran desert while carrying a boom box provokes lively and analytical target-language discussions at any proficiency level and in any language. This technique allows instructors to guide also those learners who have strong verbal abilities and are therefore more literal in their approach to visual communication, toward more sophisticated interpretations. Simultaneously, class discussion underscores the multilayered nature of artistic expression and interpretation, and therefore promotes greater tolerance for ambiguity.

Once students have accepted the ambiguous nature of visual communication, basic L2 film analysis is a logical next step. To this end, language educators choose simple plots that do not require complex vocabulary. One film that lends itself to such L2 literacy training is the short, animated film *El vendedor de globos* [The balloon seller] by Giró (2001), which is widely available on file sharing sites. Although made in Spain, it can be used in any language, since the only Spanish word that appears, and in writing, is *orfanato* [orphanage]; the rest of the film is

composed solely of sounds, music, and images and contains no dialogue. It tells the simple story of an orphan in search of someone to love. When a balloon seller gives her a balloon, it carries her over the city to an old woman who becomes her family. The vocabulary needed to discuss the story and the film techniques is novice-level. This short film uses sounds very effectively to create moods, and as the students describe the straightforward plot, they can also explain how the filmmaker conveys feelings of joy, sadness, and loneliness through sound, music, image, color, cuts, and camera angles, without having to use technical terms. Through this simple additional step, students are reminded that their language course is designed to help them acquire functional proficiency, while concurrently ensuring that they develop the habit of justifying their interpretations with specific evidence from the film in the target language.

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As they explicitly design their language courses around the development of multiple literacies, it is essential that instructors not merely use images, technology, and media to visually enhance reading materials or provide "a break from regular classroom learning," but realize that the goal is always "to promote and extend learning" (Stanley, 2013, p. 9). Film clips, funny commercials, movie trailers, or dubbed versions of Disney movies, to name a few, only promote media literacy effectively if they are soundly integrated into the curriculum and form the basis for intercultural comparisons or other activities requiring critical engagement. Even though students may reap some linguistic benefits from simply watching a film clip, not asking them to engage with it analytically encourages passive media consumption and undermines the development of critical viewing habits. A useful checklist Rogow (2009) provides can help instructors ensure that their assignments facilitate the development of media literacy skills. She stipulates that tasks should allow students to ask their own questions about media, use diverse means of expression, search for multiple sources of information, and justify their opinions while teachers allow for diverse interpretations, assess media literacy skills, and encourage application of findings to other subject areas.

From theory to practice: Making L2 literature accessible to language learners

Although students do not view creation of, participation in, and collaboration on media projects as "new concepts they must learn to embrace, but a familiar part of life" (Bloom & Johnston, 2010, p. 115), media exposure alone does not guarantee critical engagement or even a more sophisticated approach to using digital media (Castañeda, 2013, p. 71). Yet, students who have produced their own video "become more acutely aware of the ways in which their message is being framed and may potentially be received" (Bloom & Johnston, 2010, p. 119).

Media literacy at all levels

As students learn to formulate their own questions about the media or, if they create a media document, communicate their ideas, they must navigate and accept a variety of possible interpretations. In doing so, they become more adept at justifying opinions and providing analyses.

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In an elementary Spanish class, Aquaroni Muñoz's (1998) novella *La sombra de un fotografo* [The shadow of a photographer] provides students with an opportunity to learn how to analyze a literary text critically. The story relates the consequences faced by a young photographer who ignores a warning that the camera may steal his spirit. While reading the book, a variety of digital media are employed to make it more accessible. This includes students visiting the street where the protagonist lives via Google Maps, viewing videos to explain the Spanish shopping experience, matching images to the descriptions of the photos in the novella, and music, specifically the jazz tunes of Charlie Parker, which the young photographer uses to calm himself when stressed. The images help students visualize the type of photography the protagonist creates. They also understand how disconcerting it would be to see yourself standing in the street when you look through the lens of your camera, only to discover that you are not visible to the naked eye. The images also facilitate a discussion in the L2 regarding the ethics of posting images of others on social media sites without their permission. The video allows students to compare their own shopping experiences to that of the protagonist and to understand the vital role of language in this task, while highlighting the relationships formed in a Madrid *barrio* [neighborhood].

Once they have completed the novella, students are asked to explain why the author does not provide a clear resolution to the reader. In groups, they share the questions that remain unanswered along with hypotheses for this oversight. Students' theories range from accusing the author of being lazy or not knowing how to finish a story to anticipating a sequel. While engaging in this discussion they realize that they, as readers, are now actively participating in the story, and they conclude that this may have been the author's intention all along. After in-depth discussions, students can choose either to develop a digital narrative of the novella or to write an additional chapter. In the latter they must decide between providing resolution or continuing to leave the reader with thought-provoking questions.

In a second-year Spanish class, digital storytelling moves beyond personal narratives by integrating critical textual analysis in the L2. Students are directed to produce a 30-second digital version of one of the short stories or poems they have read and discussed in class using a software program called Animoto (Hsiao,

Jefferson, Clifton, & Clifton, 2006/2013). Much like Castañeda (2013) has outlined, the instructor first assesses her students' technological capabilities before beginning the project and integrates some L2 training into the language class to enable students to both use and speak about technology. She also provides a grading rubric, which emphasizes narrative perspective and original interpretation while allowing students to stay true to the essence of the text.

As they learn to produce their own multi-modal interpretations of the literary text in L2, students also need to ensure that they do so critically and analytically and justify their choices within those parameters. Thus, students submit both the digital narrative and an essay explaining their image, music, background, intertext, tone, and rhythm choices to demonstrate how they support their interpretation. Although the instructor does not give directions on appropriate uses of tense, aspect, or mode beforehand, the digital narrative and the essay facilitate the use of level-appropriate grammar. Since the objective of both the written and audio-visual text is the effective communication of ideas, grammar simply becomes a means to an end, and clearly illustrates Swain's (2000) paradigm of language acquisition as a socially constructed process. As a result, students use the preterit and imperfect or future in the digital narrative, while the essay is most effectively written in the present subjunctive and, occasionally, even the imperfect subjunctive.

Both digital narrative and essay are submitted at the same time. Animoto, the free software used for this project, allows the student to share a web address with the instructor eliminating the need for sending vast amounts of data via email. The instructor provides written feedback about initial impressions of the video followed by further comments after reading the accompanying essay and a second viewing of the video. These steps allow students to see to what extent their explanations and justifications have altered the viewer's perception. Students have the opportunity to edit and resubmit both video and essay. Finally, in-class viewing of a selection of digital narratives provides a review of all of the readings covered during the semester while facilitating sophisticated debates. The instructor chooses two divergent digital narratives for each text and, in groups, students must decide which is the more effective and explain their reasoning to the class.

Differentiated viewing and critical analysis also occur both in a third-year Spanish and a German class, where an animated short film without dialogue is used. Blaas's animated short film *Alma* (Hokes & Rowan, 2009) is about a little girl who skips through the snow-covered streets in a small town. She writes her name, Alma, which also means soul in Spanish, on a brick wall next to many other first names. As she turns around, she sees a doll, dressed just like her, in a shop window. She enters the shop and, after she touches the doll, becomes trapped inside the doll's body.

Students are grouped in threes and each takes a turn viewing a third of the short film. The two students who are not viewing the film need only close their eyes or turn their backs to the screen. Given that they cannot judge which details are important, each student recounts the segment of the video she or he has seen to his/her group in as much detail as possible. The other two students, who have heard the film, ask questions. Once all groups have concluded their discussions,

they are asked to consider the various meanings of the title, why the director has the girl write her name on the wall, and, after a second viewing, to describe the varied techniques Blaas used to create and amplify tension in the film.

In analyzing and discussing these issues, students learn that there may be multiple layers and meanings associated with each element of a short film. They also see that what is omitted may be equally as important as what is included. Approaching the film in this manner allows learners in both the German and the Spanish classes to then transfer this type of analysis to the interpretation of a short story where they consider the role of the title and the possibility of multiple meanings, and analyze the function of any inclusions or omissions in the narrative.

In the third-year German class, which functions as the gateway course to the upper-level literature curriculum, short research projects follow the discussion of the animated short *Alma,* which, because it does not have any dialog, lends itself to use in any language class. In groups, students take one of the film's main themes —signature, soul, human-like automatons, mirror, and the *doppelgänger* motif— and find out where and how they recur in seminal eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary texts. After having received specific guidelines on structure and content, they use presentational media to share their findings and provide salient course content. They choose appropriate imagery to link these elements to information about texts they will be reading in the course and justify their choices. Their peers rate the presentations according to a rubric they have developed as a class at the beginning of the semester. This, in turn, helps all students formulate their own questions for the presenters. By investigating socio-cultural context, discussing the meaning of pertinent elements contained in the course readings, and interpreting related imagery beforehand, visual-spatial learners approach the complex literary texts with greater confidence. As big picture thinkers who learn best by visualizing (Silverman, 2002), they are also given time to envision what they want to say, so that they, as Tomlinson (2001) suggests, can use their inner voice to prepare for oral communication. Through this approach, students significantly shape course content and delivery, and, as a result, learn how to speak about visual and literary metaphors and symbolism in their L2 while developing clearer oral communication abilities.

In the fifth-semester Spanish course, the discussion of *Alma* and subsequent transfer of analysis techniques to interpreting literary texts has prepared the students to develop their own video in the form of a movie trailer for the first section of Aldecoa's novel *Mujeres de negro* [Women in black] (2000). After having discussed the characteristics and functions of movie trailers, students apply a detailed rubric and directions to highlight what they consider to be the most important aspects of the story. Simultaneously, they are asked to keep in mind that the trailers also sell their fictitious movie. Again, they submit a written justification for all of their choices. Along with individual feedback from the instructor, all trailers are posted on the course website and the class reviews them to argue first for the trailer that best represents the novel and second the trailer that best convinces them to see the movie. Here, too, detailed explanations for their choices are required.

Outlook

The humanities provide avenues for more nuanced approaches to problem-solving through the development of clear thinking, clear writing, and a lifelong engagement with literature and the arts. It is therefore essential that they are made relevant to all students.

The humanities provide avenues for more nuanced approaches to problem-solving through the development of clear thinking, clear writing, and a lifelong engagement with literature and the arts. It is therefore essential that they are made relevant to all students. Concurrently, STEM work is inevitably global, which means that "multilingual communication is intrinsic to today's scientific collaboration and progress" and that languages are "fundamental to furthering every aspect of STEM professions and business" (Globalization and Localization Association, 2013, Inclusion of Language in STEM, para. 3.) Where institutional structure impedes far-reaching curricular redesign and hinders the teaching of content from the beginning and language to the end, the authors have found that carefully sequenced activities designed to develop specific literacies in individual courses benefit all students and help them develop into more autonomous learners. Integrating project-based digital and online exploration at all levels of language proficiency also provides "numerous chances for students and teachers to engage in co-learning experiences that can enhance their respective media literacies" (Bloom & Johnston, 2010, p. 122). Together with more student-centered and adaptive instruction this also ensures the retention of more STEM-focused students in upper-level classes based primarily on literary texts. Even where instructors may not have significant input into the form and shape of the entire curriculum, integrating core principles of media literacy into their own courses will ensure that students learn to analyze culturally-based values and make comparisons between their own and L2 culture.

As students develop greater clarity of written and oral expression, critical and analytic reasoning abilities, and the creativity to think outside the box, project-based, student-centered instruction at all proficiency levels helps them hone the survival skills necessary in an ever-changing economy and an increasingly multicultural society. As a result, they acquire precisely those habits of mind and abilities to interpret, communicate and synthesize facts into knowledge the Commission on the Humanities (2013) urges educators to facilitate and prepares them to navigate greater ambiguity. Where a well-articulated language curriculum has overcome the language-literature divide, has developed regular and open discussions on pedagogy for all faculty, and has clearly integrated non-literary L2 courses into the degree, weaving explicit literacy training into the program is easily done. Curriculum change in more traditional programs, where opportunities for frank discussions about a well-articulated language and content curriculum develop more slowly, can happen too—one course at a time.

Cross-disciplinary collaboration and conversation about twenty-first century learning styles and up-to-date faculty development in the utilization of emerging technologies, not to mention a long-needed redefinition of what constitutes

"literature," is crucial to keeping language teaching and learning vital and relevant to the needs of all students. As the one humanities discipline that also teaches students the intricacies of intercultural communication in another language, adjusting instruction to reach all types of learners provides the potential to address the humanities crisis from within.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our anonymous readers, *NECTFL Review*'s editor Robert Terry, and Tina Passman for their insightful comments and helpful suggestions.

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