Dialog on Language Instruction
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### General Information

- Upcoming Events
- Information for Contributors
- Call for Papers
- Thank You
Welcome to the latest issue of *Dialog on Language Instruction*. It is exciting to see how many of you (more than 30!) have chosen to make contributions to this issue. It shows a great interest in participate in a professional dialog with others in the teaching field here at DLI (and elsewhere, since DLI instructors are not the only ones who read this journal). I would encourage each and every author to develop his or her contribution into an article for a national journal and join in the national dialog on language teaching and learning. Given the limited opportunity for in-person dialog through conferences, written dialog is a viable alternative; it adds to your own credibility, and it enhances the reputation that DLI enjoys.

There is great, cutting-edge information in this issue. I recommend reading the articles carefully, then testing the ideas and suggestions in your own classrooms. Based upon your experiences, continue the dialog—write and submit your own article. The editor welcomes all contributions.

Happy reading!

**BETTY L LEAVER**  
Provost
Understanding Student Complaints

BETTY L LEAVER
Provost

Having administered language programs for six years for the U. S. Department of State, four years for the U.S. Department of Defense, and several years for the U. S. Army, as well as teaching now and then in a university program, assisting organizations with program establishment and development, and, most recently, evaluating the American Council of Teachers of Russian's (ACTR) study abroad programs, I have definitely listened to my share (and more) of student complaints. Today's client-oriented programs advertise sensitivity to student desires, and teachers and administrators in these programs truly do want to please their student-clients.

Although student commentary is one of the primary sources for ascertaining effectiveness of instruction, it is not the only one. Classroom observation, teacher feedback (in programs where more than one teacher shares the student load), and student performance are equally valid sources of feedback.

EVALUATING STUDENT FEEDBACK

In seeking feedback from students on programs, administrators often overlook a number of affective and cognitive variables that color the feedback. One of the most serious errors that new supervisors (and even sometimes experienced ones) frequently make in using student feedback is that they do not evaluate it. Assuming that student feedback is an accurate description of a program's conduct or effectiveness can lead to erroneous perceptions and evaluation on the part of administrators.

Most likely, student feedback will contain elements of veracity and accurate insight. It will also contain error and misperception. Student feedback may be faulty for a number of reasons: nature of the feedback instrument, student-teacher rapport, classroom and external “events,” student expectations, responsibility for student success, and style wars.

Nature of the Feedback Instrument

Feedback instruments can in themselves create the reception of faulty information. Often, the very fact that an administrator is asking for
“input” is interpreted by students to mean that someone wants to know “what is wrong” with the course or program. All too infrequently, students think to look at the program objectively in answering feedback questions and simply list the things that they would like to see changed or improved. Although they may feel that 90% of what they received in the course (teaching techniques, rapport, classroom interaction, materials, pace, etc.) was outstanding, they often only mention the 10% negative experiences in feedback questionnaires. Where this mindset comes from is unclear; however, it is clear that most students take this approach.

The questions on the feedback instrument itself can lead students to reporting only negative elements. Feedback instruments that do not deliberately seek out positive comments, as well as negative comments, provide the administrator with skewed results.

Often, feedback questionnaires are closed instruments. They address preselected topics, using a Liebert scale or forced choice answer, with limited opportunity for students to expound on their actual observations and experiences. As such, the information received by the administrator may be too restricted to be valid.

The actual task of filling out the questionnaire often has an impact on the kinds of feedback provided in the questionnaire by students. When students are rushed, they forget to make important comments. More often than not, they will remember the irritations more vividly and, hence, their responses will be negatively biased. If the student feels that the teacher will know who wrote the comments (especially before giving a course grade) or that administrators are not going to react to the responses, anyway, important information can be omitted, especially problem areas.

Timing of the questionnaire is also an issue. There may not be a perfect time to give the questionnaire. Questionnaires that are filled out before students receive their grades may not reflect their ultimate view of the program, since often the grade they receive colors their perception. On the other hand, for that very reason, having students fill out the questionnaire after they have received their grades, allows the grade to influence their responses, perhaps in ways that are far more subjective than objective.

In short, feedback instruments that do not foster the reporting of both positive and negative elements provide suspect information. If the feedback instruments also restrict input to preselected topics, then the overall impression of the course received by an administrator from reading questionnaires is questionable. Administrators, in reading and evaluating student feedback from questionnaires and other instruments, would do well to keep in mind the circumstances under which the students completed the questionnaires and the kinds of questions contained in it. Such tempered reading allows administrators to deal with hidden biases in interpreting the results of solicited feedback.
Student-Teacher Rapport

As much as we all like to think of ourselves as students, teachers, or administrators who are purely objective in our relationships with others, true objectivity rarely occurs. We can all verify from personal experience that we have greater rapport with some students and teachers than with others. In most situations, some students will have strong rapport with one teacher, while others have minimal rapport with the same teacher, the result being that the class feedback is mixed in judging quality of instruction.

Often, the rapport has little to do with the quality of instruction. Rather, it has much to do with interpersonal dynamics, based probably to a great extent on temperament (Leaver, 1997). Using a Jungian formulation of temperament differences proposed by Keirsey and Bates (1988), consisting of guardians (those who value order, respect authority, and preserve tradition), rations (those who value ideas, question authority, and create new systems), idealists (those who value interpersonal relations, seek harmony, and serve humanitarian goals), and artisans (those who value nature, seek adventure, and make [often artistic] products), it is easy to see that the intersection of temperament must provide the fulcrum for the establishment of teacher-student rapport. Although not without exception, greater rapport has usually been reported when a teacher is of like temperament with a student (Leaver, 1997): Several examples should suffice to explain this. If, for example, a guardian teacher has a rational student, that teacher is apt to be frustrated by the student's constant questioning and unwillingness just to accept the teacher's word. (Especially explanations along the line, “there is no particular reason for that phraseology; just accept it as the Russian way of expressing this idea,” are not appealing to the rations of the world.) The rational student begins to consider the teacher incompetent (why else would the teacher be so sensitive to questioning and criticism), and the teacher begins to consider the student a troublemaker. The idealist teacher who tries to make rational students feel part of a group and works toward cooperative learning and class harmony often very much wants to be liked by all the students (not a realistic goal). The rational students are apt to pull away from so much “touchy-feely” interaction, considering the teacher “flaky,” while the teacher is apt to consider these students difficult to reach or aloof and often is hurt by rational comments that react to events and information without “softening” the wording to protect the feelings of others. The rational teacher often fails to reach idealist students, who, because of the teacher’s interest in the subject matter and focus on developing intellectual skills, think that the teacher does not care about them personally.

When rapport is lacking, for whatever reason, student complaints, both solicited and unsolicited, often miss the mark. The idealist who complains that the teacher does not like him usually means that the teacher has not noticed his efforts or does not routinely ask about his personal experience. Very likely, the idealist has a teacher who is a rational. The artisan who complains that the teacher is too rigid usually means that the
teacher is not giving her enough choice in her classroom and homework activities. Very likely, the artisan has a teacher who is a guardian. The rational who complains that the teacher never gets around to doing any work means that he would like a more intellectual approach to the classroom. Very likely, the rational has a teacher who is an artisan. The guardian who complains that the teacher is disorganized usually means that she would like to have deadlines given in advance and more rules to follow. Very likely, the teacher is a rational.

Teachers who understand this source of rapport can, of course, adjust their behaviors and expectations to match the expectations and needs of the students in their classrooms. (Skilled teachers can determine temperament by observation.) Administrators, in reading student responses to program questionnaires or in counseling students with complaints, would do well to keep in mind some of the reasons for lack of rapport that have little to do with quality of instruction, elicit information from teachers and students that may confirm the source of lack of rapport, and make suggestions for improving rapport (including setting the example of behavior modification to match the temperament-generated needs of teachers).

“Events”

Occasionally, student complaints and feedback are colored by an unusual experience that might be called an “event.” An “event” can occur between students, between a student and a teacher, or even between a student and the program administrators and administration.

Sometimes, groups of students just do not gel. Although there may be good student-teacher rapport in general, students simply may be unable to establish rapport among themselves. Ehrman and Dornyei (1998) suggest that these intragroup and intergroup dynamics create an “invisible classroom” that is every bit as real as the “visible classroom.” Student ego security in the classroom, ability to learn, and perception of the effectiveness of instruction can be strongly influenced by the dynamics of the unseen classroom.

Sometimes, a teacher will unintentionally and unknowingly “push a button” that forever alienates a student. From that point on, the quality of the teacher’s instruction may be unfelt, unaccepted, and even derided by the student who seeks retribution for a perceived injury.

Fortunately, “events” do not happen every day, with every student, or with every teacher. However, when they do, they often result in unsolicited student complaints or in skewing of responses to solicited feedback. Being aware of “events” that might have occurred is one way administrators can balance the biases in feedback.
Student Expectations

Most students approach language learning with a sack full of experiences that they carry around with them. These experiences might be things that they have heard or read about language learning, about the language they are studying, or about the target culture. They might also be actual classroom or in-country experiences with the language they are studying, other languages, or general linguistic preparation. Whatever is in this sack is often hidden to the teacher, but strongly influences the expectations of students in the classroom.

If students expect language learning to be difficult, it probably will be, no matter how the teacher teaches. If they expect language learning to be easy, it probably will be. In such cases, it is better to work on a psychological level at changing students’ perception than to fuss over finding the right instructional method to reach the students.

If students have heard that the language they are studying is easy but they find it difficult, they sometimes assume that the way in which it is being taught is causing the difficulty. (In some cases, of course, this is true.) If, on the other hand, they have heard that the language they are studying is difficult, but it seems very easy, they could interpret the ease in a couple of ways: 1) the teacher is not demanding enough and, therefore, they are not learning enough (otherwise, they would be experiencing the expected difficulties), or 2) the teacher is brilliant. Again, when encountering such attitudes, teachers are probably better off working on a psychological level to change students’ perception.

Students who really like the culture of the language they are studying tend to have an advantage over other students, thanks to higher levels of integrative motivation. Students who absolutely detest the culture of the language they are studying (and this has often happened in Russian studies for various reasons) tend to acquire the language more slowly, being impeded by negative emotions. Unfortunately for teachers who emigrate from that culture, students with such negative attitudes toward the culture can also transfer those negative attitudes to those who represent the culture. Thus, while teachers can work at changing these attitudes (but in the short span of a language course may not be entirely successful), administrators would do well to understand complaints that are culture-biased as being mired in the attitudes from which they arise.

Students who study other languages come to Russian with expectations based on their previous language learning experiences. If they learned well in their previous classes where teachers used a different instructional method from their Russian teacher uses, they may immediately consider their Russian teacher less skilled. They may have expectations for textbooks and textbook activities, classroom activities, teaching approach, and opportunity to apply what they have learned. Circumstances may be such that these expectations are legitimate and not met; they may also be such that they are legitimate but cannot be met for lack of resources. In other instances, the
expectations may be neither legitimate nor fair. What is important here is understanding that often student complaints result from unmet expectations, and ferreting out those expectations is worth the time and effort.

Students who are linguists may well be among the most troublesome in terms of making complaints. They understand linguistic structure and want to get that information quickly about Russian. More important, they often have set ideas about how classes should be taught. These desires and expectations will, indeed, color their response to the course.

**Responsibility for Success**

I am not certain that anyone has yet fully answered the question, “Who is responsible for student success?” Of course, to some extent, students are responsible for their own success. However, are they responsible, if the program does not teach them in ways that facilitate their learning? Some programs (more and more in recent days) make teachers responsible for student success. In such cases, teachers are often evaluated by scores that students make on “objective” tests. (How objective standardized tests are and can be is a topic for another dialogue!)

In any case, students, of course, usually do feel some desire to succeed in their Russian course. When they do not succeed, some students may find it very difficult to accept the responsibility and displace that responsibility onto the teacher. It becomes the teacher’s “fault” for not teaching vocabulary well enough that they cannot use the new words introduced in the lesson—even if they have made little attempt, or little sage attempt, to practice and use the words. Their ego structure will not allow them to take on the responsibility for their lack of success (Ehrman, 1996). Administrators reading student questionnaires need to resolve this issue of responsibility in their own minds (and in stated form for teachers and students) before responding to student complaints.

**Style Wars**

Closely related to rapport is the existence of “style wars,” a term coined by Oxford, Lavine, and Ehrman (1991). Style wars occur when the learning style of the teacher and the learning style of the student clash. The variations of style wars are multiple; a few representative examples should suffice to show the nature of these conflicts. Inductive learners need massive amounts of authentic input and the opportunity to form and test their own hypotheses in learning new grammar; deductive teachers who explain and practice rules deprive these students of their greatest learning strength and frustrate them. (In return, these students might label the teacher too didactic, plodding, or boring.) Deductive learners, on the other hand, need those rules and practice opportunities. If an inductive teacher wants such students to manage authentic materials successfully and to learn new grammar in this fashion, then these students must be taught the learning strategies associated
with induction. They must also have access to grammar rule books with explanations and practice exercises so that they can confirm their hypotheses in the only way that is usually acceptable to them — through an authority. Otherwise, they may contend that the teacher does not know how to explain grammar, is disorganized, or has no obvious goals. Likewise, a sight learner working with a teacher who has an auditory sensory preference may feel that the teacher is unprepared because the number of handouts is insufficient, as is the use of the blackboard. (These are just a couple of the many examples that could be presented.)

More and more programs are now considering learning styles and learner profiles in establishing content and activities in the program. In fact, one element in the definition of contemporary content-based instruction (a syllabus design that is gaining popularity among teachers of commonly taught languages and in a number of U. S. government language programs) is sensitivity to learner needs, including learner profiles (Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Leaver, 1998). Programs that are sensitive to learner profiles are less likely to encounter student complaints emanating from a style war.

In reading thousands of student questionnaires (not an exaggerated number), I have often found that style wars have colored students’ interpretation of classroom conduct. In fact, I have found so many inconsistencies — one student claiming that a teacher is highly disorganized and ineffective and another student in the same class claiming that the same teacher has great insight into student learning needs and is a remarkable instructor — that I will not react to any student complaint until I know the learner profile of both the teacher and the student (for those skilled at determining style through observation, the profile of the student often “leaps off the page” through the words used if the questionnaire is not simply a Liebert scale or multiple-choice response form).

MANAGING STUDENT FEEDBACK

There are ways for administrators to gather accurate and pertinent data from students. The quality of the feedback and the ability of administrators to react wisely to student complaints depends on how the data is gathered and evaluated.

Data Collection

Gathering accurate and reliable data is the first step toward ensuring that student complaints are accurately understood. Good data collection starts with a good feedback instrument. It also includes verification of the results and their interpretations.

There are some commercially available forms for program evaluation. However, the best, in my experience, are those the administrator prepares to fit his or her own program. In putting together the questionnaire, I recommend avoiding the typical Liebert scale or multiple choice responses. More and
better information can be obtained if words are not put into students’ mouths. I also recommend balancing the number of questions likely to elicit negative feedback with those likely to elicit positive feedback. There is absolutely nothing wrong with asking what was right with a program! I like to ask for that information upfront. It tells students immediately that I am looking for balanced input, not just seeking out problems.

Of course, it is important that students feel that their input can be anonymous and that there will be no retaliation for “reporting” a problem. However, there is much to be gained in talking to students beyond what they have written in their reports and questionnaires. The best method I have found is to talk to them in a group, then leave open the option for one-on-one discussion with those who wish to have one. In talking with students, as with the questionnaires, I like to elicit both positive and negative comments and make them aware from the very start that I am looking for an objective and comprehensive view of their experience in the program. Such discussions with students allow an administrator (or a teacher who wants to do the same at the end of a class or even during it) to find out what students really mean when they say there was no organization, few goals, not enough materials, or whatever other complaints they may express. It allows the administrator the opportunity to explore for hidden biases based on style wars or events, to evaluate the perceptiveness of individual students (some students’ observations are more accurate than others because some students are better at these kinds of observations than others), and to determine the depth of students’ experience in language learning (those who are more experienced language learners usually have a better background against which to evaluate their current experience).

Taking unsolicited feedback is also useful. It can come in through an open door policy. It can also arise spontaneously simply because the administrator is frequently in the students’ area or classroom. As with solicited feedback, unsolicited feedback, which is usually more specific, allowing for more accurate understanding and better management of administrative response, must be evaluated against all of the factors that can color the student’s perception.

Talking to teachers is also an important piece of data collection and one that is often omitted. Students do not occupy classrooms alone. Teachers may perceive events, style wars, instruction, and student success in very different ways from many of the students. To obtain the full picture, the teacher’s input is essential. (Even in the case of a single unsolicited complaint, the teacher’s view of the problem is important in determining whether there will be corrective action and what the correction will be.) Classroom observation simply cannot be avoided in data collection. If a picture is worth a thousand words, than an hour of observation is worth a thousand hours of listening to someone else’s description of the class. Yes, often classrooms are not WYSIWYG cubicles. What you see is not necessarily what students routinely get. Sometimes what you see is much better (a dog-and-pony show), and sometimes what you see is much worse.
(a case of nerves dismantling a good lesson plan). Nevertheless, observation of student performance, interaction, and behavior in particular can tell an administrator much about what does routinely transpire in the classroom, including students’ approaches to and success in learning, group dynamics, and teaching effectiveness for that particular class.

A final piece of data collection is obtaining a record of student results. Any other information about students’ progress, particular problems and successes in learning, and personal issues (if related, such as illness) is also useful in accurately evaluating the feedback and understanding complaints.

Data Evaluation

How an administrator evaluates data is critical to the effectiveness of a student feedback system. To understand student complaints accurately all the variables that affect students’ perceptions must be added into the balance. Greater weight can be given to students who have shown themselves to be especially perceptive, to those who are experienced language learners (assuming that they do not come with unrealizable expectations), and to those for whom nothing in particular appears to color their reactions to the classroom.

Historical comparisons are also worthwhile, although they take some time. Plotting the success of a particular teaching method, teacher, or group of students, along with the feedback associated with them, can provide much useful information for program modification and for interpretation of data from current and future classes.

CONCLUSION

The approaches to understanding student complaints as described above can be used by administrators in managing foreign language programs. They can be used in TA development, and teachers can use many of the suggestions on their own to fine-tune their own classes and better understand their students’ needs.

Administrators, in soliciting and accepting student feedback, have a responsibility to use it judiciously and fairly. Doing so requires interpreting that feedback accurately and evaluating it completely, using the factors discussed above, as well as any other potential sources of influence on the information provided in the feedback. If administrators plan to listen to student complaints, then they should make every attempt to understand those complaints. In this way, student complaints can be seen as assets that help refine a program to ever higher levels of perfection, rather than as problems to darken yet another day.
REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION

In designing and implementing a successful online course, attention is often given to aspects such as appropriate goal setting, content selection, scope and sequence, activity design, and assessment of learning. Of particular importance is the interactivity of the online course. Similar to face-to-face instruction, learners are more likely to succeed in online courses in which they interact with the course content, the instructor, and other students (Mabrito, 2004). One reason why interactivity is crucial is that active learning engages learners in the learning process, as opposed to passive learning that involves minimal interaction with the content, the instructor, and peers. The authors of this article will use online teacher training courses at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) to discuss possible ways to increase such interactivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PRACTICE AT DLIFLC

Social Constructivism

Social constructivists view learning as a socially and collaboratively mediated activity that allows learners’ active participation (Vygotsky, 1978). Social and communicative interactions between learners and instructor, and among peers, are important components of classroom learning. In a face-to-face conventional classroom, a high level of interaction can be easily achieved (McConnell, 2000; Ni, 2013). In comparison, online learners may feel isolated due to the lack of face-to-face interaction and a sense of community (Brown, 1996; Wegerif, 1998). Lacking a sense of community may cause learners to be anxious, defensive, and unwilling to take risks in learning (Wegerif, 1998), leading to decreased interest in the topic and learning effectiveness (Maki, Maki, Patterson, & Whittaker, 2000, as cited in Ni, 2013).
Community of Inquiry (CoI)

Fortunately, researchers in the field of online education realized the potential pitfall. The CoI framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), illustrated in Figure 1, is a comprehensive process framework that overtly emphasizes the notion of interactivity and shows “collaborative, constructivist online learning as being a function of the intersection of three presences: teaching, social and cognitive” (Ice, 2010, p. 1). It is one of the most influential representations of constructivist learning (Swan, Garrison, & Richardson, 2009).

![Community of Inquiry](image)

Figure 1: *The Community of Inquiry Framework* (Garrison, 2007, p. 62)

Effective teaching presence encourages active discourse and knowledge construction (Garrison et al., 2000). The teaching and social presences set the appropriate climate for optimal learning, as shown in Figure 1. Teaching presence and cognitive presence ensure the right selection of learning content and materials. Defined as knowledge co-construction via sustained communication within a community of inquiry (Garrison et al, 2000), cognitive presence and social presence create a supportive discourse for learners to interact with the learning content, as well as with one another. The social, cognitive, and teaching presences are necessary in developing a community of inquiry. The optimal educational experience is achieved when the three components are present and working in tandem. Therefore, it is crucial that they
be taken into consideration when designing and delivering online courses (Garrison et al., 2000). Additionally, social presence and cognitive presence influence teaching presence and how it is perceived (Garrison, 2007). High social presence in the course keeps students engaged and therefore fosters a sense of community.

Learning and communicating with one another allow learners to share their questions, ideas, and challenges, and enable them to receive help and feedback from peers (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). Research shows that the sense of community promotes critical thinking, learning outcomes, and student satisfaction by improving information flow, learning support, group commitment and collaboration (Dede, 1996; Wellman, 1999). In learning, interaction is a necessary and fundamental process for knowledge acquisition and cognitive development (Barker, 1994). Interaction has been a focus of research for instructional designers (Hannafin, 1989). Studies demonstrate that meaningful, timely, frequent, and planned interactivity in an online course helps motivate learners and make them feel like part of a learning community (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). In the next section, the authors will discuss the significance of three forms of interaction in online course design.

Three Forms of Interaction

With the rapid development of technology and its increasing potential to support communication, online teaching and learning have been ever-evolving. However, educators and instructional designers abide by, in online course design and delivery, the fundamental principle of simulating face-to-face instruction in the online environment. Instructional setup, learning activities, and idea exchanges are usually easier to achieve in a face-to-face classroom. In order to mirror the conventional classroom, online course designers examine ways to promote peer interaction, scaffold learning, timely teacher feedback, and optimized learning outcomes via online materials. Moore (1989) outlined three forms of interaction: learner-learner, learner-instructor, and learner-content. With these three forms of interaction, an online environment can emulate the face-to-face instructional setting.

Learner-Learner Interaction

In a conventional learning environment, learner-learner interaction can be formal and informal verbal and textual conversations that take place inside or outside the classroom. The interaction is a valuable means to engage learners, encouraging deeper and broader contact with the content, free thinking, debate, and collaborative learning. It can also help establish bonds and trust among learners. In comparison, learner-learner interaction is different, and sometimes asynchronous, in an online learning environment. Asynchronous interaction, which results in delayed or lack of responses from peers, differs from what many learners are used to in a conventional classroom; therefore, it may present challenges to them. In a large-scale empirical research study on students’
barriers to online learning conducted by Muilenburg and Berge (2005), social interaction was measured as one of the “underlying constructs that comprise student barriers to online learning” (p. 29).

In order to promote learner-learner interaction, the design of the course should consider when and how learners can interact, and for what purposes. In an online faculty development course of “Reflective Teaching” at DLIFLC, course facilitators utilized Audioboo, a voice discussion forum to encourage learner-learner interaction. The participants recorded voice observation notes on Audioboo after observing a class taught by fellow trainees, as shown in the screenshot below (Figure 2). Due to Audioboo’s user-friendly interface, the participants were able to record and share their notes immediately after the observation, as opposed to organizing their notes into a written report. This interaction not only allowed trainees to “see” how classes were conducted in different classrooms, but also hear their classmates’ voices. This audio dimension of interaction enhanced the sense of belonging, strengthening the social presence in the online learning environment and facilitating trainees’ intellectual engagement and dialog. By communicating with one another via Audioboo, the participants co-constructed knowledge as a community, which is defined as cognitive presence as aforementioned.
Furthermore, in the same course, the participants were encouraged to use a mind mapping tool called “MindMeister” to brainstorm action research topics for an individual action research proposal, which was the final project of the course. The participants used MindMeister to outline relevant issues to include in their action research. Their classmates commented directly on each other’s mind maps, providing useful peer feedback, as shown below (Figure 3). By integrating Audioboo, MindMeister, and other Web 2.0 tools, learner-learner interactions were achieved by using more than just text-based formats.

![Figure 3: Screenshot of the Brainstorming Activity on MindMeister](image)

**Learner-Instructor Interaction**

The aforementioned learner-learner interaction is undoubtedly crucial in maintaining social presence to animate the eLearning community. Technology tools that enable synchronous and asynchronous communication simulate multiple formats of group/pair collaboration. Social interactions among learners, however, do not necessarily guarantee that learning will take place. As Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) pointed out, interaction did not equate to cognitive presence, and quality of interaction was far more important than quantity as far as cognitive engagement was concerned.
It is true that the three types of presence (social, teaching, and cognitive) are interwoven and thus inter-dependent. As stated by Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, “a community of inquiry is the integration of cognitive, social, and teaching presence” (2005, p. 134). In addition to the learner-learner dimension of interactivity, teaching presence that mostly takes the form of instructor-learner interaction is of equal importance. Empirical research by Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) and by Hay, Hodgkinson, Peltier, and Drago (2004) revealed: “teaching presence in the form of facilitation is crucial in the success of online learning” (as cited in Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, 2005, p.136). Garrison and Cleveland-Innes’s study on learning approaches and higher-order thinking skills (2005) showed that teaching presence was crucial for the cultivation of deep learning that depends on higher-order thinking skills.

Teaching presence does not consist merely of direct instruction, but of instructional design and facilitation/co-facilitation as well (Garrison, 2007). Facilitation in the format of “guide on the side” cultivates deep learning and higher-order thinking skills. When the teacher retreats from the spotlight of the teaching platform and plays the role of a guide to provide learning resources, scaffold learners, and probe questions, learners gradually develop the ability of independent learning. By consulting resources, discussing with peers and teachers, learners are able to explore new knowledge and solve problems on their own. This learning process holds learners accountable and gives them a sense of ownership and responsibility. The engaging process and the sense of ownership are of paramount importance in an online learning environment because they allow real learning, not rote memory of facts, to take place. Through meaningful discussions and problem solving, students’ higher-order thinking skills are developed and improved. For the teacher-training course at the DLIFLC, meaningful learning activities and multi-dimensional exchanges were implemented through effective communication mechanisms. Communications were built in both the synchronous learning platform of Defense Connect Online (DCO) and the asynchronous one of Sakai, as shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Tools for Achieving Teaching Presence](image-url)
With these communication tools, teachers can establish their presence in the eLearning community to interact with learners by replying, commenting, and redirecting trainees’ postings, providing needed scaffolding for trainees.

**Learner-Content Interaction**

Despite the multi-dimensional interactions among learners and between the teacher and the learner, the first and foremost factor that leads to meaningful interaction, group cohesion, and effective learning outcomes is the design of learning content. Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) compared four online courses and discovered that instructional design and teaching approach had a tremendous influence on learners’ learning approaches. They concluded: “…social presence may be a necessary but insufficient precondition for creating a community of inquiry and encouraging deep approaches to learning” (p. 143). Hence, cognitive presence is equally important. It requires effective online instructional design to ensure that learners are cognitively engaged, that is, learners employ deep learning approaches to tackle learning tasks at hand.

Experiential learning, proposed by Kolb (1984), has proven to be an effective course design and delivery principle. By allowing learners to have a concrete experience, and then reflect and debrief the learning points through guided discussions, experiential learning is intellectually stimulating because it requires learners to utilize deep learning approaches. It has been utilized as a guiding design principle for all faculty development courses at the DLI/FLC. Our teaching experience from the teacher training courses confirmed that an effective instructional design strategy is to ensure that learners interact with the learning content in a most dynamic way, as opposed to reading and digesting the learning materials that are purely text-based (consisting primarily of printed words). Authoring tools, such as Captivate, Camtasia, and Flash, can help create multi-media learning components, thus enhancing the learner-content interaction.

The following screenshots demonstrate the learner-content interface of a simple memory game (Figure 5) created in Captivate. Once learners start the game, different words will appear and disappear one after another. They need to memorize the words, count those they remember, and jot down their reflections on how memory works. This experiential learning activity helps them understand the process of memory, as well as the differences between short-term and long-term memory through the Information Processing Model with audio narration (see Figure 6), which concludes the game.
Figure 5: Screenshot of Memory Game via Captivate

Figure 6: Screenshot of the Information Processing Model (Adapted from http://www.buzzle.com/articles/information-processing-theory.html)
The above examples and many other multi-media supported content maximize the learner-content interaction that goes beyond the text-based learning/content interface where learners can only interact with the text. These tools enabled learners to demonstrate their understanding of the content in discussion forums and other online venues. Meaningful interaction between the learner and content stimulates higher-order thinking skills and deep learning approaches, which in turn optimizes learning effectiveness in online education.

CONCLUSION

Since its inception, online education has focused on emulating the face-to-face instructional setting and on maximizing interactivity via a myriad of technology tools. However, the task of simulation remains daunting. Researchers, online course designers, as well as instructors have been testing, implementing, and improving different methods of interactivity other than static and unidirectional delivery of teaching materials which are largely text-based. The notion of CoI together with its underlying three types of presence sets the parameters by which online instruction should abide. Our discussion once again demonstrates that concrete measures and tools can bring the three types of presence into reality. A balance among the three types of presence is needed to achieve desired learning outcomes, because superficial vibrant social interaction in the discussion forum or wiki does not necessarily lead to real learning. Effective online instructional design that optimizes learner-content interaction is the key to achieving desired learning outcomes.

REFERENCES


Why It Takes a Village to Raise an Independent Learner: Improving the Collaborative Process While Fostering Learner Autonomy

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This study examines the interrelationship between learner characteristics; i.e., sensory preferences, cognitive styles, and personality types, because they affect the extent to which a student masters subject matter. The learner must negotiate three domains: their own, their classmates’, and their teachers’. This approach acknowledges the integral roles of the student, the teacher(s), and other students as stakeholders in individual student learning. Elevating these latent processes underlying all classroom interactions for examination provides the basis for epistemological break¹, when all are aware of these distinctions.

INTRODUCTION

Objectives

This research endeavors to find ways to facilitate autonomous learning at the Defense Language Institute (DLI), using the assumption that facilitating learner autonomy will improve foreign language (FL) proficiency. Taking into account the collaborative learning environment at DLI, also known as a cooperative learning environment, this study aims to determine the degree to which collaborative learning helps foster autonomous learning. This study also examines the interplay among sensory preferences, cognitive styles, and personality types, all of which have become relevant to FL teaching, and contribute to stakeholders (learners and teachers) characteristics.

Hypothesis

The primary hypothesis of this study is that all stakeholders affect individual learning. Each stakeholder is aware of the other’s sensory preferences, cognitive styles, and personality types. In an environment such as
this, students can facilitate their own learning, teachers can facilitate their students’ learning, and classmates can facilitate one another. This process occurs both in the classroom and out, and each student supports and maintains a cooperative learning environment. In addition, teachers use the same awareness to solve a variety of student problems caused by mismatches between student and activity, or between student learning preferences and teacher preferred teaching behavior. Throughout this study, the term learner characteristics is used to encompass a person’s sensory preferences, cognitive styles, and personality type.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature relevant to this research into facilitating learner autonomy covers three concepts: the characteristics of an autonomous learner and why learner autonomy is desirable; the interpersonal nature of learning, specifically, the nature of visible and invisible groups in the classroom (see definition of this concept in the section of “the Interpersonal Nature of Learning”); and what each stakeholder in the student’s learning—student, teacher(s), and fellow students—can do to promote learning.

Learner Autonomy

One of the key texts for this research is Ehrman and Dörneyi’s book, Interpersonal Dynamics in Second Language Education: The Visible and Invisible Classroom (1998). The authors define learner autonomy as “an active, independent attitude to learning and personal involvement in decision making, closely related to self-regulated learning,” (emphasis added) (p.278). Their concept of self-regulated learning underscores the investment of the individual in his or her own learning, including “awareness of goals, control of pacing, and learning strategies, evaluation of one’s own learning and affective self-management that lead to the ability to learn autonomously” (p.282). The authors refer to Dickinson (1995) in establishing that learners’ success and enhanced motivation depend on learners “taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning, and perceiving that their learning successes and failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies, rather than to factors outside their control” (p. 256). They also cite Dickinson (1995) in suggesting that an autonomous approach leads to increased motivation, specifically in second language learning. Ehrman and Dörneyi also refer to Ushioda (1996) to support the concept of a relationship between motivation and autonomous learning: “autonomous learners are by definition motivated learners” (p.255). Hence, we can facilitate autonomous learning by determining how to best motivate our students.

In addition to extrinsic motivation, Ehrman and Dörneyi (1998) point out that individual learners are significantly affected by the other key figures in their learning: their teacher(s) and classmates. The authors find the roadmap to motivation in collaborative learning, which, although seemingly the opposite of
autonomous learning, serves as its underpinnings. They note the paradox of individuality, such that “Individuals must develop their group connections for full individuation, but at the same time, the group requires that its members contribute as individuals to be complete” (p.123). Thus, as individual students contribute to the progress of their class as a whole, the group in turn contributes to the growth of the individual as an autonomous learner. Collaborative learning itself creates a type of group autonomy from the instructor. As Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) cite from Ushioda (1996), it creates the conditions for “intrinsic motivation, since it explicitly puts the learning initiatives and control of the learning process in the hands of the students themselves, by harnessing their sense of peer-group solidarity and shared responsibility, and minimizing their perception of external direction and control from the teacher.” As cited by the authors, Dörnyei (1997) asserts that there is a correlation between cooperative (collaborative) learning and success in the study a second language; this is attributable to the amount and variety of target language (TL) input created by group interaction, and “the supportive environment created by cohesiveness among learners.” (p.250) which is fostered by group members working towards a common goal.

In her research on grit and self-control, Duckworth (2013) suggests these non-cognitive factors play a significant role in learner success. Duckworth defines grit as the tendency to sustain interest in an effort, toward very long-term goals, and self-control as the voluntary regulation of behavioral, emotional, and attentional impulses in the presence of briefly gratifying temptations or diversion. In cross-sectional studies, grit correlates with lifetime educational attainment, and grit and self-control contribute to success more than talent does. One characteristic of autonomous learners is their willingness to learn stretch strategies and to correct maladaptive low-grit beliefs and behaviors, in order to improve their chances of learning in any situation. The research conducted in Duckworth’s laboratory at University of Pennsylvania suggests people can learn to change their habitual patterns of interaction in the world as they acquire life experience.

The Interpersonal Nature of Learning

Another focus of Ehrman and Dörnyei’s work is the invisible group (invisible classroom), which includes “group-as-a-whole phenomena, arising from unconscious processes that are inferred from the behaviors of the members; different from the visible group, which is the sum of the individual members, and their behavior in a group context” (p.278). The social construct of the classroom dictates what behavior will be protected and indulged, and “individuals (both students and teachers) are profoundly affected by interpersonal processes” (p.4). Despite a student’s self-concept as an individual who controls his or her own actions and thoughts, as the authors note in citing Forsyth (1990), “groups often exert a strong guiding hand on our attitudes and behaviors” (p.4). Considering that interpersonal processes, “produce and enhance motivation to learn other languages and cultures and to interact with
speakers of a language...[and] also underlie massive anxiety about how one is perceived and accepted by others, which can interfere greatly with achievement” (p.5), understanding the specific intrapersonal, dyadic, intragroup, and intergroup dynamics is important for facilitating students’ autonomous learning. The authors cite Agazarian and Peters (1981) in defining the invisible group as based in “the extensive unconscious communications and resulting structures that are hypothesized to underlie the overt group structure and observable behavior” (p.14). Ehrman and Dörnyei conclude that, “The learning experience of every student and the effectiveness of every teacher are influenced by what goes on among and between the people who populate the classroom” (p.5).

In this context, if creating an autonomous learning is the ultimate goal, it behooves all stakeholders in the class to determine how best to motivate students toward the intermediate goal, with the proximal goal of bringing stakeholder awareness to their own learning preferences, cognitive styles, and personality types. Although it is difficult to predict which classes will jell and which will not, examining the learning preferences, cognitive styles and personality types of all stakeholders will shed some light on how the individual members will interact as a group. Even groups who jell endure periods of emotional distance and closeness. According to Ehrman and Dörnyei, the former is characterized by lower productivity, as the group “is distracted by its own internal events from pursuing its ‘official’ goal,” whereas the latter is characterized by increased cooperative task-effort and an increase in productivity; ultimately, “the role of the leader becomes less central, which permits the group to increase the degree to which it structures its own sense of reality” (p.103). Thus, students’ autonomy as a group allows people with compatible personality types and sensory preferences to self-organize, leading to group structure stabilization and “in later stages, as the intensity of emotional fluctuation decreases, affective energies tend to be channeled into tasks, and work output rises” (p.103). The power of the group creates cohesion as well as exclusion, which makes awareness of the invisible classroom’s workings significant for the teacher and each student. As Ehrman and Dörnyei put it, more than the leader, it is the group that tends to keep the individual on track: “Peers act as a very significant socializing agent for members, demanding conformity as a price for acceptance” (p.132). The performance of individuals is, at least, in part explained by Vroom’s expectancy theory that if individuals expect to receive a reward for high performance, they are more likely to strive for high-level of performance than if there were no reward. Therefore, in the effort to motivate individual students, teachers can harness the power of the group, including themselves as members of that group.

Sustaining motivation also depends on individualizing teaching. Hall, Strangman, and Meyer (2003) highlight the role of individual students’ learning preferences and cognitive styles, and cite Tomlinson, 2001, Ellis and Worthington, 1994, Rose and Meyer, 2002 in attesting to the success of differentiated instruction in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom. Leaver (2013) makes the additional connection between individual learner characteristics and interpersonal learning by pointing out, “students whose
cognitive styles do not match the cognitive style of the teacher” are often at academic risk, “although the teacher is not aware of this” (p. 25). Likewise, “students whose cognitive styles do not match the cognitive style of the majority of the class” (p.26) are also at academic risk. The author points out a critical feature for student success in the foreign language classroom: “The cognitive styles of teachers and textbook writers should also be taken into account when considering student cognitive styles, as their interplay can greatly influence the overall results of the teaching process” (p. 23). This requires teacher awareness of his/her own learner characteristics, in addition to requiring the teacher to both differentiate instruction and help students expand their abilities as learners.

Stakeholder Contributions to Their Own and Others’ Learning

Each individual student bears the brunt of the responsibility for his or her own success as a learner, and success depends on the understanding of his/her own learner characteristics. Ehrman and Leaver (2003) provide a “model of cognitive styles and its application to enhancing the effectiveness of intensive language training” (p.394), based on the recognition that awareness of one’s own learner characteristics enhances one’s language learning. As learners gain awareness of their default processing of target language texts and communicative situations, they are more able to hone what works for them and practice stretch strategies for the times when they are not presented information in a way that matches their preferred set of learner characteristics. The authors suggest, “Students have to accept that they cannot have everything exactly as they want it, even though teachers can meet their individual needs much of the time” (p.410). Ehrman and Leaver make an important distinction for individual learners regarding “the degree of conscious control of learning desired or needed” between more synoptic learners, who group information together and tend to treat it as a whole, and more ectenic learners, who stretch information out in order to examine it in pieces: “synoptics trust their guts, and ectenics tend not to” (p.395). This distinction also helps learners better understand their own approach to texts, as well as tests and test-taking, a significant factor for DLI learners. The authors avoid labeling one cognitive style as “good” or “bad” for learning a foreign language, rather, they point out the usefulness.

Ehrman and Leaver also point out the role of the teacher’s awareness of the student’s cognitive styles in facilitating learning: “the teachers could work with [the students] to adapt their self-study activities both to tap into their preferences and to extend their versatility into areas that are less preferred” (p. 410). The use of stretch strategy is echoed by Leaver’s contention that “Students who have very rigid cognitive styles…[and] students who have mastered only a limited number of learning strategies will need teachers’ help in diversifying and expanding the portfolios of strategies” (p. 29). She suggests that teachers can take advantage of review periods to ask students to “work in a non-preferred cognitive style” (p. 23). Thus, teachers can facilitate the stretch strategy, and not cater solely to students’ extant dominant preferences.
Hall, Strangman, and Meyer (2003) emphasize providing differentiated instruction (DI) as the teacher’s primary contribution to the individual student’s learning success. They examine elements of teaching that can be differentiated, in order to “maximize each student’s growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is and assisting in the learning process” (p. 3). DI starts with awareness and recognizing students’ varying backgrounds, knowledge and experiences, as well as a readiness to learn, language aptitude, and learning preferences, and adjusting their teaching approach accordingly. Within a given curriculum, the authors suggest content can be differentiated by keeping instruction “concept-focused,” in that the teacher would cover “the same concepts with all students, but the approach should be adjusted to suit diverse learners” (p. 3). They advocate differentiating process by consistently employing “flexible grouping,” i.e., “grouping and regrouping must be a dynamic process, changing with the content project, and on-going evaluations” (p. 4). According to the authors, the most important factor in creating autonomous learners is differentiating products by recognizing students as “active and responsible explorers” and “each student should feel challenged most of the time” (p. 4). This can be accomplished by way of dynamic assessment, serving as a basis for “vary[ing] tasks within instruction as well as across students” (p. 6). Teacher is responsible for “ensur[ing] that students have choices in their learning” because “engaging all learners is essential” (p. 6).

Clearly, the teacher bears great responsibility for facilitating learning. As Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) point out, even in a collaborative learning environment, which typically requires considerable delegation and sharing of power, the teacher does not abdicate altogether. They cite Cohen (1994): “the teacher is still responsible for giving task directions, setting initial ground rules, training students to cooperate…and holding the group and its members accountable for their work. When things go amiss, it is the teacher who is first responsible for repair” (p. 267). According to Duckworth (2013), any stakeholder in the class can help learners improve their grittiness by teaching individuals who believe that frustration and confusion are signs they should quit what they are doing that these emotions are common during the learning process. Stakeholders can also teach students who are hindered by their fear of making mistakes that the most effective form of practice lies in tackling challenges beyond one’s current skill level. According to Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998), in an effective second language classroom both teachers and fellow students show unconditional positive regard toward the individual student and toward each other. Key in smooth student relationships, and in the teacher’s perception of each learner, is the “adoption of a less critical approach and the assumption that the other person has some kind of logic behind the frustrating behavior” (p. 48).

Also key in creating a cooperative learning environment in the DLI classroom are the behaviors of the leaders of the visible classroom—the teacher(s) and class leader—and the “natural” leader of the invisible classroom. The class leader and the “natural” leader may or may not coincide. To be effective, these leaders must “not only promote a sense of acceptance, but also
help the group make sense of their experiences” as both affective and cognitive factors “create an environment conducive to learning and development” (Ehrman and Dörnyei, 1998, p.166). Although the teacher(s) and class leader have positional power, reward power, and coercive power, according to research by Schmuck and Schmuck (1997), as cited by Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998), “these are generally the least effective sources of interpersonal influence; therefore, [they] also need to develop referent power (based on the respect for and attraction to the leader) and expert power (based on the leader’s expertise)” (p. 159). The use of referent power is characteristic of democratic leaders; democratic leadership “encourages the membership to take responsibility for its own growth and development, and the role of the leader is to assist such growth” (p. 159). Thus, is learner autonomy not only desirable for achieving higher levels of proficiency, but teachers and fellow students play a significant role in facilitating this autonomy.

According to Leaver (2013), “Students with different cognitive styles can really help each other. Through task-based instruction, students can help each other and expand the range of the tasks they can handle successfully” (p. 30). As Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) suggest, awareness of stakeholders’ cognitive styles can improve and support the interpersonal relationships present in the visible and invisible classrooms, because “social relationships are subject to the effects of selective attention and processing of experience” (p. 38). Within the interpersonal learning environment of the classroom, individual learners simultaneously desire both inclusion and autonomy, and fear exclusion and loss of identity. Add to this uncertainty, the natural processes within effective second language learning include “relatively deep changes, not only in cross-cultural knowledge and receptivity but also in a more generalized acceptance of ambiguity, multiple ways of experiencing the world, and increased cognitive flexibility.” Thus, as students gain autonomy as learners, they face the challenges and resistance inherent in cognitive and affective change, and “relationships are fundamental to success” (Ehrman and Dörnyei, 1998, p. 16).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The 53 students assessed for this study were recommended for academic advising by their teaching team leader and/or the department chair. They were students of Modern Standard Arabic, Levantine dialect, or Iraqi dialect. Although they were at varying points in the course when they came in for advising, (from week 8 to week 58 of a 64-week course), they were identified as at-risk students, whom the teaching teams were trying to help, but appeared to need additional assistance in applying learning strategies. Typically, this at-risk status is evidenced by poor test grades in one or more modalities. The advisees were both male and female, from all services, in active and reserve components, with an educational level ranging from a high school diploma to a Master’s degree. Most students in the study were recent high
school graduates at a very early stage in their military careers. Most had studied a foreign language in high school, and many, according to information gathered from the students, were not placed in the foreign language (FL) they had requested.

Materials and Procedures

The students in the study had all attended the Introduction to Language Studies 101 course as taught by the Student Learning Center, prior to the institutional reorganization that moved the responsibility for teaching that course into the individual schools. As part of their Student Learning Portfolio, which was reviewed before each advising session was conducted, participants used the Felder-Solomon Learning Styles Inventory to determine their own learner characteristics along the scales of active-reflective, sensing-intuitive, visual-verbal, and sequential-global.

Although no additional assessments for learner characteristics were administered in my advising, the learner characteristics determined by the following instruments provided the initial input for determining the challenges faced by each student:

• Barsch and VARK learning preferences assessments, which indicate how students prefer to receive information, in degrees visual (including words and pictures), auditory, kinesthetic (overall body movements), motor (hand movements), and verbal (written word) intake.

• Ehrman and Leaver Learning Style Questionnaire v. 2.0, a cognitive styles assessment, with several subscales, most significant of which for this study were the random-sequential, inductive-deductive, analogue-digital, concrete-abstract, leveling-sharpening, and impulsive (active)-reflective ranges.

• Meyers-Briggs Personality Types Indicator, which utilizes the scales of extrovert-introvert, sensing-intuitive, judging-perceiving, and thinking-feeling.

Because of the brief nature of my encounter with these advisees, asking specific questions about learner characteristics proved more expedient; each answer to general questions provided the basis for additional, more targeted questions regarding specific learner characteristics.

In addition to background information about student performance provided by teaching team leaders and/or department chairs, the advising session also provided an opportunity to gather data about:

• the student’s perception of his/her own success and challenges while studying in class (including during Special Assistance) and outside of class (homework, self-study, work with a tutor, work with study group or study buddy, and other time on task with the TL, e.g. listening to the TL while doing other activities, such as working out, driving, doing other homework, cooking, etc.).

• any outside distractions the student may have had to deal with.
• the student’s eating, sleeping, and physical activity level.
• any additional relevant information about the subjects as learners.

We discussed learning strategies students had tried, what worked and did not, additional strategies they might try, and whether students thought those strategies could work.

The students also provided input on teacher behavior in the classroom, as well as classmate behavior. In response to specific questions about specific activities in the classroom, the students related what they would normally do, and what the teachers and other students would normally do. Student input was typically conveyed as a report of what normally transpires, and rarely did students make judgments about their teachers’ or their fellow students’ behavior. The opinions expressed were typically positive, with a high regard for, and appreciation of, teachers’ and fellow students’ efforts to help. Team leaders were contacted via e-mail or meeting to offer their perceptions of the learners and the learning environment.

In addition to reviewing the techniques and strategies the student pledged to try both in class and outside of class, I provided each student a short summary, including a description of the student as a learner, suggestions for the student, and suggestions for the teaching team to better facilitate learning.

This study compares the results of 53 student profiles, focusing on the overlap of recommended learner strategies across learner types and overlap of suggestions for teachers to improve their teaching across all learner types. These repeated recommendations demonstrate the value of a few key techniques, in that a multitude of learners with varying challenges/difficulties can benefit if rooted in varying learning characteristics, i.e., the same solution can be used to solve one problem with multiple causes, or multiple problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mismatch between Student and Teacher

Unmitigated, non-ameliorated, unrecognized mismatches between student and teacher were found to correlate with student problems, which were ultimately resolvable. The most frequently identified mismatches and the problems they most frequently create are as follows (where T indicates “teacher”, S indicates “student”, and 25/53 indicates 25 of the 53 students):

a) **T = active, S = reflective (25/53 students):** T plays audio/video clip, stops at the end and asks without pause, “What did you understand?”

b) **T = active, S = reflective (25/53 students):** T asks if Ss have any questions, and when they are satisfied that they have no more questions, T goes on, assuming Ss have sufficiently understood. Then T asks content questions and reflective student cannot answer. (T) “Why don’t you ask questions if you don’t understand?” (S) “I don’t even know what to ask.”

c) **T = visual or auditory, S = motor (22/53 students):** T is talking and becomes frustrated because S is not watching T, and therefore presumes S is
not paying attention; or T thinks S is not paying attention because S is doodling or playing with something.

d) **T = non-kinesthetic, S = kinesthetic (15/53 students):** T sees S turning in his/her chair and considers this a willful attempt to be disruptive; or, T finds it inappropriate that the S constantly wants to write on the board, especially if the tasks are of higher order.

e) **T = extroverted, S = introverted (6/53 students):** T makes suggestions to S in class, during one-on-one sessions, and in counseling statements, but believes S is not receptive to T’s suggestions because S has a different idea of what is needed.

f) **T = visual + motor, S = non-motor (20/53 students):** T plays audio and expects S to take notes, and becomes frustrated when S is not taking notes; T believes the S is not paying attention and asks, “Why aren’t you taking notes?!”

The solution to these problems starts with a recognition of the mismatch, followed by applying the appropriate technique and/or strategy (as correlated with the above problems):

a) After playing an audio or video clip, the teacher might allow for one minute of silence, before discussing. This will help the reflective learners capture everything they understood, whereas active learners can still “think aloud” by writing notes.

b) Giving students more time by not calling on a given student first allows the student the opportunity to compose thoughts.

c) Motor learners pay attention by moving their hands, which means they may be looking down at their drawing while listening. If the teacher checks in with the student by soliciting input periodically, the teacher will be able to confirm that the student is indeed paying attention and is engaged.

d) The teacher can provide differentiated instruction by asking the kinesthetic student to complete the activity on the board. Activities can be adapted for kinesthetic learners by making slight changes. The teacher does not need to create entirely separate activities or include any set of learner sensory preferences to suit kinesthetic learners.

e) The teacher might provide feedback in a one-on-one fashion and provide suggestions rather than direction. This will allow the student to try different techniques and make an independent evaluation of the value of those techniques.

f) Many students are distracted by note taking. They can be specifically directed to not take notes while they listen, or they might take them during the silent period after listening to the text. This one solution may help solve different problems.

**Mismatches between Students**

Unmitigated, non-ameliorated, unrecognized mismatches between students within a group were found to correlate with student problems, which
were ultimately resolvable. The most frequently identified mismatches and the problems they most frequently create are as follows:

a) **Reflective + active (25/53 students):** active learners’ tendency to answer aloud immediately has the unintended effect of erasing reflective learners’ memories of the language they just processed, especially audio materials.

b) **Reflective + active (25/53 students):** active learners are already practicing the new vocabulary in class, while reflective learner are still processing.

c) **Concrete + abstract, digital + analog, sequential + random (37/53 students):** “That doesn’t’ make any sense!” vs. “What is it that you don’t understand?!”

d) **Judging + perceiving (4/53 students):** “Why can’t you just finish?! The rest of us have already finished.” vs. “I’m considering all my options.”

e) **Judging + perceiving (4/53 students):** “Be quiet while I finish this/I have to tune you out” vs. “I need multiple inputs; quiet distracts me.”

f) **Introvert + extrovert (19/53 students):** “Why are you always talking?” vs. “What’s your problem?!”

The solution to these problems starts with a recognition of the mismatch, followed by applying the appropriate technique and/or strategy (as correlated with the above problems):

a) Take notes instead of answering aloud, then answer after a silent period (cf. solutions 1a and 1c).

b) Reflective learners can try reading ahead the night before to allow themselves time to process before they must produce a learning product (cf. solution 3e).

c) When working with a person with different learner characteristics from oneself, try an explanation that uses some of that learner’s characteristics. Additionally, simply asking the person to “bear with” a seemingly random explanation until it comes back around to the sequential alignment will often engender stakeholder buy-in.

d) Agree that if all necessary work is done by the deadline, that will suffice.

e) Students ask for what they need and/or find a partner who has the same needs.

f) Extroverts can find a way to talk quietly to the person that also wants to talk, so as not to disturb others. Introverts can use headphones to facilitate their preferred environment.

### Learner Strategies and Learner Characteristics

Students benefitted from learner strategies tailored to their learner characteristics, as well as practicing stretch strategies to function in an environment mismatched with their personal learning preferences. Whenever they can control their environment, students increase the likelihood for success. Participants in this study reported the following learner-specific strategies that proved successful for them:
a) Ss who listen to music while they study can re-create the soundscape for themselves in their heads, even in a silent environment, such as in the classroom or during a test. This helps them to reduce any negative affect caused by the mismatch between the learner’s characteristics and the environment, especially in a high-risk situation, such as a test. The student creates a positive effect by listening to his/her preferred music right before taking the test. This allows the student to concentrate on the test, rather than being distracted by the silence.

b) Motor learners who manipulate an object (e.g., something small in their pocket) or doodle while they study can be careful not to disturb others. This gives them something to focus on, so they can concentrate on the test, rather than being distracted by idle hands.

c) Motor + visual learners can take visual bullet-point notes, and practice counting on their fingers to keep a physical count of the major points/themes of the text, i.e. bullet points. This reduces any negative affect caused by the mismatch between the learner’s characteristics and the environment, especially in a high-risk situation such as a test when they are not allowed to take notes. This technique bridges the gap between the common practice of taking notes while reading or listening and the prohibition against taking notes during the institute-level tests.

d) Auditory learners can read aloud and subvocalize when reading in a silent environment. This helps highly auditory learners associate the graphic form of the word with the aural form. The same technique helps highly visual learners associate the aural form of the word with the graphic one, and, especially, to make the association between reduced and elided forms common in aural language with the written forms.

e) Sequential learners can benefit from the inside out classroom approach: sequential processing, although often a burden for the student in the classroom (group) environment, actually provides a control over the intake of TL information by reducing the likelihood of surprises that might otherwise overburden the learner. If the students are allowed to read ahead in the textbook outside of class and cover all the material in a systematic way, they will be better prepared to cope with the ambiguity or surprises that might otherwise come up in class.

f) Addressing seemingly peripheral issues: Is the student doing the “hard” homework first, just to get it out of the way, thereby missing a chance to use the “easy” homework as a warm-up (pre-listening or pre-reading) for the “hard” homework? If so, suggest the student change the order of tasks. Is the student visualizing/practicing success, leaving past failures behind? If students are “practicing failure,” they can practice mental management to free themselves from that obstacle. If the students have any outside distractions, such as family, relationships, pre-existing condition, etc., they can actively work on managing the time/situation to ensure they have the time and space to concentrate on their studies. If students are working against their natural biorhythms, they can change their study schedule to counteract any timing issues. For example, night owls who must rise early
can ensure they complete all their work the night before and then get up later. Early birds who stay up late doing homework can go to sleep earlier and wake early to complete their homework.

**Awareness of Intrapersonal, Dyadic, and Group Processes**

Students were able to benefit by bringing awareness to intrapersonal, dyadic, and group processes. When at-risk students were open and transparent with other stakeholders, behaved with unconditional positive regard, and adopted a less critical approach towards others, they were able to create an environment for themselves more conducive to learning. Being aware of other students’ learner characteristics and the teacher’s or teachers’ learner characteristics gave these students a way to understand other stakeholders’ behavior, and adapt themselves, or negotiate for change as necessary. By seeking out partners to work with in class, such that the pairing is: reflective + reflective, kinesthetic + kinesthetic, extrovert + extrovert, one introvert + one extrovert, concrete + concrete, they were able to work more effectively.

**CONCLUSION**

This study focuses on students in the DLI basic course, but the results can be applied to any classroom situation. Given the differences between each stakeholder in the classroom vis-à-vis learner characteristics, we can extrapolate from the results of this study that each participant must bring a vigilant awareness to the classroom, so as to avoid misunderstandings and better adapt to others, or negotiate for different presentation of information/approach/ behavior as needed. Differentiated instruction is a way for teachers to build that awareness into a lesson plan. Teachers also need to consider their own learner/teacher preferences to help set students up for success both in and out of the classroom.

This study, however, has its limitations by focusing only on student responses. Future research into underlying classroom dynamics should include teacher surveys and assessments of teachers’ sensory preferences. The teaching team’s characteristics, in addition to the characteristics of all student stakeholders, will provide a clearer picture of the potential effects on any given student. The teachers are key in establishing a healthy learning environment, so understanding what all stakeholders bring to the classroom environment will better elucidate possible ways forward.

In addition to awareness of learner characteristics, all stakeholders can help foster a collaborative learning environment by engaging in unconditional positive regard and fostering openness, trying to be on the other person’s side. This safety net allows students to move farther away into autonomous learning. Relationships are fundamental to students’ success; therefore, it behooves all stakeholders to invest in creating an environment conducive to learning, increasing the likelihood of healthy relationships.
Participants’ awareness of their own needs, and how they affect others, helps create a line of sight between individual activities and the group’s result, a key practice in high-performing teams. Although the mantra of differentiated instruction has been repeated, the concept does not require multiple lesson plans for each hour. Rather, in addition to performance measurement, the dynamic assessments help students to make adjustments and continue to grow as collaborative learners. Training teaching teams and their students together, as one set of stakeholders, on the features of the invisible classroom can provide useful tools for curbing frustration and allowing all participants a greater likelihood for success by explicitly examining stakeholder characteristics.

NOTES

1. While this awareness may not appear to have significant effects, it appears to meet the definition of “epistemological break” as, “The moment of rupture, separating science from its non-scientific past…In this way, the history of science…entails not simply the addition of new knowledge, but the reorganization of the very possibility of knowledge” (www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095755104).

REFERENCES


FACULTY FORUM

“Faculty Forum” welcomes reader contributions. We are interested in (but not limited to) your ideas and views on innovative foreign language education practices, as well as your comments on matters of general academic interest and on articles in previous issues of this journal.

Experiential Learning in Teacher Development: Action Research

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This paper analyzes a workshop designed for foreign language teachers at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC). The workshop incorporated the Experiential Learning Cycle model (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1985). In addition to providing teachers with the chance to see and use specific teaching techniques, the model also provides the author with the basis for revising the workshop for a second iteration with different participants. Reflection, in the form of action research, was used to assess the workshop and changes were made before the second iteration in order to improve its effectiveness.

1. Focus Area

The three-hour workshop was meant to help teachers understand the communicative approach and to improve their skills in applying this approach in grammar lessons. Teachers had hands-on experience using the skills learned in the workshop.

It was proposed that the following three goals would be attained by using the Experiential Learning (EL) model:

1) Teachers would be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their teaching process (reflective teaching).
2) Teachers would engage in a variety of practical activities that could be modified according to specific lessons. Teachers would become familiarized through practice with these activities.
3) Based on the tenet that grammar can be effectively learned using the inductive method (Larsen-Freeman, 2003), teachers would experience an inductive learning technique by creating grammar teaching guidelines for their own teaching based on their experience with the sample activities.

As the workshop facilitator, I was able to use the same elements, phases, and techniques in the EL model to improve the design of future grammar-teaching workshops.

2. Workshop Design and Development

There are five phases in the Experiential Learning cycle: (1) experiencing, (2) publishing, (3) processing, (4) generalizing, and (5) applying (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1985). In the first phase, experiencing, participants become involved in an activity. Participants then share experiences from that activity in the publishing phase. After publishing, participants have processing time during which they explore, discuss, and evaluate what emerged from the activity. Then, participants develop principles by generalizing about common themes from the experience. In the last step, participants test and use planned applications. This is the “experiential” part of the EL model.

This model examined three focus areas. The first addressed participants’ reflection time that occurred during the publishing and processing stages. After practicing activities, participants formed small groups and reflected on their experiences. In this particular workshop, the publishing phase was repeated by using two different sets of activities.

The second focus area addressed the experiencing phase. Teachers modeled and performed a class activity that they could use in their teaching with minimal modification. Because the intent of the workshop was to introduce as many activities as possible, I decided to use the experiencing phase twice: before and after the publishing phase.

The third focus area was the processing and generalizing phases used to generate guidelines for teaching grammar. Based on their experiences and observations, teachers worked together to make “rules” for teaching grammar inductively. Later, these rules or guidelines were tested by converting a textbook grammar exercise into a communicative activity/task.

Diagram 1 illustrates how the EL cycle was applied in each phase to examine the focus points of the study. It also summarizes how the action plans were implemented during the process.
3. Data Collection

There were two iterations of the grammar workshop, each with different participants. To assess responses to the workshop, teachers voluntarily completed questionnaires after each workshop (see Appendix A, the questionnaire used after the first iteration of the workshop, and Appendix B, the questionnaire used after the second iteration). A total of 33 teachers completed the survey: 15 teachers from the 1st iteration and 18 from the 2nd iteration.

4. Interpretation and Evaluation (1st Iteration)

The first workshop was executed as shown in Diagram 1. The results of the questionnaire completed after this session are summarized below.

All 15 teachers said that they grasped the idea of the communicative approach to grammar teaching. Some noted that the balance between theory and practice helped them to understand the communicative approach. Ideas that they gathered from activities were seen as helpful. One participant had never thought
about using the communicative approach in teaching grammar and had always relied on explaining grammar rules. The participant learned from this workshop about how to improve teaching according to the communicative approach.

For the question about how confident they were in adapting textbook exercises to more communicative activities, the majority reported that they had gained great confidence. Several mentioned that they had learned a lot from the activities and would like to modify those activities for their classes and languages. Five teachers thought they would need more practice with their students. They also felt that coming up with ideas could be challenging.

Eleven teachers said the most useful part of the workshop was the variety of activities that they had practiced. Overall, most teachers found the activities, such as fun games, those with visual aids, and those with lead-ins, informative and useful.

Overall, the experiential approach was successful in improving teachers’ knowledge about the communicative approach, demonstrating the importance of reflecting on their experiences, and increasing teachers’ confidence in applying the skills to their own teaching.

5. Changes Implemented

After the first iteration of the workshop, I took advantage of the EL model to reflect and to develop an improved version. My reflection showed that the processing and generalizing phases were under-utilized during group work because of insufficient time to process thoughts and inadequate background knowledge of foreign language instruction among some teachers. I decided to eliminate the second publishing phase to provide more time for activities and discussion. I moved directly to the processing phase where participants worked on finding general guidelines for teaching grammar based on practicing two activities.

A short lecture (5-10 minutes) on the communicative grammar teaching approach was moved to after the processing phase, instead of after the generalizing phase, as in the first iteration of the workshop. I encouraged teachers to modify their guidelines based on input from other groups and on the knowledge that they had gained from the lecture (generalizing phase). This revision is summarized in Diagram 2.
A comparison of Diagrams 1 and 2 indicates that there were important differences between the two iterations of the workshop. The publishing phase which occurred after the second set of activities was eliminated for the second workshop. Instead of sharing their experiences, the participants moved to a more focused discussion and evaluation of the activities, which led to a more thoughtful analysis than simply sharing feelings and impressions.

To reflect the changes made to the second workshop, I also modified the questionnaire by adding a section to ask about the process of the EL model. These questions were intended to provide me with a better idea of what teachers thought after having gone through the process.

6. Interpretation and Evaluation (2nd Iteration)

Eighteen teachers took part in the revised second iteration. Similar to the first iteration, teachers were positive in their assessments of how well the session helped them understand the communicative approach to grammar.
instruction. The majority believed that they had gained a fair amount of confidence. Some stated that they used to think textbook adaptation was too challenging, but through the session they had gained the confidence to use the adaptation technique. Most teachers thought the variety of activities and the chance to practice them were the most useful part of the workshop.

A 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the EL model where 1 equals “completely useless” and 5 equals “completely useful” (See Appendix B). All phases were rated 4 (somewhat useful) or higher. Most teachers thought that having time to reflect on their own participation was useful (mean = 4.42). They thought designing and conducting sample activities were very useful (mean = 4.50). Creating individual grammar teaching guidelines was useful (mean = 4.33). The mini-lecture on communicative grammar was somewhat useful (mean = 4.22). These results generally support the effectiveness of the EL model phases in the workshop.

The data supported the idea that reflecting on experiences was important. Reflection helped teachers understand the issues in grammar teaching. Also, guided reflection practice helped teachers understand how they could use reflection as a way to improve their own teaching.

The experiential approach to learning about communicative grammar teaching was successful. A majority of the teachers appreciated the fact that they were able to practice many activities. The workshop provided activities that model the ideas of the communicative grammar teaching approach (e.g., authentic materials, tasks, problem-solving activities, games, visual images). Based on ideas from these activities, teachers built their own applications and enhanced their ability to apply techniques to their own classrooms. Experience and reflection are important elements in increasing teachers’ confidence.

7. Thoughts on “Reflective Teaching”

The Experiential Learning Cycle is effective in instruction on several dimensions. First, the EL model can accommodate the idea of reflection. A critical skill for teachers is the ability to reflect on progress and activities conducted in class (Easley, 2006). The workshops gave teachers time to practice reflecting on their experience in a group environment. Second, one way of teaching grammar is using the inductive approach of working on tasks first before introducing grammatical features. After practicing this instructional method, teachers reflected on their experiences and generated guidelines about how to teach. Finally, teachers collected ideas and activities that they could use in their classrooms.

8. Facilitator’s Use of the Experiential Learning Cycle

Diagram 3 illustrates how the facilitator employed the steps in the EL process to assess and evaluate the workshop, leading to revisions in the second iteration of the workshop. Reflection on what could have been done to improve teaching helped the facilitator to improve the design and presentation of the
second workshop. I improved the experience by increasing the reflection time, which, according to the participants in the first workshop, was critical to learning.

![Reflection Loop from Design to Execution of the Workshops](image)

Figure 3: Reflection Loop from Design to Execution of the Workshops

Based on the feedback from the second workshop, I found that teachers had a better experience than in the first one. Providing more quality reflection time and making a clear link to the generalization phase helped cement understanding. It is not enough for teachers to understand the method or to be familiar with practices. The key is implementing these new skills and strategies in teaching. Using the EL cycle can lead to such implementation and improvement.

As a teacher trainer, using the skills and strategies of “reflective teaching” to teach reflective teaching is a powerful way to communicate the effect of the method implicitly. Rather than telling teachers how a method works, I showed them how it worked. Experiencing is always more powerful and memorable than explaining theory (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2011). This action research shows that the EL cycle served both the clients and the facilitators.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for First Iteration of Teaching Grammar Workshop

I am interested in receiving feedback about the effectiveness of this session from you. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. How well did this workshop help you understand the communicative approach to grammar instruction?
2. How confident are you that you can adapt textbook exercises to more communicative activities?
3. What part of the workshop did you find the most useful?
4. What part of the workshop did you find the least useful?
5. Do you have any suggestions for making this session more effective in the future?

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for Second Iteration of Teaching Grammar Workshop

I am interested in receiving feedback about the effectiveness of this session from you. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. How well did this workshop help you understand the communicative approach to grammar instruction?
2. How confident are you that you can adapt textbook exercises to more communicative activities?
3. What part of the workshop did you find most useful?
4. What part of the workshop did you find least useful?

5. Do you have any suggestions for making this session more effective in the future?

6. How useful did you find each of the following? (Please circle one number)

   - Reflecting on each of the aspects discussed
     
     | Completely useless | Somewhat useless | Neutral | Somewhat useful | Completely useful |
     |---------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
     | 1                   | 2                | 3      | 4               | 5                 |
     
     Any comment?

   - Designing and conducting sample activities (e.g., modifying textbook exercise)
     
     | Completely useless | Somewhat useless | Neutral | Somewhat useful | Completely useful |
     |---------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
     | 1                   | 2                | 3      | 4               | 5                 |
     
     Any comment?

   - Creating your own grammar teaching guidelines
     
     | Completely useless | Somewhat useless | Neutral | Somewhat useful | Completely useful |
     |---------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
     | 1                   | 2                | 3      | 4               | 5                 |
     
     Any comment?

   - Presentation of mini-lecture
     
     | Completely useless | Somewhat useless | Neutral | Somewhat useful | Completely useful |
     |---------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
     | 1                   | 2                | 3      | 4               | 5                 |
     
     Any comment?
A “dialect” is considered a language variety, which is also noted in the literature as “vernacular” (Ryding, 2007) or “colloquial” (Mughazi, 2007). Hornberger (2003) has used the term “biliteracy” to denote the case of teaching two related or unrelated languages at the same time. The counterpart of a dialect is usually a “standard” variety known to be the language of formal government dealings, of academics, and the media (Trudgill, 2002, p.29). The standard variety for teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language is referred to as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), sometimes “Fusha.” Standard Arabic is the language of writing and formal speaking. An Arabic dialect is the language of normal conversation (Holes 1995).

At the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC), two designations, standard and dialect, are used for teaching in the Arabic schools. The distinction between these two varieties is debatable because language variation is constant and limitless, although socially constrained by the speech community. A speech community in this context refers to a community of speakers; members of the speech community may restrict or disapprove the extent of using a language variant. A linguistic variable, or variant, is the observation of two alternative ways to say the same thing (Labov, 2008), through specific realizations of phonemes. Dialects are considered local and represent local cultures, but at certain times in history have also been considered as “low” and “corrupt,” whereas a standard language represents a national identity (Suleiman, 2008), and is considered “high.” When people speak the same language but have their own preferred word forms, different pronunciation of certain words, and different use of grammatical structures, it denotes natural and realistic variations in the speech communities. Such variations exist even within a dialect. For example, the Levantine dialect consists of four subdivisions: Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Palestinian. However, when intelligibility is at stake, language variations may purport to a different dialect or even a language.

In general, language variation is a sociolinguistic term (Trudgill, 2002; Bassiouney, 2009; Suleiman, 2008; Labov, 1972 & 2008) that typically relates to the study of language in society. In Britain, according to Trudgill (2002), a variety of dialects exist from north to south that jeopardizes mutual intelligibility. In the Middle East, five dialects are commonly noted, some of which are mutually intelligible, such as Levantine, Iraqi, Egyptian, Sudanese, and Gulf Arabic. Intelligibility is more limited between the dialects of more distant regions. The North African dialect may be unintelligible for Levantine speakers due to vowel shortening, sound amalgamation, conveyance, and other specific
dialectal characteristics. The standard variety of Arabic is typically considered similar in all areas (Bassiouney, 2009).

**ARABIC DIGLOSSIA: MSA AND DIALECT**

Diglossia is a term that describes a situation in which two varieties of the same language are used under different conditions within a community, often by the same speakers. Trudgill (2002), Hudson (2001), and Holes (1995) have questioned the legality of teaching exclusively the standard variety of any language, diglossic or otherwise. Hudson’s position (2001) is that a standard variety is “the result of a direct and deliberate intervention by society” (p. 32). It is not a “natural” variety because it represents a choice by a specific group of people (Trudgill, 2002).

The classification of “high” and “low” by Ferguson (1959) to denote standard language and dialect respectively has taken a toll on the way scholars, and laymen, look at Arabic. This view was subsequently questioned. Chomsky indicates that dismissing a variety and labeling it “primitive” or “low” suggests a non-humanistic inclination. According to Chomsky (1965), a primitive language belongs to the realm of “competence.” This implies that a dialect exists as deep knowledge in the mind of its speakers. Chomsky (1965) explained the modality and the importance of a primitive language: “…we might set the problem of developing an account of this innate linguistic theory that provides the basis for language learning” (p. 25).

If taking the validity of Arabic at face value as a language that experiences triglossia, scholars have further noted that Arabic may even suffer from multiglossia, as explained in a model developed for the Egyptian dialect by Badawi (1973), Badawi & Elgibali (1996), and Fahmy (2010) in which five varieties of Egyptian Arabic are noted, based on native speakers’ educational level and social and religious status. At one extreme, a language variety is described as the language of the “illiterates,” whereas at the other extreme is the variety that serves as the vehicle for religious authorities. Between these two extremes, Badawi specifies three levels of varieties, typically revealing speakers’ educational level, discourse preference, and context. Modern Standard Arabic, or “middle” language, labeled as a “modern literary language,” comes second, following the highest level. This is followed by “high standard colloquial” and “middle standard colloquial,” noted for their use in high-level discourse and everyday communication respectively. Badawi’s model could represent other regional Arabic dialects because a speaker’s educational level determines the ability of that speaker to switch between the related varieties of the Arabic language, as well as to switch between different languages, such as Arabic and French in the francophone regions of Arab countries.

The approach to teaching a diglossic language presents a sociolinguistic as well as a sociocultural issue. It must fill the gap between language varieties, providing ways to create mental and cultural links, or continua, between the linguistic characteristics of those two varieties. How native speakers of Arabic use both the standard form and dialect to communicate in specific contexts and
under specific conditions needs to be researched further; the research findings should be made available to learners and educators. Elgebali (2006) states that educated native speakers enjoy the deep knowledge of a core Arabic grammar that builds on the spoken form acquired at a younger age, and on formal instruction in school and beyond. A core grammar must be included in the research.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic distribution of Arabic speakers differs from most speakers of world languages because the native language for all Arabic speakers is only the spoken variety of Arabic, i.e., dialect. The standard variety is an acquired language that Arabic speakers study at school and use mainly in writing and in formal speaking. However, the advent in the 21st century of a language used by the media and on social media networks has changed the equation between dialect varieties and standard language, as noted below.

Arabic dialects are spoken by approximately 350 million in the Middle East who use these dialects for everyday communication; in large part, these speakers study and acquire an implicit knowledge of the standard variety in school. School curricula build on the standard variety, supported by classical and literary texts that are commonly memorized. Grammar instruction in school builds on what has been handed down from prescribed grammars in earlier decades and even centuries, such as the first grammar of Arabic written by Sibaweh in the third century of the Islamic calendar. Elgibali (1996) noted the emphasis on these prescriptive grammars in teaching Arabic: “Arabic like any other language has evolved throughout its long history, but its traditional prescriptive mode of study has remained unchanged and has continued to dominate the investigation of Arabic for some thirteen centuries” (p.1).

The influence of these first Arabic grammars, and the versions that appeared afterward, continues in contemporary teaching at schools in Arabic-speaking countries. Arabic instruction in the United States has followed the tradition of focusing on reading. Arabic teaching started in the US around the 17th century at Harvard, and later at Yale and Princeton in the 18th and 19th centuries, as a complementary language to Hebrew studies in “Near Eastern Languages” departments.

In recent times, the appearance of a media language has promoted a “middle” language combining dialects and MSA in many formal venues such as university lecture halls, TV talk shows, and church and mosque sermons. Furthermore, the appearance of social media networks like Facebook and Twitter has promoted the use of dialect, because this variety is informal, more personal, and more communicative. It consists of simpler structures and inflections, including the use of abbreviations, requiring less editing and control. Within this complex balancing of the formal and informal varieties of Arabic, MSA becomes incomplete unless dialects are taught to promote interaction and communication. By the same token, dialects are incomplete if not backed by the standard variety. In response to the changing Arabic-speaking world, the
DLIFLC leadership has decided to implement Arabic dialect classes in addition to pure MSA classes.

TEACHING ARABIC AT DLIFLC

Teaching Modern Standard Arabic had been the norm at DLIFLC until two years ago. Teaching MSA is insufficient for building communicative competence and proficiency because MSA is typically a reading-writing-grammar translation language program. Speaking in MSA is not natural for everyday communication in an Arabic-speaking community. However, the inconvenience of teaching a dialect is that it has no spelling or pronunciation standards. It is typically regional and may become unintelligible to a large extent as geographical areas widen and social distance between communities occurs. Trudgill (2002) suggests, “In some situations, regional dialects, by reinforcing local cultures and local identities, may act as counter to nationalism” (p. 29).

In response to the need to teach both MSA and dialect, DLIFLC has decided to set a goal of dual proficiency in Arabic. For this purpose there are classes that teach MSA and others that teach a dialect. The MSA classes contain a brief introduction to common Arabic dialects. Dialect classes typically engage students in listening and speaking in a dialect in addition to a significant portion of the daily instruction devoted to MSA.

This section will provide an overview of the teaching content used in the dialect classes, specifically Levantine. Semester One textbooks for Levantine include twenty chapters, each chapter consisting of four lessons. The first lesson starts with an MSA text preceded by an orientation in English, asking students to write in English the meaning of specific words listed in Arabic, requiring a transfer into Arabic of the knowledge acquired from the context presented in the short orientation. The next two lessons present dialogs between family members talking in dialect about their daily activities, such as shopping; preparing food; planning trips by car, bus, or plane; giving advice and recommendations; and reflecting on travel security. The last lesson in the chapter contains an explanation of the grammar points connected to the MSA text presented in Lesson One. This is an example of having MSA and a dialect in the same chapter, though they are still presented separately and are not directly connected.

The teaching of these lessons calls for different methodology. Teaching reading differs from teaching listening, speaking, or grammar. The requirement for distinct instructional methodologies, one for MSA and another for dialect, counters the idea of a language continuum. The argument here is that MSA and dialect need to be connected. The connection that one can imply from the discussion in the preceding sections is that MSA and dialect must be taught in tandem, as a continuum, as two varieties that complement one another, and not as two separate entities.

The connection considers dialect and MSA as a continuum. A language continuum means teaching both dialect and MSA in a parallel fashion. Learners’ attention must focus on the informal use of the language, as in a dialect, and the
Formal use, as in MSA. In order to impart a holistic and integrated understanding of the language, language functions and situations are used as units of instruction, and the similarities and differences are shown on a scale of informality and formality. The proposition here is for an informal versus a formal cline, or continuum, illustrating the common functions and situations of the language. Developing a level of dual proficiency should be the ultimate goal of training students in their use of Arabic. Teaching should raise students’ consciousness of the links between dialect and MSA and allow them to reflect on the language varieties. Such a practice will help students to switch between the two varieties fluently and accurately.

In general, implementing a dialect program means setting a new direction in teaching. Teaching by continua will produce students equipped with the skill of shifting between informal and formal styles. Holes (1995) evaluated the contemporary sociolinguistic situation for Arabic and criticized the concept of “diglossia,” proposing the view that Arabic speakers shift styles in their speech. He noted that a style shift should not be considered as indicative of language diglossia. He further explained that the partition of language into two entities is only an idealized way of conceiving of the two varieties. “The concept of Arabic as a “diglossic” language, if it was ever accurate, is now a misleading oversimplification: the behavior of most Arabic speakers, educated or not, is rather one of constant style shifting along a cline at opposite ends of which are “pure” MSA and the “pure” regional dialect, more accurately conceived of as idealized constructs than real entities” (p. 39).

Students are sometimes unable to identify the vocabulary as MSA or dialect because they do not have a range of denotation, such as informal or formal, against which to weigh the words. The glossaries of words in textbooks merely provide the immediate translation of a word as a dialect word or an MSA word. The amount of vocabulary words to learn every day can amount to the hundreds. The teaching of continua will alleviate the burden of remembering words as either MSA or dialect. Presenting a continuum of the concept of location, for example, as in: “locating existing – finding – being available – is” with the two extremes of standard and dialect on each side helps students to retain the vocabulary and to sharpen their skills in choosing and alternating vocabulary. For attaining a high level of dual proficiency, the methodology needed is that of transitioning from a dialect to MSA and vice versa in a meaningful way. A sound curriculum should consider that the difference between a dialect and MSA is a range of meanings and styles, and such a framework reveals the continuity of the language in its two varieties.

CONCLUSION

The discussion above presents an overview of the problems involved in teaching two varieties of a language such as Arabic. The integration of a dialect and MSA as a continuum will provide learners with a large picture of the language, reinforcing their language intuition and accelerating their acquisition of the language varieties. At the present time, teachers of Arabic dialects at
DLIFLC perceive themselves as pioneers in creating materials and transforming the traditional language teaching approaches. Teachers have found that teaching through continua makes language more accessible and meaningful. The method that this paper has discussed is to acknowledge the presence of two language varieties that can be explained through the concept of informality and formality. Future research and more efforts are needed for building frameworks that facilitate the creation of curricula based on language functions and situations.

REFERENCES


*Engage*

*Innovate*

*Apply*

*Reflect*

*Discuss*

... *Dialog on Language Instruction*
Formative assessment, such as Diagnostic Assessment (DA), plays a critical role for Defense Language Institute (DLI) teaching teams to assist all students to meet or exceed course requirements. Informal and formal formative assessment uses a variety of tools in and out of class to better understand student progress, which is informative for modifying teaching and learning activities. In contrast to summative assessment, which assesses learning outcomes, formative assessment is an on-going and dynamic process throughout the learning process. DA is used to continuously assess DLI students’ personal characteristics and linguistic abilities, and to offer an intervention plan that provides learning strategies to students.

Components of Diagnostic Assessment at DLI

The DA process consists of three segments: the collection of personal data, the collection of linguistic data, and the creation of an intervention plan. A student portfolio is built through administering a variety of questionnaires that evaluate a student’s characteristics such as personality type, cognitive styles, and motivational approaches. Linguistic data is obtained through administering speaking, reading, and listening DA interviews. DA also utilizes reading and listening recall protocols to assess these particular skills. The DA process at DLI has evolved from a set of standardized procedures to a set of tools available for DA Specialists. The choice to administer all or some of the personal and linguistic DA tools is a choice made by the DA Specialist based on the learning needs of the student. After analyzing the data collected and identifying the areas that need improvement, the DA Specialist develops an intervention plan to help learning yield better results.

Diagnostic Assessment Underutilized in Teaching

DA provides needed information for teachers to make timely instructional changes. Additionally, DA delivers comprehensive and in-depth data, which the teaching teams may not be aware of from classroom interactions. The formative assessment process not only guides teachers in making decisions on future instruction but also allows teachers to reflect on teaching and to identify the discrepancies between their teaching styles and students’ learning styles or preferences.

In the past, however, the DA and the intervention plan were primarily geared to the student, particularly to low-performing students, and did not
consider the teacher and teaching team as principle stakeholders. DA was underutilized in teaching. The content of the DA Intervention Plan was seen to offer students some strategies for self-study and classroom learning. Teachers seldom used the DA Intervention Plan content explicitly and systematically in their classroom practice because the Plan was geared to students. Teachers also hesitated to use the DA Intervention Plan because the Plan was designed for one particular student, not for the whole class.

**Five Approaches to Utilizing DA in Teaching**

We have summarized five basic, but often overlooked, approaches for teachers to utilize DA results and the Intervention Plans.

1. **Utilize Personal Profiles:** Identify changes in students’ learning styles, motivation level, or learning strategies over time. Learning styles may change over time and teachers need to continually assess students’ personal learning characteristics to best assist them.

2. **Utilize Linguistic Profiles:** Review DA interviews and recall protocols. Identify the causes of learning difficulties and address/reflect on these in daily teaching, and make use of students’ strengths so that they can advance to the next level.

3. **Review Intervention Plans:** Check students’ current progress and identify how you can incorporate the Intervention Plan suggestions into your lessons in combination with the learners’ study strategies, making a joint effort between teachers’ instruction and students’ self-study.

4. **Differentiate Instructional Approaches:** Plan your daily and weekly lessons to address the characteristics of your students by differentiating instructional content, process, and products.

5. **Adjust Your Teaching Style:** Monitor your teaching style, your class instructional methods, and students’ progress. Make appropriate adaptations to promote learning.

   Formative assessment takes place in the classroom all the time when a teacher proceeds through a lesson, reacting and responding to what students need. Many teachers constantly check on students’ learning outcomes through observation and questions. However, not all information can be gathered during class time. A high-quality formative assessment like Diagnostic Assessment is useful to improve teaching and learning. Our short article provides a rationale for making better use of DA results and the DA Intervention Plan.
Feedback is vital to student learning. When students do not receive enough feedback, they do not know in which areas they are excelling or which areas require more attention. Feedback motivates students and builds a supportive exchange of ideas among students.

The Portuguese team adopts a systematic approach to homework correction, as a tool of diagnostic assessment that provides timely information about students’ strengths and weaknesses. This practice could be useful for other language programs at the Institute. The purpose of this paper is to describe our practice in detail.

HOMEWORK CORRECTION AND FEEDBACK

Homework is assigned weekly for reviewing the vocabulary and structures that have been studied. The assignments consist of a) listening comprehension (such as transcription, translation, summarization, and open-ended questions); b) grammar exercises (with limited allotted time dedicated to practicing forms, such as “fill-in the blanks” exercises for verb forms); and c) writing tasks on topics previously covered in class (such as fictional compositions or current events reports).

Because of students’ different experiences and backgrounds, Portuguese instructors design personalized instructional materials and homework assignments that will help them succeed in the learning process. As a diagnostic tool, homework correction provides vital information on students’ performance, and this information helps teachers to customize their instruction. In a typical seven-hour teaching day, the 2nd and the 4th hour are scheduled for speaking activities. All other teaching hours involve homework correction and feedback, as detailed below.
The Portuguese team has four teachers. It has been a long-standing practice for all instructors to teach both sections so as to expose students to more variety. Through frequent and effective communication, team members ensure that they discuss students’ progress and provide timely feedback.

1st Hour

All homework other than grammar exercises is due before the 1st hour and submitted via Sakai. Homework is processed as shown in Figure 1. While the grammar exercises assigned as homework are corrected in class during the 1st hour, teachers who are not teaching the 1st hour correct other parts of the homework, to be used for individual counseling if needed. Homework correction uses different techniques, depending on the week of instruction, type of error, and assignment.

![Figure 1: Homework Correction Daily Process](image)

If a student does not perform as expected or does not do the homework, the teacher who corrects the homework writes a report, counsels the student, has the student sign the counseling form, and records the occurrence. The same teacher also reports to the team in which areas the student does not meet expectations, and proposes actions to be taken. This provides the team with an opportunity to discuss the learner’s other prevalent linguistic, grammatical, or comprehension issues.

3rd Hour

During the 3rd hour that is designated to listening comprehension, time is allotted for listening comprehension homework discussion. To expose students to authentic materials from the outset, the team selects authentic audio and video passages in the Portuguese-speaking world for class instruction and homework. The exercises are open-ended comprehension questions that include
vocabulary practice, transcription, translation, and summarization. As students progress to the second and third semesters, the passages become longer and more complex. Daily assignment includes the transcription of one passage and the translation of four passages.

Class time is spent on revising the listening comprehension homework. Working in pairs or as a class, students read the passages’ script to fine tune their understanding, pronunciation, and intonation. They also check their transcribed and translated passages against the script. Teachers discuss common mistakes and provide detailed feedback.

5th Hour

The 5th hour focuses on writing and presentation. Students write essays two or three times a week on topics covered in the program. Students are required to make a presentation of their essay in class without reading from it. In addition, they prepare comprehension questions of their essay. Every student is required to ask the presenter one question in order to promote exchange of ideas and student participation. This hour is usually a split session. The first part gives students enough time to express themselves in the target language. The teacher is present, but does not interfere when the exchange of ideas take place. During the second part of the class, usually towards the end of the hour, the teacher provides language and content feedback to students’ presentations.

6th Hour

Starting on week 14, the 6th hour is for students to work on current events. Each student selects an article from any of the Portuguese-speaking countries, and writes a summary in English. They must also write definitions for five new words from the articles, use the new words to create original sentences, and write two comprehension questions based on the content of the articles. During the 6th hour, students give an oral report of their article, without reading from it. Those in attendance must ask the presenter detailed questions to ensure accurate comprehension and to promote class interactions. The 6th hour is similar to the 5th hour, when the teacher provides feedback at the end of the presentation, but does not interrupt the flow of idea exchange among students.

7th Hour

The 7th hour is for some students to receive extra attention. For example, when students have pronunciation issues, they are given exercises to practice at home. They listen to passages selected by teachers and practice mimicking the native speakers and record themselves on their mobile devices with the script provided. Teachers provide detailed written feedback and practice with each student individually during the 7th hour.
CONCLUSION

Daily supervision of students’ productions using the approach described above allows teachers to assess students’ learning frequently and thoroughly. Consequently, teachers are able to identify and address areas that call for improvement through detailed feedback and customized instruction and homework.

Immersing Culture in Daily Teaching

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Language proficiency is achieved through understanding the culture embedded in the language. Foreign language learning goes far beyond mastering linguistic forms. Teaching culture in foreign language classrooms is as important as teaching linguistic knowledge, because the cultural knowledge greatly impacts students’ language use and their communication with native speakers. Based on the features of the Basic Course curriculum, we would like to share how we integrate Chinese culture into language teaching by focusing on different cultural aspects during semesters I-III.

Semester I

For the first semester, we teach culture that is customary in social encounters and interactions, such as greetings, expressing thanks and apologies, saying farewell, and making phone calls, requests, and invitations. We immerse culture in teaching from day one when we teach你好（ni hao -- Hello). The word 好 (hao), which means “good”, is a combination of two Chinese characters of a girl and a boy. The character itself reveals a traditional concept that a family is good and complete if it has at least a girl and a boy. Culture orientation is used even in the early stage of vocabulary teaching. For example, when teaching some basic characters, we explain that the written symbol of 男 (male, man) means “labor or strength in the field”, whereas the character of 妇 (woman) is “a woman with a broom”. These two characters clearly defined the traditional division of labor in a family. In doing so, we have enhanced students’ interests in learning Chinese characters. The association to meaning also makes it easier for students to remember the written symbols.
Semester II

For the second semester, we focus on teaching traditional Chinese ethics, morals, virtues, and values embodied in Chinese idioms, proverbs, and legendary stories. Rich cultural backgrounds and information are embedded in many proverbs (usually fixed phrases of four words) and idioms. Understanding and applying them correctly require the cultural knowledge that surpasses the literal surface meaning. A student once composed the sentence “美国人十八岁喜欢背井离乡。” He thought the meaning was “Americans like to move away from home when they are eighteen.” The student did not understand 背井离乡 means “to be forced to leave home due to disasters or unfortunate events.” Learning from this type of misunderstanding, we provide explanation of implied cultural information and demonstrate through examples how to use these phrases in context. We find video clips for students to watch, provide scripts of the story for them to read, and ask them to perform skits or role-plays. This allows us to check whether students have understood the intended cultural information, and are able to create language in accordance with the sociocultural parameters of a specific situation.

Semester III

Language mirrors the complexity of the world and people's views of the world. Thus, for the third semester, our objectives are to broaden students’ perspectives on Chinese geography, history, civilization, philosophical outlook, religion, customs, society, economy, and political systems. We allocate at least one hour per week for specific topics that cover chronological dynasties up to the era of Republic of China in 1949; the principles of the major philosophical schools in China, such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism; and contemporary Chinese history from 1949 to the present with a focus on major political movements and government policies, such as the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), family planning policies (1978-present), and economic reforms and opening up to the outside world (1978-present). We ask students to conduct individual research. The individual research has aroused students’ cultural awareness, helping them understand the culture underpinning of the Chinese people’s thinking and behavior. In class, two students are assigned to lead forum discussions or debates while teachers facilitate learning. The heightened cultural awareness expedites students’ language learning and their ultimate achievement of higher levels of language proficiency.

We have noticed that a student’s cultural knowledge affects his/her linguistic potential. Lacking cultural knowledge, a student cannot apply the language accurately and appropriately, and therefore cannot be an effective intercultural communicator. We also encourage students to compare their own culture with the target culture. The key similarities and differences enable students to develop an insight into the essence of language and culture and
realize that there are multiple ways of viewing the world. The culture training provided by us improves students’ communication skills, awareness of and sensitivity to language and culture, which leads to mission readiness.

**Developing Critical Listening Strategies**

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Because of the fast-paced curriculum and the pressure to cover a variety of materials quickly, teachers often present a listening passage in one of two ways: 1) by getting the main idea and summarizing it; or 2) dissecting the audio passage and translating every word into English, particularly when dealing with difficult passages. Both methods are useful to a certain degree, yet the former does not allow students to analyze and evaluate the information beyond the content, and the latter limits students’ global listening skills, hindering their ability to comprehend the context beyond the need of understanding every word.

In order to allow students to listen with understanding, motivation, and the ability to evaluate what they hear, we need to prepare them for listening, engage them during listening, and give them the opportunity for production (speaking) in post-listening. The following are examples of the three:

**Pre-listening**

- After the introduction of the topic, give students a list of vocabulary/ phrases and ask them to circle the ones they anticipate hearing in the listening material;
- Watch the muted video with a list of vocabulary and ask students to predict the topic, content, or the vocabulary
- Ask students to predict/guess the answers to questions about the audio before listening
- Discuss the topic of the audio before listening

**During-listening**

Teachers should involve students in active listening so they can focus on specific information, the speaker’s tone, ideas behind an obvious message, inferences and implications. They should prepare questions that go beyond extracting Essential Element(s) of Information (EEIs) and push students to listen
critically, rather than just gather the main pieces of information, as exemplified in the following:

1. What is the speaker’s tone?
2. What is the speaker’s concern?
3. What is the speaker’s opinion of…?
4. What information does the speaker use to support his/her beliefs?
5. What is the philosophical question that the speaker poses, and what are its implications?

**Post-listening**

Post listening activities should include reflecting, contrasting, and building up further knowledge through speaking/writing. Request that students do the following:

- Support an opinion
- Reflect on a topic, based on personal experience/background knowledge
- Participate in a meaningful debate/discussion
- Execute a real-life scenario with an opportunity to personalize the language and content, use the topic-relevant vocabulary, and incorporate job-related elements
- Amass knowledge by exposure to additional materials on the same topic

We also find that guiding students to self-administer some of the five study strategies helps them develop Critical Listening Strategies. We have summarized these study strategies based on 1) the study tips for graduate students in the Translation/Interpretation program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies; and 2) firsthand advice and pointers for language training obtained through interviews with Military Language Instructors (MLIs) who are successful military linguists in their previous deployment(s).

1. **Read extensively:** Students should be encouraged to read “for fun” about favorite topics, preferably in the target language. Reading helps students not only notice grammar features and vocabulary use in different texts, but also broadens general knowledge of the subject.

2. **Watch and/or listen to news and different types of discourses in their native and target languages:** Students should analyze the story while listening, and try to anticipate the course of action. Anticipating the story helps the listener focus on understanding the author’s intention. Moreover, practicing active transcription (noticing style and format of the text) rather than copying the “letters” has a higher impact on improving language skills.

3. **Use “hands” to improve writing skills:** Manually copying sections of authentic materials in the target language helps the learner recognize and process certain patterns of the language through multiple senses. Teachers can also utilize peer proofreading. Students can write a short text about a topic. Then
they can be paired up to proofread each other’s text. This puts each partner in a ‘language expert’ position and helps the student think from a different perspective and be more attentive to language structure and usage.

4. **Improve public speaking skills**: Students can form a speech club and discuss designated topics on a regular basis. They can also make presentations in the target language. This helps reduce the anxiety of speaking a foreign language in front of others.

5. **Enhance analytical skills**: Orally summarizing the main points helps students learn to discern key information from peripheral information. Practicing to explain complicated concepts in the level of language, they feel comfortable, which enhances their analytical skills and nurtures their ability to paraphrase and internalize the learning.

In summary, developing critical listening strategies will foster students’ ability to effectively comprehend and analyze source materials, which is a significant element for reaching higher proficiency levels.

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**Did your students reach higher levels?**

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**Dialog on Language Instruction**
Most teachers of foreign language agree that students must be exposed to authentic materials designed for and used by native target language speakers. Authentic materials expose students to real language and cultural information, which has a positive effect on learners’ intrinsic motivation. Students enjoy using authentic texts and aural materials, but as learners they need pedagogical support in dealing with real language.

At the same time, authentic materials pose challenges to teachers, especially in lower-level classrooms, because these materials often contain complex vocabulary and structures, colloquialisms, and cultural references that may pose difficulty for students. Teachers need to find ways to overcome these challenges and use authentic materials effectively to expand students’ lexical, structural, and discourse competencies.

GLOSS lessons can serve as examples for adapting authentic materials for classroom instruction. The following steps are taken to produce a GLOSS lesson. After establishing students’ current proficiency level, in accordance with the ILR scale, teachers can select an authentic text or aural material at a level slightly higher than the students’ current one, with the goal being to expand their knowledge and improve their target language skills. They can then take the steps listed below when preparing authentic materials for classroom instruction:

- Identify the lesson’s functional objective; identify teachable language features contained in the authentic source
- Decide which approach is more appropriate for the level: top-down or bottom-up
- Design logically-connected activities by scaffolding
- Employ different tasks with increasing degrees of complexity
- Use feedback in the teaching/learning process
- Enhance learning with target-language linguistic and socio-cultural information.
A More Learner-centered Approach through iBooks

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What is the conventional method for teachers to approach teaching materials with multiple-choice questions? Take listening materials as an example. Teachers play the audio and learners answer the content questions in the textbook. Teachers then lecture on the passage and respond to learners questions. Such an approach is teacher-controlled and teacher-centered. Using the “iBooks Author” to convert multiple-choice teaching materials to iBooks can promote not only a learner-centered classroom atmosphere, but also an interactive mobile learning environment.

As of now, the Asian School I has developed five Chinese iBooks that can be categorized into three types: audios, textbooks, and supplementary iBooks. Reviewing what has been learned through multiple-choice questions is one of the interactive functions in iBooks. Learners are able to assess their comprehension after reading or listening to a passage by responding to the multiple-choice questions. By clicking the “Check Answer” button, learners get instant feedback. The two most recent iBooks include many supplementary multiple-choice materials that are used by many Chinese teaching teams. As soon as these two iBooks became available on the share drive, they were adopted in daily teaching.

To understand the classroom application of these two iBooks, a survey was conducted in the Chinese Program at the Asian School I. Two Chinese Basic Course teaching teams, consisting of 11 instructors and 33 students, were randomly selected to provide feedback after using the two Chinese supplementary iBooks. Users responded positively to using iBooks, citing the following advantages:

**Paperless.** Each iBook has five to ten digital lessons. Printouts are no longer necessary after downloading the iBooks from the share drive. It is convenient for users. Digitized teaching materials also contribute to creating a paperless learning environment.
Mobile Autonomic Learning. After downloading the iBooks from Mobilecho, the learners are able to not only synchronize iBooks to their own iPad, iPhone, and Macbook, but also to learn and practice via iBooks anytime and anywhere even without an Internet connection. Furthermore, the interactive iBooks also have made the learning feasible even in a combat zone.

Learner-oriented Learning and Teaching. Learners cited "self-controlled" and "self-paced" as the major advantages. By using iBooks, learners can learn and practice according to their own needs and at their own pace. Instructors also commented that they preferred the student-oriented teaching methodology in iBooks to the traditional non-interactive multiple-choice one. The iBooks made teachers more aware of the importance of interacting with students in teaching. Therefore, using iBooks not only promotes a learner-directed learning autonomy but also requires instructors to change pedagogy.

The five Chinese Languages iBooks compiled by the Asian School I are just the beginning of digitized teaching and mobile autonomic learning. Apart from those previously mentioned, other benefits of using iBooks are likely to be evident in the future; as among these should be efficiency in teaching and learning, better use of human resources, and conservation of teaching supplies.

Achieving Learner Autonomy through Guided Current News Reports

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Autonomous learners have not only the ability, but the attitude to take command of their own learning. However, autonomous learning does not necessarily mean that learners do not need assistance when learning the target language (TL). The instructor should facilitate successful autonomous learning in the classroom, so that learners can achieve language abilities to carry out their own study, as well as maintain a positive attitude and motivation to study consistently.

The following lesson plan, which can be used for various FLOs topics, illustrates the major steps in using guided current news reports to maximize students’ autonomous roles in language learning and minimize instructors’ traditional roles in language teaching. The prevailing concept of the lesson plan has students managing their own study according to individual learning needs and interests. Thus, the role of instructor is limited to that of a facilitator who provides students with clear guidelines for studying. Students are the main actors on stage, who research and select their own lesson topics, prepare and
present reports, and analyze and critique peers’ presentations through critical writing.

**Step 1, Research Authentic Materials:** Students are given homework assignments to select news articles in the target language (TL) electronic newspapers according to their learning interests and needs. The instructor should provide guidelines for selecting authentic news because random selection leads to a waste of class time and unnecessary hurdles for learning. Here are the sample guidelines:

a) The text level of newspaper articles depends on the student’s level.

b) More than three newspapers or other news resources should report the news on this topic. This helps students identify salient topics of the week. Researching the same topic in three newspapers or other news media demands that they spend time reading or listening to current news.

**Step 2, Guidelines for the Presentation:** The instructor should also provide guidelines for presenting core information from the news articles:

a) The presenter must explain how and why the TL society perceives and reacts to the topic. The context of the current news should be explained using higher order thinking skills.

b) The presenter should help the audience understand the main ideas, intentions, tones, and detailed information of the selected articles.

c) The presenter should provide essential topic-related language chunks, such as phrasal structure, idioms, etc.

d) The presenter should explain how the selected articles are constructed to best serve the author’s intention. This requires students to explain how Korean discourse pattern differs from American.

**Step 3, Active Listening:** As one student makes a presentation, the others should be listening actively, taking notes, using an active listening grid, provided by the instructor to organize information, as an aid.

**Step 4, Questions:** Following the presentation, listeners ask the presenter questions to clarify the content, concepts, or viewpoints of the news article.

**Step 5, Critical Writing for Summary:** Each student is to write a critical summary after listening to the presentation. The success of this depends on effective active listening. It may include synthesis, analysis, and evaluation of the presented news articles.
Autonomous Transcription Practice

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According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary’s definition, transcription is the act or process of making a written, printed, or typed copy of words that have been spoken. It is one of the skills of the Final Learning Objectives (FLOs) that DLI students need to master. Transcription is often challenging because it requires students to listen and write within a very limited period of time.

There are two types of transcription: phonetic transcription and orthographic transcription. Phonetic transcription focuses on phonetic and phonological properties of spoken language, whereas orthographic transcription focuses on the orthography of a given language. DLI uses orthographic transcription for its transcription practices.

In order to do the transcription well, students need to have sound listening and writing skills. In practice, however, they frequently have difficulties listening to audio materials because they do not know what to expect from the listening; transcribing what they have heard will be even more challenging and frustrating. Providing students with the context helps them stay focused on what to expect during listening. When designing a transcription activity, teachers play an important role in making transcription practice fun and motivating.

Caption Me, Please is a transcription activity that I designed for students, which maintains their motivation level and promotes autonomous learning. Classroom experience shows that students have fun doing this transcription activity and enjoy the freedom to be creative in language production. Some students were surprised to realize that they were able to do more than what they had believed they could do in terms of transcription. This activity also enables them to practice transcription in the absence of an instructor.

By giving students the feeling that they are in control of the activity, they are motivated to practice the skill on their own.

First, form groups of three to four students. Show a picture related to the topic under discussion. Give students one minute to write a caption for the picture consisting of 10 to 20 words (depending on language levels). Next, one student in the group reads his caption twice at normal speed as the others transcribe it. Students then compare their transcriptions for accuracy. Repeat this until everyone has had a turn.

In summary, this activity is brief and fun, allowing students to practice during session breaks. It also gives students, in a timely manner, the opportunity to review and practice language skills and content knowledge, such as composing sentences, and discussing the details of a topic that has been studied in class.
Ways to Encourage the Positive Effects of Student Autonomy

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Henri Holec (1981) first mentioned the term autonomy in language learning. He stated that learners can take responsibility for the totality of their own learning situation and choose methods of instruction through continuous trial-and-error; thus they can learn from ideas to correct lexical and phonological forms, and make correct connections between meanings and forms in grammar. Benson & Voller (1996) also pointed out that autonomy is an inborn capacity, which is suppressed by institutional education. Therefore, teachers should take advantage of learner capacity to enhance language learning. Deci & Ryan (1985) elaborated on the advantages of learner autonomy in different aspects; as among these, enhancing learners’ self-awareness towards the use of the target language, increasing learners’ creativity in complex language situations, developing the ability to actively manage learning, and choosing to use appropriate learning strategies. Moreover, learner autonomy can encourage learning from peers.

We believe that each learner has the ability to learn on his own. Teachers should help learners to develop and improve this ability. With the guidance of learner autonomy theories, we began experimenting in our teaching practices. DLI has set a general language goal of 2/2/1+ for all students, but some learners have the potential to achieve higher goals. By identifying students’ personal learning goals and learning needs as the first step, teachers can incorporate activities that require full participation into classroom instruction. In other words, the activities are led and/or performed by students. For example, students take turns making a five-minute LIFT presentation of materials based on the topics of interest. When making cultural presentations, students are required to include visual and audio aids. This challenges them to investigate a certain topic further. The annual Christmas celebration also provides an opportunity for students to present what they have learned in a creative and artistic way.

Technology incorporation plays a crucial role in independent language learning. We took advantage of the powerful hardware and software tools provided by the school when designing activities for students to practice three skills in and out of class. For example, a Sakai blog is frequently used for practicing writing and sharing OPI tasks. Project-based assignments in tandem with textbook content enable students to complete real-life tasks such as ordering food. Written and oral reports allow teachers to check students’ progress. In the past, children were an essential part of the survival of family farms, where they performed jobs around the farms. In digital learning farms, students become contributors, collaborators, and leaders in learning. The availability of iPads creates digital learning farms at different stages of learning. One example has students collect and introduce useful iPad apps for language practice to their peers. VoiceThread, available both online and on iPad, provides...
a convenient way not only for students to create recordings to practice speaking, but also for teachers to listen to, and make oral comments about, students’ recordings.

As the result of our experiments and practices, we found that integrating and promoting learner autonomy is not only feasible at DLI, but also effective in improving language skills. With clear and explicit instructions and expectations explained by the teaching team, students develop a sense of being challenged as well as being recognized. By providing “space” away from textbooks, we give students the chance to explore the outside world based on their own interests, which gives them the intellectual stimulation and motivation to learn more and better. While helping students become independent learners, teachers also enhance their skills as facilitators, monitors, and counselors.

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**MEET A TEAM**

*Helping Students Become Better Language Learners*

*An Interview with Dr. Hyeyung Sung-Frear, Director of Student Learning Services, Directorate of Academic Support*

**Editor:** Would you tell the readers about the Student Learning Services? How do you support students during their language training at DLIFLC?

**Dr. Sung-Frear:** The Student Learning Services (SLS), formerly the Student Learning Center (SLC), was reorganized in March 2014, and is now in the Directorate of Academic Support. SLS has nine members: a Director, an Associate Dean, two Academic Specialists and five Student Learning Specialists. We come from a wide variety of backgrounds; some were originally hired as classroom (platform) foreign language instructors at UGE, while others were brought on as English or study skills instructors. We rely on our diverse professional experience and teamwork to accomplish SLS’s mission of helping DLIFLC students become better language learners.

Our goal is to raise students’ linguistic and metacognitive awareness, so they can achieve and maintain their proficiency goals at DLIFLC and beyond. SLC previously taught learner preparation and sustainment courses, Introduction to Language Studies (ILS) and Autonomous Language Sustainment (ALS). Since March 2014, ILS and ALS courses have been taught by UGE faculty. Our role at SLS is to ensure that DLIFLC students receive the best learner preparation and sustainment courses by (1) providing training and mentoring to UGE teachers, (2) observing ILS and ALS classes, (3) collecting and analyzing student feedback, and (4) communicating our findings to stakeholders.

**Editor:** So SLS now focuses on quality assurance by monitoring the process of learner training courses. Since the reorganization, what have been the major accomplishments of your team?

**Dr. Sung-Frear:** I am proud that our team has accomplished a lot. From February to May 2014, we offered four iterations of a one-day workshop to
familiarize UGE teachers with the ILS and ALS course concepts, which were fully supported by syllabi and teaching resource materials. Using the participants’ feedback, we developed five different module-based workshops. Since June 2014, SLS has offered the workshops every week, assisting UGE teachers to create learner-centered activities. Our data shows that by the end of July, 344 teachers attended the workshops.

Editor: Congratulations on your team’s swift and smooth transition to your new role as teacher trainers. We all know that designing and offering a new workshop take a lot of thought and planning.

Dr. Sung-Frear: Developing and conducting teacher-training workshops are only part of our responsibilities. In addition, SLS faculty observed over 500 hours of classes taught by UGE faculty and provided informal feedback. We have created a quality-assurance procedure to certify UGE teachers in teaching SLS courses and will begin conducting certification observations.

Moreover, we have been providing support for the ILS courses taught at the SLS facility. Currently, the first four days of the ILS course are scheduled at the SLS building. Between March and July, SLS coordinated and supported 56 ILS classes for 1,233 new students in eight UGE schools.

Editor: What are some of the special challenges you have faced in your work? How did you meet these challenges?

Dr. Sung-Frear: Since the reorganization, we have faced constant challenges to meet the new vision and goals at DLIFLC. The special challenge for the SLS was a paradigm shift—from platform instruction to teacher training and quality assurance. SLS faculty loved teaching and working with students. It was not easy to transfer their role from teachers to faculty trainers. However, by focusing on students’ success, we have been adapting, adjusting, and creating new practices and procedures to ensure that students are as best prepared as possible for their language training. The key to our successful transformation is flexibility, focus, internal training, and communication.

Similarly, UGE teachers also face the challenge of teaching different content in the ILS and ALS courses. Not all UGE teachers are prepared for the content change. SLS will continue to provide weekly workshops and individual mentoring services to ease this transition.

Editor: Would you share one of your best practices with DLIFLC colleagues?

Dr. Sung-Frear: The SLS is effective in doing many things. One example is utilizing a collaborative learning program called EDMODO (details of the program are available at www.edmodo.com). EDMODO creates a collaborative learning environment that allows instructors to develop, share, and store
instructional materials, activities, and lesson plans. This has been instrumental in helping UGE faculty understand and learn new information and in promoting discussion of ideas.

Editor: What would make your team more productive and successful?

Dr. Sung-Frear: As I mentioned before, our team went through a paradigm shift. We need continuous professional development to provide effective teacher training as well as robust quality assurance. I would also like to have a team-building event at least once a year to help make our team more cohesive and efficient.

Editor: As the Director of Student Learning Services, how do you encourage your team to maintain high levels of productivity?

Dr. Sung-Frear: Our team members are incredibly smart and dedicated. They are passionate about students’ success not only at DLIFLC, but also out in the field operations in our nation’s defense. The SLS maintains a high degree of collaboration and transparency through teamwork, regular staff meetings, brainstorming sessions, workshops, and training. As a manager of the team, I concentrate on maximizing the capability of our team members and providing continuous professional development opportunities. My personal goal is to create an environment in which team members want to come to work every morning.

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“Quick Tips” welcomes reader contributions. We are particularly interested in previously unpublished, novel or innovative, easy to follow ideas for use in the language classroom or in any aspect of foreign language teaching, such as technology tips, useful classroom activities, and learner training tips.

Enhancing Delivery: A Key to Improving Oral Proficiency

JIHUA ZHOU & RUIQI MA
Proficiency Standards, Testing

Delivery in oral proficiency assessment refers to the speed, the clarity, and the phonological accuracy of the examinee’s speaking performance, often subcategorized into pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. More specifically, fluency refers to the ease and naturalness of speech; phonological accuracy refers to the pronunciation of individual sounds in the language, as well as the patterns of intonation, including stress and pitch. Along with rating factors, such as Global Task Functions, Lexical Control, Structural Control, Sociolinguistic Competence and Text Types Produced, Delivery is one of the key rating factors in evaluating oral proficiency. Because Delivery is the vehicle in which all other rating factors are manifested, it deserves attention in both speaking instruction and assessment.

Understanding the characteristics of delivery at each level can help instructors monitor students’ performances, diagnose problems, and design methods to enhance delivery. Below is a table that summarizes key features of Delivery at each ILR level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILR Level</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0+</td>
<td>Shows little real autonomy of expression, flexibility or spontaneity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unable to produce continuous discourse except with rehearsed material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILR Level</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+</td>
<td>Labored speech. Pronunciation understandable to natives familiar with foreigners. Can combine most significant sounds with reasonable comprehension, but encounters difficulty in producing certain sounds in certain positions or in certain combinations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Can handle most normal high-frequency social conversational situations with confidence. The individual uses the language reasonably well, but with some noticeable errors; still, these errors rarely interfere with comprehension and rarely confuse the native speaker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Often shows high degree of fluency and ease of speech, yet when under pressure, the speaker’s ability to use the language effectively may deteriorate. Weakness or unevenness in fluency and ease of speech, or in pronunciation, occasionally results in miscommunication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The individual speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Individual sounds are accurate, but stress, intonation and pitch control may be faulty.</td>
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Delivery at each level contains certain unique characteristics deserving to be considered in language teaching or training. The following are some tips on how to enhance students’ delivery to improve their overall oral proficiency.

### I. Phonological Accuracy

1. **Aim at a mastery of accurate pronunciation as early as possible.** Pronunciation is the external manifestation of speaking behavior. Once formed, it is difficult to reform. Therefore, it is important that speakers acquire accurate pronunciation at the initial stage of learning. To achieve this purpose:
   • demonstrate to students the correct tongue and vocal positions;
   • slow down and separate syllables to ensure that students develop the correct pronunciation;
   • repeatedly practice the unique and unusual sounds that do not exist in the learner’s native language; and
   • keep track of students’ phonological behavior, such as their patterns of pronunciation, intonation, stress, tone, and pitch, for a more effective subsequent training.
2. **Acquire the target language intonation**: Mimicking and then mastering the basic, prominent and distinctive intonation patterns of the target language is often considered as a multiplier in spoken language learning. This is because intonation is often more important than individual sounds in acquiring a near-native accent. Consonant and vowel cluster exercises are helpful for this purpose.

3. **Adopt the read-aloud approach**: From a physiological perspective, read-aloud is an essential step to transfer a learner’s phonological knowledge first into speaking behavior and then gradually into muscle memory. Read-aloud is a good exercise to train students to imitate the correct pronunciation, intonation, stress, and pitch of the target language. Students may start with reading aloud following a native speaker’s sound recording.

4. **Conduct fun activities**: Singing, riddles, rhymes, tongue twisters, and raps in the target language can be used in and out of class to promote correct pronunciation and intonation.

II. **Fluency**

1. **Use pattern drills**: Have students practice set phrases, idiomatic expressions, clusters of speech; train students to memorize commonly-used expressions and idioms to build up the memory of certain set phonological segments, especially those that are difficult, awkward, and different from learner’s native language.

2. **Make read-aloud a part of homework or unit test**: Read-aloud is widely considered a useful approach in improving speaking techniques, because it directly demonstrates phonological rules through vocal practice. It also helps learners develop a native-like speaking speed. In addition, read-aloud may enhance listening comprehension—an important part of any conversation.

3. **Construct an immersion environment**: Encourage students to speak the target language at all time. Giving each student a name in the target language can raise the initiate target culture awareness in subsequent speaking practice. Let students practice speaking through meaningful activities by creating interesting and practical tasks appropriate and relevant in the target culture. Help students improve their communicative skills through role-play situations. Organize class presentations to help students feel more comfortable and confident in speaking.

4. **Cultivate learner autonomy**: Self-reflection plays an important part in adult learner’s success. Encourage students to record and play back their speech or conversations, analyze the pauses in delivery, and consciously improve fluency.
III. Delivery

1. Adopt appropriate general forms of speaking: Speaking is often an interactive speech act. Using an appropriate opening, closing, and turn-taking strategy will enhance the effectiveness in both monologs and dialogs.

2. Organize the content of speech: Try to gain time to collect one’s thoughts before speaking. Train learners to quickly organize their main ideas before speaking so as to avoid unnecessary pauses and hesitations caused by searching for content information. Always stay focused on the topic or task given.

3. Fill pauses like a native speaker: Teach and train students to use target language fillers to make the pauses sound natural like native speakers do.

4. Ask questions: Asking questions is an effective strategy that helps students gain time for gathering their thoughts to continue their speech.

5. Use non-linguistic acts to help: Use appropriate body language such as gestures and eye contact to enhance the effectiveness of delivery during face-to-face conversations.

Delivery is a physical manifestation of one’s linguistic ability through speaking. It plays an important role in the evaluation of an examinee’s speaking proficiency. Although the above tips target delivery, this process is inevitably affected by other linguistic abilities, such as lexical and structural controls. Therefore, we should work to lay down a solid foundation of the basic linguistic abilities to improve students’ overall proficiency.

Using QR Codes in Language Teaching

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EDGAR ROCA
Faculty Development Support, Academic Support

QR Codes are everywhere these days: magazine advertisements, movie posters, real estate flyers, and even cereal boxes and labels. But what exactly are QR codes, and how can they be used in the language classroom?

QR Code stands for Quick Response Code. QR codes are just like the barcodes used in stores to scan the price of merchandise. Instead of providing the price of an item, QR codes can link directly to websites, videos, sound files and much more. They can be scanned using any “smart” device (phone, tablet, etc).
To start using QR codes, users need to download a QR code reader app. There are many free apps available online. Simply search for the term “QR code reader” — there are dozens available. A good option is QR Code Reader by Scan. Each app may work slightly different, but they all do basically the same thing— scan a QR code and navigate the reader to the linked website, video, text, or sound file.

Most students are already familiar with this technology and will likely know how to use a QR code.

Teachers can also create their own QR codes using a QR code generator website. There are many different sites available for creating these codes; one such site is www.qrstuff.com. For a detailed description and explanation of how to create QR codes and sound files, simply scan the code below:

Despite their small size, QR codes can hold over 4000 characters of information. Instead of printing out a long web article for students to read, QR codes can give them direct and instantaneous access to many added resources in class or at home. QR codes serve to bridge the gap between the print and digital worlds. They allow the reader to go from a printed article to a website, or other media, containing additional resources and information.

Because of the speed and ease of creation, teachers everywhere have been discovering new and creative ways to use QR codes in education. Here are a few ideas:

• Add QR codes to worksheets as a way to provide students with related feedback for use during or after class; or, as a means to add questions and additional tasks to be completed independently.
• Use QR codes to link printed texts to a variety of listening comprehension media.
• Post printed QR code clues around the classroom and hallways to create scavenger hunt activities.
• Have students produce their own QR codes with descriptions of various images provided by the teacher. Print and scramble all images and codes for additional classroom matching activities.
• Students record themselves giving directions to and from different points in town. After creating their own QR codes, their classmates listen to the directions and determine the location looking on a map.

QR codes combine speed and ease with the capacity to hold a large amount of data. They can help add a new dimension and enrich the language class.
Sample Activity

Below is an English translation of a lesson created for the Portuguese students using QR codes:

I need your help!
My sister’s best friend is arriving at the Monterey airport in about 30 minutes, but I just got a call from the director calling me into an emergency meeting. I must attend this meeting…
Can you help me and go pick up my sister’s friend at the airport?
She left a message on my answering machine with the details of her arrival.

1<sup>st</sup> - LISTEN TO HER MESSAGE ➔

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh no! I’m going to be stuck at the office all afternoon! Can you take care of my sister’s friend for a couple of hours? Ask her what she likes to do and plan something to entertain her for a couple of hours until I can join you.</td>
<td>(2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; – Listen to each statement above, then discuss with your partner who is the correct person and decide where to go and what to do)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Teaching Tip on Improving Lexical Learning

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I have developed a vocabulary-learning activity that can be an optional supplement to students’ homework. Instructors can choose one textbook and, based on the textbooks’ vocabulary lists, write sentences to illustrate how the new words are used in context. For example, I have selected the Newspaper book, which contains ten chapters. Each chapter begins with a long list of isolated vocabulary items that are difficult for students to memorize.

Preparation. I write sentences to illustrate the use of these words in context. Then I record the sentences and save each sentence in a separate audio file. The length of the audio file is less than a minute.

Assignment. I give students one audio file a day. They practice the spelling and the pronunciation of the words and review grammar rules. This helps students to not only learn the new vocabulary from the Newspaper Book, but to also learn new phrases and idioms used in the sentences. Students listen to the audio file, transcribe it, and translate the transcription. The next morning before class begins, students submit their work to me in a notebook. Before noon, students get their notebooks back with my feedback and corrections. One audio file a day (including weekends and holidays) also pushes students to develop the habit of working on the target language on a daily basis.

Currently, this is an optional task, given to those who are willing to spend 5-10 minutes a day working on the audio file. To make this activity work effectively, I instructed participants to do the following:

- Have a notebook of at least 200 pages, so as to keep their work in one place for future reference. (This also helps instructors to keep track of a student’s learning and improvement.)
- Pay attention to the feedback that they receive every day, and study the corrections to avoid repeating the same mistakes.
Giving Instructions: A Hands-on Activity

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Organizing thoughts and speech is an important skill in giving instructions. Instructions must be clear and logical. Attention must be given to organizing and providing step-by-step instructions. I created the following hands-on activity for students to practice organizing their thoughts.

Preparation

Before the activity, the teacher needs to:
1. Go online and register (if needed) at a website for recipes, such as http://www.pesto.co.il/index.php?act=submit_rec_(an Israeli site.), or https://www.cooking.com/Recipes-and-More/Submit-Recipe.aspx (recipes are written in English).
2. Make an audio recording of step-by-step instructions in the target language on how to enter the website and navigate to the webpage where they can post a recipe.
3. Purchase a bag of (medium) marshmallows, a box of graham crackers, and some dark chocolate.

Activity

1. Teacher introduces the task of giving instructions and the skills needed to complete the task.
2. Teacher tells the class: “Today we will prepare s’mores. Please take your notebook and pencil and record every step in preparing s’mores.” Students and teacher go to the area where the microwave is. The teacher reminds students to record each step in the order to prepare the s’mores.
3. After preparing and eating the s’mores, return to class.
4. A student volunteer goes to the class computer (projected on the SMARTBoard screen) and follows the teacher’s recorded instructions (mentioned as Step 2 in preparation for the activity) to arrive at the webpage for writing and uploading recipes. At this point, other students use the notes they have taken to give the volunteer step-by-step instructions for preparing s’mores. The volunteer types the instructions dictated by the class.
5. To maximize students’ participation, the teacher can ask students to take turns writing the instructions until the recipe is complete. The final step is to upload the completed recipe to the website.
6. As a follow-up, the teacher gives students the homework assignment of writing step-by-step instructions for preparing their favorite food.
TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

“Resources” welcomes reader contributions. We are interested in brief write-ups on resources related to the foreign language education field, including print and non-print materials, tests, research reports, websites, computer and mobile apps, etc.

Apps for Classroom Interaction and Individualized Homework Assignments

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Asian School I, Undergraduate Education

Mobile technologies have been successfully implemented in today’s classroom. iPads, in particular, have facilitated language learning and teaching. SuperNote and ShowMe, two iPad apps, allow learners to create and share personalized audio and visual materials. The flexibility and convenience of these two apps bring creativity and individuality to learning activities and homework assignments, contributing to a more dynamic learning environment.

SuperNote

- Note-taking

SuperNote functions as both a note-taking app and a classroom tool for students to exchange information such as study notes, writing, pictures, and voice recording through instant file sharing. Students use SuperNote to take notes, write ideas for classroom discussion, or make their own vocabulary lists. By tapping the record or camera icon on top of their SuperNote, students can integrate sound recordings and photos with their notes.

- Ease of file sharing

Students can transfer their notes from iPads to computers, or share notes with others via iPads. Because each iPad has a unique IP address, other students can use a web browser on their iPads/computers to access and download shared files. In comparison with other file sharing apps, such as Google Drive or Dropbox, SuperNote is more convenient and faster. It does not
require students to enter the email addresses of other users, nor does it require
students to email other users long web links. Students do not even have to
register or upload any files, if they choose to share files through IP addresses. In
addition, students can share SuperNote files via email or Dropbox.

The only downside of SuperNote is that it may not support some
foreign language encoding during file sharing from one iPad to another. One tip
is to take a screen shot of the notes, which will be saved automatically in
Camera Roll, import the image from iPad photo library into SuperNote, and then
share the image with other students through IP address links.

- Class activities

SuperNote is a quick and hassle-free file sharing tool, which is handy
for discussions, presentations, and other classroom activities. For example,
before a class discussion, students may first engage in pair work and use
SuperNote to write keywords, main ideas, and important facts for arguments.
Different groups can then exchange notes through SuperNote links. This will
facilitate the class discussion. It can also enhance the effectiveness of a
presentation. The presenter may use SuperNote to create a vocabulary list or a
presentation outline, which helps the audience. Discussion facilitators can also
use this app to write and share comments and feedbacks.
ShowMe

ShowMe is a versatile and entertaining app that allows students to create multi-media projects. The main features of ShowMe app include:

- A canvas for writing and drawing on the iPad screen, with the options of changing colors, styles, editing, erasing, etc.
- Recording the writing and drawing process. This is particularly useful in teaching Chinese characters and Japanese kanji that have stroke orders. A Chinese or Japanese teacher may use ShowMe to demonstrate the correct stoke order by means of an animation, or ask students to record their writing on ShowMe for homework.
- Functionality to add images by importing pictures from one’s photo library or built-in camera.
- Audio input capability to record voiceovers in photos and writing.
- Capability to share materials online. After students finish a ShowMe session, they can upload their work, with the option of sharing it in public or with a selected audience.

In summary, teachers and students can use ShowMe as an interactive whiteboard. Because ShowMe can capture voice and sync it with writing and pictures, students can make illustrated books, animated audio books, and other projects for classroom demonstration in a creative way. ShowMe also allows teachers to create and share learning tutorials, educational animations, and whiteboard lessons that students can watch after classroom. You can visit the ShowMe website: http://www.showme.com, watch hundreds of ShowMe tutorials, lessons, and projects shared by users, and search topics that you are interested in.
iBook: My Ticket to Target Language Country

OKSANA WILLIS
Harvard University

Literature in Proficiency-oriented Instruction

This paper will discuss the benefits of using iBook Author in a language course, whose main content is based on timeless authentic materials, such as literature, art, and cinema. Proficiency-oriented language instruction is based on comprehensive introduction to the culture of the target language country. Higher levels of proficiency can only be achieved through increased sociocultural competence that allows the learner to acquire a full range of stylistic, emotional, and cognitive nuances of a text. These nuances very often originate from literary works such as literature, movie scripts, and art critiques written in the target language. Literature, in particular, plays a key role in the foreign language classroom as explained by Shattuck (1958), “There exists only one form of language which provides full linguistic challenge, which incorporates a mature emotional and intellectual apprehension of the world and of ourselves, and full understanding of which demands a disciplined critical approach in the original tongue. The only structure of words which can begin to offer an adult the excitement and mental discipline of rudimentary verbal expression for a child is literature. It does not merely give information about language and about culture. It is itself the ultimate embodiment of those two human achievements in a single entity.”

The semantic density and various references do not hinder educated native speakers’ understanding of these texts; however, for these texts to be used for teaching non-native speakers, an important task for the teacher is to support and facilitate students’ exploration of connections between the target language culture and linguistic forms. Studying works of literature requires time for independent preparation. Support of in-depth out-of-class cultural studies can be provided through the “flipped classroom” model, which requires the student to go through a number of learning activities prior to attending a lesson (Rosenberg, 2013). An interactive digital platform, such as iBook Author, can help the learner to more easily navigate through literary texts.

Tips on Building an iBook

For the language teacher, iBook Author offers a wide range of possibilities for course management and assessment of student progress. By widening avenues for course individualization, iBook Author can foster student autonomy, facilitate individualized instruction, and support independent study. By offering interactive maps, expandable images, embedded videos, presentations, and articles on cultural topics, the platform can take students on an incredible virtual tour of the Target Language World. In the very beginning...
of DLI Basic Language courses, when their opportunity to visit the target country is in the distant future, students can “book” their ticket to immersion through iBook.

1. **Have a detailed plan.** Designed for independent study, iBook literature lessons require a strong methodological foundation. The process of creating the iBook should begin with a detailed plan of the contents, such as activities, pictures, and assessment tools. This first step is imperative because the current version of iBook has a major flaw: it does not allow users to rearrange the pages. Adding or withdrawing pages might require the user to rebuild the book from the point of change.

2. **Select the template.** iBook Author offers several templates with pre-selected fonts and designated space for text and pictures. During the template selection process, it is important to visualize how the iBook will appear on iPad (where the book will be viewed by the learners, and all interactive features of the iBook become activated). From the title page, the users have an option to include an introductory video and build a glossary, which allows teachers to list selected words with their definitions, insert pictures, and add links to synonyms. As a rule, templates offer three types of pages: Chapter - with a text box for the title and designated space for the picture, Section - with an outline or plan of the section, and Pages.

3. **Utilize the widgets.** The interactive features of iBook are called widgets. iBook comes with a set of free widgets that can be used for playing audio, demonstrating video, providing comments, describing a picture, inserting presentations (the Mac version of PowerPoint must be purchased separately), and more. Additionally, there are some websites, such as Bookry.com and Bookwidgets.com, that offer a wide variety of widgets for iBook. There are also flashcards, memory games, quizzes, and tools for assessment. Some widgets give a pedagogically sound option to imbed video into the iBook, saving the time on searching relevant information on the Internet.

Besides the widgets, there are some other less flashy but helpful interactive features. For example, clicking on a word while viewing the text on iPad gives the options to make a note – highlight the word or underline it for the record, copy the word, search in the iBook glossary, or find the definition of the word in an online dictionary. It is also possible to bookmark pages.

4. **Publish the iBook.** In order to share an iBook lesson with the students, the teacher must connect his/her laptop with the student’s iPad and click on the option “Preview” (Note: the students’ iPad will need to have iTunes version 11.1 downloaded and the iBook application open). The new iBook will be stored in the iBook Author library. The option “Publish” will allow the teacher to make their iBook available for purchase through iTunes. In order to be published, the iBook needs to be vetted for copyright law compliance and authenticity. Once the book is submitted to be published on iTunes, the author can never use the content of the iBook on any other media. The teachers have an option to share their iBook in PDF format as well, but all interactive features will be lost in this format.
In its current version, iBook does not support the Cyrillic alphabet. Note that Cyrillic content, which appears perfectly fine on the laptop, will be partially lost on the iPad. There is information that Apple is aware of this software flaw, and is currently working to fix it. There is also another defect that might upset some scholars and instructors—iBook Author does not support footnotes or endnotes.

Building an iBook is a labor-intensive project that requires expertise in foreign language methodology and education technology. This is another reason why the content of iBook should be “timeless,” based not on news articles that will become obsolete one day, but on works of literature, cinema, art, and literary critique that stand the test of time.

REFERENCES


“Tests and Quizzes” in Sakai

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This article will share technology-based language assessment tips by using Tests and Quizzes available in Sakai. My students and I have found this asynchronous platform effective in assessing language level in speaking, reading, and listening.

Templates

The available templates in Sakai can accommodate different types of questions to assess listening, reading, and speaking. I will briefly describe the templates:

- The Short Answer/Essay template is useful for constructive response questions, which is a good tool for assessing listening and reading. Teachers decide whether to display all the questions on one page or one question at a time. Students can answer the questions in the target language or in English.
• **Multiple Choice** is another great template where students can choose one or more than one correct answers. Another advantage of this template is its automatically grading function.

• **Fill in the Blank** template is great for transcribing an audio file, choosing the appropriate vocabulary from a list, and filling in a missing word.

• **True or False** template can check if the student comprehends the main idea of an authentic reading or listening passage.

**Functions**

*Audio Recording* allows students to record a verbal answer using Sakai embedded recording software. Students are given unlimited attempts to practice and listen to the recording before submitting a final answer for grading. They can attach audio recordings via *File Upload* and submit to teachers for grading.

**Flexibility**

Sakai does not require teachers to finish the assessment immediately, or build a test in a specific order. Teachers have the convenience of crafting and reviewing the tests when they have time. Moreover, teachers can use other computer programs to draft test items. Sometimes I draft my assessment questions in a Word document, which helps to check the spelling, before I copy and paste them into Sakai.

**Setting Control**

Setting allows the teachers to control how the assessment will be delivered and conducted: timing, number of attempts, accessibility, background color, linear or random display of questions, and deadlines are some setting features that I frequently use to program the delivery of my assessments. For example, when I set a quiz to be 20 minutes long, a green timing line appears on top of the quiz to indicate how much time students have left to complete the quiz. Students can also choose to hide this feature.

**Storing and Retrieving**

I found the *Pools* feature handy because it allows questions to be stored, organized, and retrieved. I have created three pool categories that correspond to speaking, listening, and reading. This feature stays accessible to the teacher no matter which teaching team the instructor is part of.

**Gradebook**

When setting up a test, it is important to specify that grades should be sent to the *Gradebook*. Grades from the Multiple Choice Questions will then be
recorded automatically. I find *Gradebook* helpful in saving my students' grades and monitoring their progress throughout the course.

I recommend using this tool in Sakai for any type of assessments because its many features lend themselves to be adapted to teachers’ and students’ needs. I have prepared a step-by-step tutorial on how to build your own assessment. It is available at: https://dliflc.rsmart.com/x/aw8aji.

**Evernote for Engaging Different Modalities of Learning**

WEILING HUANG  
*Asian School I, Undergraduate Education*

*Evernote* is an app that can be used on both MacBook Pro and iPad. It allows users to create, edit, store, and share texts and sound files. In a nutshell, *Evernote* lets users to make text entries, import and edit images, record audio files, and save webpages with ease. Basic features of *Evernote* enable teachers to design activities that combine reading, listening, speaking and writing. The “annotate” option in image editing makes it easy to include visual aids for more explicit instructions or effective representation of information. The following are some examples of learning activities supported by *Evernote*.

Some OPI tasks can be practiced in a fun and engaging way. Students can post a map, draw or annotate the route on the map, and record verbal directions to the destination. Another possibility is to practice describing a place or a person while highlighting the features being described on the images. *Evernote* is also a great app for reporting current news by creating an “audio newspaper.” First, students choose a news event, then look for an appropriate picture online to import to *Evernote*, draft a report following the conventional sequence of news reporting in the target language, practice the oral report several times, and record it in *Evernote*.

In addition to the aforementioned features, *Evernote WebClipper*, a browser add-on, saves the actual webpages with the embedded links. After clipping a desired webpage to *Evernote*, users have the ability to edit the text and add annotations. Teachers can apply the capabilities of *WebClipper* to activities that focus on developing students’ critical thinking skills. For example, after a teacher selects an editorial article online and devises an opinion question based on the article, students *Webclip* the editorial article, paste in into *Evernote*, and read and type notes on the article referring to specific sentences or paragraphs. When needed, they click on the link(s) embedded in the article for additional information. After formulating an opinion or an argument, students record it in *Evernote*. Later, they listen to each other’s recordings and provide critiques. This activity can be assigned as homework or as a follow-up topic for
one-on-one speaking sessions. This activity lets students practice their reasoning skills and generate language production related to abstract concepts. WebClipper is useful for learning complex FLO topics, because it allows students to organize relevant documents, resources, and notes in one place for further study and review.

*Evernote* can also be incorporated into assessment type of activities. For example, beginning students create a family tree and record a presentation of their families. Or they import their own photos and talk about their hobbies or favorite sports. Intermediate students create an informational brochure or flyer, write and record skits for different lesson topics, such as a job interview, or a visit to a doctor’s office. Advanced students record “interviewing experts” for news and commentary radio programs.

In summary, sharing files created in *Evernote* is easy. A class or group of students can share one account for group projects. After logging in to the shared account, they can work on the project on their own devices. If individual accounts are preferred, students can click the “email” or the “export” icon to share their work with peers and teachers. Feedback from peers and teachers can be provided in written or verbal form. For iPad users, *Evernote* can be downloaded from App store. For MacBook users, visit the *Evernote* website: https://evernote.com.
# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 2014

### NOVEMBER

**November 21-23** American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Annual Convention (ACTFL), San Antonio, TX. Information: www.actfl.org.

**November 21-23** American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX. Information: www.aatg.org.


## 2015

### JANUARY


**January 8-11** American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), Vancouver, Canada. Information: www.aatseel.org.
**MARCH**

March 5-7 Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT), Atlanta, GA. Information: www.scolt.org.

March 12-14 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL), Minneapolis, MN. Information: www.csctfl.org.


**APRIL**


**MAY**


**JUNE**


**JULY**

**July 8-11** American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), Saguenay, Quebec, Canada. Information: www.frenchteachers.org.

**NOVEMBER**

**November 20-22** American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Annual Convention (ACTFL), San Diego, CA. Information: www.actfl.org.


**November 21-24** Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Denver, CO. Information: www.mesa.arizona.edu.
INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Submission Information for Authors

Aims and Scope

The publication of this internal academic journal is to increase and share professional knowledge and information among Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) faculty and staff, as well as to promote professional communication within the Defense Language Program.

*Dialog on Language Instruction* is a refereed journal devoted to applied research into all aspects of innovation in language learning and teaching. It publishes research articles, review articles, and book/materials reviews. The community-oriented columns — Faculty Forum, News and Views, Quick Tips, and Resources — provide a platform for faculty and staff to exchange professional information, ideas, and views. *Dialog on Language Instruction* prefers its contributors to provide articles that have a sound theoretical base with a visible practical application which can be generalized.

Specifications for Manuscripts

Prepare the manuscripts in accordance with the following requirements:

- Follow APA style (the 6th Edition) — the style set by the American Psychological Association;
- Do not exceed 6,000 words for research articles (not including reference, appendix, etc.);
- Use double spacing, with margins of one inch on four sides;
- Use Times New Roman font, size 12;
- Number pages consecutively;
- In black and white only, including tables and graphics;
- Create graphics and tables in a Microsoft Office application (Word, PowerPoint, Excel);
- Provide graphics and tables no more than 4.5” in width;
- Do not use the footnotes and endnotes function in MS Word. Insert a number formatted in superscript following a punctuation mark. Type notes on a separate page. Center the word “Notes” at the top of the page. Indent five spaces on the first line of each sequentially-numbered note; and
- Keep the layout of the text as simple as possible.
Submission Requirement

*Dialog on Language Instruction* publishes only original works that have not been previously published elsewhere and that are not under consideration by other publications. Reprints may be considered, under special circumstances, with the consent of the author(s) and/or publisher.

Send all submissions electronically to the Editor: *jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu*.

Review Process

Manuscripts will be acknowledged by the editor upon receipt and subsequently screened and sent out for peer review. Authors will be informed about the status of the article once the peer reviews have been received and processed. Reviewer comments will be shared with the authors.

*Accepted Manuscripts*: Once an article has been accepted for publication, the author will receive further instructions regarding the submission of the final copy.

*Rejected Manuscripts*: Manuscripts may be rejected for the following reasons:

- Inappropriate/unsuitable topic for DLIFLC;
- Lack of purpose or significance;
- Lack of originality and novelty;
- Flaws in study/research design/methods;
- Irrelevance to contemporary research/dialogs in the foreign language education profession;
- Poor organization of material;
- Deficiencies in writing; and
- Inadequate manuscript preparation.

Once the editor notifies the author that the manuscript is unacceptable, that ends the review process.

In some cases, an author whose manuscript has been rejected may decide to revise it and resubmit. However, as the quality of the revision is unpredictable, no promise may be made by this publication pursuant to reconsideration.

Correspondence

Send all inquiries and editorial correspondence by email to the Editor: *jiaying.howard@dliflc.edu*.
Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation

First, decide the column — Research Articles, Review Articles, Reviews, Faculty Forum, News and Views, Quick Tips, or Resources, for which you would prefer as the appropriate category.

Research Articles

Divide your manuscript into the following sections, and in this order:

1. Title and Author Information
2. Abstract
3. Body of the text, including:
   • Acknowledgements (optional)
   • Notes (optional)
   • References
   • Tables and figures (optional)
   • Appendixes (optional)

Ensure that your article has the following structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover Page</th>
<th>Type the title of the article and the author’s name, position, school/department/office, contact information on a separate page to ensure anonymity in the review process. See the example below:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foster Learner Autonomy in Project-based Learning</td>
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<td>JANE, DOE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Persian-Farsi School, UGE</td>
</tr>
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<td><a href="mailto:jane.doe@dliflc.edu">jane.doe@dliflc.edu</a></td>
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<td>831-242-3333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Briefly state the purpose of the study, the principal results, and major conclusions in a concise and factual abstract of no more than 300 words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>State the objectives, hypothesis, and research design. Provide adequate background information, but avoid a detailed literature survey or a summary of the results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Discuss the work that has had a direct impact on your study. Cite only research pertinent to a specific issue and avoid references with only tangential or general significance. Emphasize pertinent findings and relevant methodological issues. Provide the logical continuity between previous and present work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Method** | State the hypothesis of your study. Describe how you conducted the study. Give a brief synopsis of the methodology. Provide sufficient detail to allow the work to be replicated. You may develop the subsections pertaining to the participants, the materials, and the procedure. 

*Participants.* Identify the number and type of participants. Indicate how they were selected. Provide major demographic characteristics. 

*Materials.* Briefly describe the materials used and their function in the experiment. 

*Procedure.* Describe each step in conducting the research, including the instructions to the participants, the formation of the groups, and the specific experimental manipulations. |
| **Results** | State the results and describe them to justify the findings. Mention all relevant results, including those that run counter to the hypothesis. |
| **Discussion** | Explore the significance of the results of the work, but do not repeat them. A combined Results and Discussion section is often appropriate. Avoid extensive citations and discussion of published literature. |
| **Conclusion** | Describe the contribution of the study to the field. Identify conclusions and theoretical implications that can be drawn from your study. Do not simply repeat earlier sections. |
| **Acknowledgements** | Identify those colleagues who may have contributed to the study and assisted you in preparing the manuscript. |
| **Notes** | Use sparingly. Number them consecutively throughout the article. They should be listed on a separate page, which is to be entitled *Notes.* |
| **References** | Submit on a separate page with the heading: References. References should be arranged first alphabetically, and then sorted chronologically if necessary. More than one reference from the same author(s) in the same year must be identified by the letter ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’, etc., placed after the year of publication. See examples below: 


Appendix

Place detailed information (such as a sample of a questionnaire, a table, or a list) that would be distracting to read in the main body of the article.

Review Articles

It should describe, discuss, and evaluate several publications that fall into a topical category in foreign language education. The relative significance of the publications in the context of teaching realms should be pointed out. A review article should not exceed 6,000 words.

Reviews

Reviews of books, textbooks, scholarly works, dictionaries, tests, computer software, audio-visual materials, and other print or non-print materials on foreign language education will be considered for publication. Give a clear but brief statement of the work’s content and a critical assessment of its contribution to the profession. State both positive and negative aspects of the work(s). Keep quotations short. Do not send reviews that are merely descriptive. Reviews should not exceed 2,000 words.

Faculty Forum

This section provides an opportunity for faculty, through brief articles, to share ideas and exchange views on innovative foreign language education practices, or to comment on articles in previous issues or on matters of general academic interest. Forum articles should not exceed 2,000 words.

News and Views

Reports on conferences, official trips, official visitors, special events, new instructional techniques, training opportunities, news items, etc. Reports should not exceed 800 words.
Quick Tips

Previously unpublished, original or innovative, easy to follow ideas for use in the language classroom or in any aspect of foreign language learning and teaching, such as technology tips, useful classroom activities, learner training tips, etc. (Examples include: Five strategies for a positive learning environment; Using iPad to develop instructional video; Four effective strategies for improving listening – tips that your colleagues can easily adapt to their classrooms). Tips should not exceed 800 words.

Resources

Brief write-ups on resources related to the foreign language education field, such as books, audio/video materials, tests, research reports, websites, computer and mobile apps, etc. Write-ups should not exceed 800 words.
CALL FOR PAPERS

*Dialog on Language Instruction* is an occasional, internal publication of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) and part of its professional development program. It provides a forum for faculty and staff at DLIFLC to exchange professional information. *Dialog* encourages submission of articles, reviews, forum articles, brief news items, quick tips, or resources.

**Deadline:** Submissions are welcome at any point. Manuscripts received by 31 January will be considered for the spring issue and by 31 July for the fall issue.

For guidelines in the preparation of your manuscript, please refer to the previous section (pp. 93-98): *Information for Contributors.*
THANK YOU

First and foremost, the editor is grateful to many DLIFLC colleagues who have sent manuscripts to the *Dialog on Language Instruction*. Your dedication and commitment to the enhancement of educational practices and professional knowledge are evident in your work. The publication of this volume is made possible by your participation and support.

The editor also expresses her sincere thanks to colleagues listed below, who provided many hours of service as consultants, reviewers, copy editors, and proofreaders for *Dialog on Language Instruction* Volume 24(2). Your work has made this volume better.

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