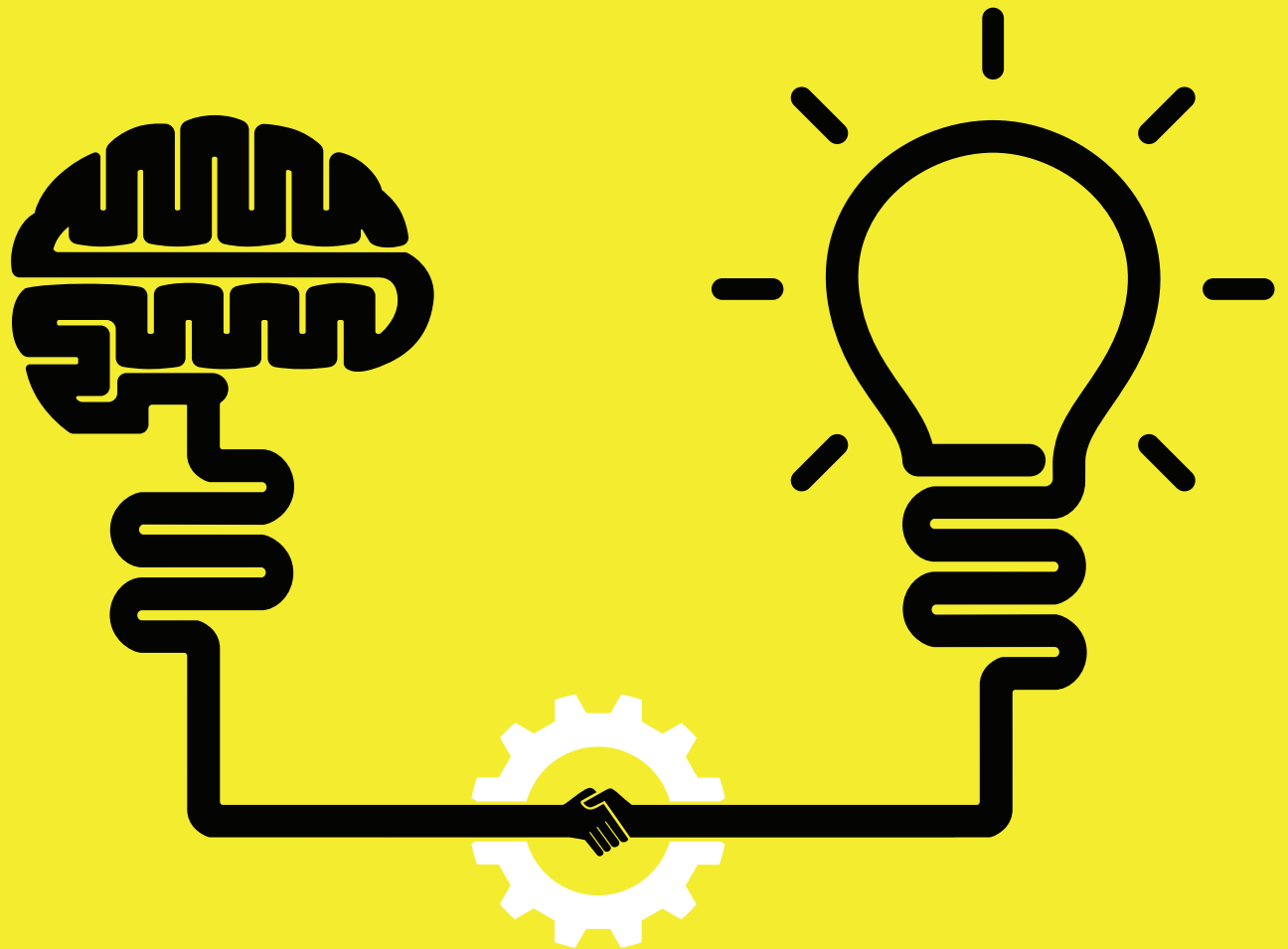


# LEARNING LANGUAGES

fall/winter 2015 volume 21 issue 1



EXPLORING  
CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION  
THROUGH  
LANGUAGE LEARNING

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# Sealing the Deal for Biliteracy

I enjoy the diversity and beauty the U.S. has to offer, especially when it comes to heritage and immigrant populations and their native languages. As a second-generation American whose parents grew up speaking Polish at home, yet who chose not to teach it to my siblings and me, I've always felt a twinge of envy when I meet people whose parents did continue both the language and cultural traditions of their countries of origin. Often our country insists immigrants adapt and "leave the old world behind." That is certainly what my grandparents wanted for my parents as they adapted to the "American way of life" for most of the 20th century.

But times have changed, and both business leaders and educators have begun to recognize the importance of tapping into the 350 languages spoken here. Yes, learning English is an imperative to succeed in the U.S.—and the rest of the world—but there is no reason why we shouldn't promote both English and a native or second language.

It seems I'm not alone in my belief. There has been a quiet yet powerful and progressive trend taking place across the U.S. in state capitals, where legislatures are passing a State Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal is awarded by an individual school, school district, or county office of education to students who have studied and attained high proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. Language skills are measured by national exams.

Students who receive the Seal may have a gold seal placed on their transcripts and diploma, be awarded a medal, or have a simple line added to their transcripts. But the result is the same: proof of biliteracy to college admissions offices and future employers. The Seal of Biliteracy acknowledges students' hard work and achievement

in their pursuit of a new language. Any student who masters English and a second language, be it a native language spoken at home or a world language studied in school, can be awarded the Seal.

The Seal began as a movement by parents, teachers, education advocates, and civil rights groups in California both to improve education for non-native English speakers and to encourage language study in schools. The coalition helped implement the program across the state, and in 2011, California became the first state to pass legislation around a State Seal of Biliteracy.

Since then, 12 states have passed legislation creating a State Seal program: Texas, New York, Illinois, New Mexico, Washington, Louisiana, Minnesota, Washington, D.C., Virginia, Indiana, Nevada and Hawaii.

Tireless lobbying efforts of parents, teachers, and other education advocates have progressed 15 more states closer to passing legislation.

Parents are crucial to the success of the State Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal supports our goal of preparing children for today's global marketplace. It encourages language learning from an early age through high school, rewarding those who master a second or third language. A Seal for high school seniors not only appeals to colleges and employers, but can save money for parents by eliminating language credits at the university level.

I started getting involved as a professional and parent when I learned about the Seal from colleagues in Illinois, Indiana, and Minnesota and have been

actively engaged with the Connecticut group working toward the Seal in our state. Here are some ways you can get involved:

Ask your district school board about the program. In states that have already passed legislation for a State Seal, it is still up to individual school districts to adopt the program. Talk to the district board about incorporating the program in your district. Approach them with a coalition of parents, teachers, and education advocates so they can understand how important the issue is.

Inquire about the Seal in your child's

## Parent's Corner

school. As more parents ask about the Seal and how their sons and daughters can attain the merit, more schools will begin considering implementing their own program. High school parents especially should ask about the program if their children can pass tests in English and another language, but also to provide them with an incentive to continue studying Spanish, French, German, Mandarin, or other languages available throughout their four years of high school.

Contact your state representatives. Call, write, or visit your state representative to convince him or her of the importance of the Seal of Biliteracy, and to start a bill that would create a state-sponsored program. They don't cost

much—if anything—to run, but the student benefits are great.

Advocate for mandatory world language learning in your school and/or district K-12. Whether you have a full or partial language program, show your support with teachers, principals, PTO/PTA, and board of education members. Encourage your children to take the subject just as seriously as others. If you have no program, create a group of like-minded parents who want to build a language program and start advocating. Studies show that language learning comes more easily to those whose brains are still in the development phase—up until roughly 13 or 14 years of age. Parents with children in elementary schools should push for early language education since the Seal requires these programs to survive.

Gather together with families who speak another language at home. Heritage speakers are great supporters of the Seal. They pass their language along to their children who are able to communicate verbally in the language, but may not be able to pass a writing or reading test. The Seal of Biliteracy enables these students to become completely proficient.

The Seal of Biliteracy encourages language learning from an early age and celebrates it—something that has disappeared in today's school districts across the country as language programs are cut just when we need them most. Get involved. Make a difference. Join the movement.

**Stacie Nevadomski Berdan** is a seasoned global executive and an expert on international careers. She is the author, most recently, of *A Parent Guide to Study Abroad* (IIE 2015) and *Raising Global Children* (ACTFL 2013).



We hope you enjoy exploring creativity and innovation through language learning in this issue of *Learning Languages*. As a daughter of an artist, I grew up with art all around me. Whereas my two older brothers shared my mother's artistic talent, I, unfortunately, did not. While I admired their art and creativity, I have to admit I was envious that I was not born with the same talents. Of course my mother tried to reassure me that I too was creative, but as the youngest, I assumed I was simply shortchanged by the gene pool. That is, until I became a teacher. Once I began creating lesson plans, I realized I was a creative person and that teaching was my creative outlet.

Creativity and innovation go hand in hand in the field of teaching and learning. In most language learning classrooms, either textbooks are not in the budget or a curriculum unique to the teacher's setting has not been developed. Therefore, teachers' innate ability to solve problems in creative and innovative ways results in learning opportunities for both the teacher and the learner.

In this issue, "Exploring Creativity and Innovation through Language Learning," Jones and Boston realized that

innovation and creativity does not have to be complicated. In fact, simplicity is greatly appreciated and a sign of sophisticated

planning. Kong shares with us her research and how culture, identity, and creativity are demonstrated through problem solving skills. Mitchell recognizes that we are all creative and that children have powerful imaginations. "Activating the Imagination Inside the World Language Classroom" explores ways to stimulate the learner's imagination in order to guide them to be creative and innovative with the language. Madera shares with us everyday activities that can become learning opportunities, while Garrett-Rucks and Davidson Devall get students engaged through physical activity.

Solving problems in creative and innovative ways fosters critical thinking. As Berdan points out, the "Seal of Biliteracy" solves the problem of our lack of recognition and value of bilingualism and multilingualism in the current education system. Students deserve the opportunity to learn another language from an early age and should be acknowledged for their accomplishments of either learning another language or maintaining the language of their heritage.

On behalf of NNELL, I would like to thank all of the creative and innovative early language learning educators and advocates for their continued support. We hope you will join us in a regional workshop, at the annual NNELL Summer Institute, or at our annual National Networking Breakfast at the ACTFL Convention.

Nadine Jacobsen-McLean  
NNELL President



# President's Message



# Creatively Encountering Languages in Caregiving and in the Early Childhood Classroom

by Piña Madera  
**WHAT IF?**

What would it be like in communities and classrooms if students started elementary school FLEX and FLES classes having been exposed to multiple languages during their preschool years? Maybe some teachers are lucky enough to have world languages introduced in preschool or to live in communities rich with language diversity. What if students came to their elementary FLES or FLEX classrooms having heard the language, comfortable with some basic phrases?

## **WHAT IS KNOWN**

For years, research has shown that language learning at an early age has great benefits. Most recently, a May 2015 study published in *Science Daily* suggests that exposure to multiple languages in childhood produces

better communicators (“Children exposed to multiple languages”). A 2014 study in Singapore showed that infants exposed to multiple languages showed increased behaviors that predict cognitive gains in preschool (“Benefits for Babies”). A 2012 post at the Dana Foundation is a rich resource and expounds “The Cognitive Benefits of Being Bilingual” (Marian and Shook).

Educators are aware of the research, which seems to be reported anew nearly weekly. Strong language skills provide children a foundation for all of their learn-

ing. Multilingualism, specifically, has been linked to improved focus, abstract thinking, task switching; and even health benefits like delayed Alzheimer’s, among others.

## **CAREGIVERS NEED NOT BE BILINGUAL**

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to give ALL children this strong start? Having a language expert in every early childhood classroom or home setting would be ideal, but is not always possible. Some savvy parents are providing children with bilingual caregivers early in life, but they are in the minority.

Caregivers and early childhood educators can get children started on their multilingual journey by adding exposure, fun, and by modeling an openness to new and different cultures.

Teachers and caregivers who specialize in teaching very young children (ages 0-6) can introduce languages to their students, regardless of their own language ability. Choosing to introduce multiple languages when the child is acquiring her first, offers a beautiful opportunity for both the fluent and non-fluent caregiver (and child!).

Fluent speakers have the advantage of being able to simply speak to children in the target language--the child could naturally acquire what is spoken to them if they hear it enough.

For non-fluent speakers, it requires some strategy and an openness to learning the language themselves. All young children begin by learning simple phrases through repetition: a perfect recipe that will simplify and support the caregiver’s own learning.

Of course, this requires getting support from native speaker friends, families, online, or elsewhere. There is no shortage of help online--find a native-speaker partner, search for activities and ideas to engage young learners in the target language, or find a good online dictionary that offers pronunciation of the target language. Google “Preschool (target language) activities.”

## **CREATIVE STRATEGIES FOR CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS**

Where language immersion is not an option, here are some ways that any creative caregiver, parent, or educator can bring a little world language into their daily time with young children:

**1. Nouns are great for labeling, but NEEDS get people communicating.**

In early childhood classroom, it is common to see signs in multiple languages that label the sink, bookshelf, or other items. This is a great start and creates a welcoming space to families whose first language is not English. A slight shift in approach, in addition to these well-intentioned efforts, can go a long way in bringing children further in their bilingual journey.

Learning communicative phrases (both the question and the answer) will help children express their real needs, and can be woven into the planned activities, without need for additional time spent on language instruction. Phrases like these can easily be incorporated into a typical day: “Do you want\_\_\_? / I want \_\_\_\_.” or “Do you need\_\_\_? / I need\_\_\_\_.” The caregiver can choose a handful of vocabulary to fill in the blanks--drawing from what’s relevant to their specific engagement with the kids. For example, caregivers who serve orange slices every day might look up the word for orange.

## 2. Expand the language

Many programs offer colors and numbers as the language goal. Perhaps it’s best see this vocabulary as peripheral to real communication. If adults can speak simply about what children want or like or need, it becomes natural to then talk about those items, later adding descriptors like colors and quantity.

--Add numbers:

Count the items as they are learned. A song that simply puts the numbers one through ten to music could be utilized throughout the day as teachers lead children in counting anything from bananas at snack time to chairs at the table to balls on the playground.

--Add colors:

Add the mention of color to describe items at hand (like the bananas, chairs and balls counted above).

--Add choice:

Once children have mastered those simple dialogues above, add choices. “Do you want milk or water? Do you want the ball or the bat?” A wonderful perk to this idea is that the child hears the answer in the questions! This is an easy way to introduce additional vocabulary once they’ve got the stem down (such as “Do you want\_\_\_?”).

## 3. Leverage the daily schedule, especially transitions

Any quality early education program meets children’s need for structure with a predictable schedule. This creates an excellent opportunity for world language learning. Transitions can harness the regularity of the schedule, and help teach simple structures. Write or find a chant or song to transition children to the next activity.

Here is a chant useful when talking about moving to another activity, like reading, playing, building, washing, eating, or resting. Clapping along to the syllables is optional, and adding a gesture to mimic the activity is encouraged!

*Let’s go,  
let’s go,  
let’s go read.*

Repeat the song until the kids have made the transition.

Beyond helping children move through transitions, by distracting and making a game of it, this is a sneaky grammar lesson they won’t know they’re learning! Here they begin to learn how the language is built (Let’s go + a verb = a sentence). They will begin to pick up on this pattern, noticing that the stem stays the same, and the verb (taught with a gesture) changes. This also brings a lightness to the transition, increases cooperation, and brings joy into the room.

## 4. Say it the same way every time!

Fluent speakers will naturally vary their phrases. This is great for an immersion model, where children are swimming in the target language. It is natural to call children to circle using phrases like: “Come to the circle.” “Join us.” “Let’s go to circle.” The more language, the better.

However, if immersion is not an option, and language is taught in chunks and phrases, children will benefit from hearing discreet, simple phrases, spoken the same each time. The natural variation mentioned above will slow down their process. Songs and chants are the best way to make this happen--commit to simple language, simple phrases, and keep them consistent. Choose a phrase, set it to a rhythm (clapping), or a tune, and rely on it to keep the language consistent.

## 5. Sing and move with the kids

Caregivers know that singing and mov-

ing is natural for young children, a joyful way to engage. Find songs to support the target language goals--simple songs about daily activities are ideal. Again, if children are not immersed in language, select vocabulary that they can use. Farm animals might be less relevant than food vocabulary. Add moves to engage the whole body and mind (for both adults and kids!)

## A CALL TO ACTION

You, as a language expert, can influence your community by sharing the data on early language acquisition. The benefits last a lifetime. Maybe you have considered offering services to a younger group, or maybe you have a child in a preschool setting. As educators committed to quality language instruction, what can be done to encourage exposure at even younger ages and give kids a stronger foundation in their bilingual/multilingual journey?

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**Piña Madera** is co-founder of SingALingo, Inc, creators of songs, videos and online activity plans to help adults engage kids in Spanish. She was raised Spanish bilingual and went on to earn a B.A. in writing from Brown University. She has nearly 30 years of educational experience -- her first job at 16 was running a music hour for preschool kids. She is proudest of the award-winning songs she co-wrote with her husband Michael that teach young children Spanish, English or Chinese.



## A CONVERSATION WITH PAULA GARRETT-RUCKS

# Creative, kinesthetic activities to motivate young learners to communicate

*Kelly Davidson Devall: How do creativity and kinesthetics motivate young language learners?*

Paula Garrett-Rucks: From a proficiency-oriented perspective, our goal as world language educators is to encourage learners to use the target language to communicate meaningfully in spontaneous interactions in an acceptable and appropriate manner to native speakers of the language, regardless of the learner's age. For educators to encourage learners to use the language, we must consider the age-appropriate personal interests and developmental levels of our learners. Most young learners, especially under the age of 12, struggle to apply concepts to anything that cannot be physically manipulated or seen. Yet, even very young children can represent events and objects and engage in symbolic play. For these reasons, creativity and kinesthetic activities are at the core of my Pre-K to Grade 8 teaching methods course.

*Kelly: When preparing a lesson with these principles, what type of characteristics might you*

*consider for different age groups?*

Paula: There are several theoretical positions and descriptions of learners' characteristics across age groups. Among the more popular theorists, Piaget's cognitive development theory describes children ages 2-7 to be in the Pre-operational Stage and ages 7-11 in the Concrete operational stage. The younger Pre-operational stage learners exist in an egocentric phase where they cannot understand concrete logic nor mentally manipulate information without a physical representation. For example, a child sees two peas and knows when one more is present that there are three. However, the child does not understand what 2 + 1 equals. Another example would be how a

child may know the word for red and the word for shirt in Spanish, but the child might still struggle with saying "a red shirt" without practice. In this stage, symbolic play and pretending are essential for the child to make sense of the world around them and they begin to stabilize understanding of the world, as well as their magical beliefs. For these reasons, language instructors must engage young learners in this pretend, imagina-

tive world in their lessons. As children progress into the Concrete operational stage, children can think more logically, but they are still somewhat limited to what they can physically manipulate. In this stage, learners' classification skills and interest increase drastically, thus instructors should tap into this classification interest when presenting material. For example, when presenting animals, have learners classify them within parameters—domestic versus wild, omnivores versus carnivores, etc.—to tap into the child's interests and thinking habits.

Equally important to the child's cognitive development is an understanding of how children explore and learn about the



world in different developmental levels. Egan proposes a classification of young learners, of approximately ages 4-10, to be in the Mythic Layer and learners approximately ages 8-15 to be in the Romantic Layer. According to Egan, the younger learners in the Mythic Layer learn best from story, metaphors and binary elements. He believes these learners rely strongly on their emotions in perceiving the world and thus want to know how to feel about what they are learning. They make sense of things through emotional and moral categories (usually extremes and opposites). For example, they want to know who is the good guy and who is the bad guy in a story. This makes for great vocabulary building and lessons when presenting opposites that captivate the attention of these learners. As children progress into the Romantic layer, they like to go deeper into the extremes, explore that which is strange and learn lots of facts. They become more interested in the transcending qualities of people in stories rather than binary characteristics. Although these learners are still quite emotional, they begin to separate the world around them from their internal world. They see the world as both fascinating and frightening. Similar to Piaget's cognitive developmental description, Egan also finds these learners to be collectors of information who enjoy researching their own topics and memorizing information.

In addition to these developmental theorists, I emphasize to my Pre-K to Grade 8 Methods students to consider the description of learners as Pre-literate, Newly Literate, and Developed Reading learners when choosing materials for lesson plans. For example, in choosing an interpretive task for a unit on clothing at an elementary school, teachers must consider that for Kindergartners, they need to use images of the clothing the students hear rather than words since the children are just learning to read in their own language. Curtain and Dahlberg have a fantastic representation of these various learner characteristics in their book, *Language and Children: Making the Match*. In addition to theoretical descriptions of children across different age levels, they include multiple teacher testimonies of descriptions of the children they work with and the interests of children across

various age groups. It is a wonderful read.

*Kelly: Movement and creativity connect with many disciplines. How do you view our goal as world language teachers for young learners? What are some basic principles for early world language pedagogy and content-based instruction?*

Paula: Interdisciplinary efforts are essential to optimal early language learning, and perhaps learning at any age, although elementary school teachers, in my opinion, are true masters of this practice. The most effective teaching and learning I have seen in the world language classroom infuses and reiterates information and activities from the sciences (earth and social), math, language arts, music, all of the classes really. In content-based instruction that draws from material being taught in other courses, the content material is fresh in the learner's mind and the instructor can start scaffolding on the learner's shared knowledge in the target language. Learners not only gain a sense of pride in their mastery of the content material, but they also gain self-efficacy in their language abilities.

Building on the content material from additional classes, I direct learners to present the material in a "story form" in their daily lesson plan and across a unit plan. The story form starts with a clear Beginning—the teacher motivating and engaging the learner's interest, then Middle—learners performing an activity toward a goal, and End—the lesson concluding with an outcome, product, solution, or resolution due to the achievement of the learning goal by the learners. To give a basic example, in a Kindergarten class where young learners are studying "The People in Your Community" in their Language Arts or Social Science classes, I suggest the language instructor design a unit plan around a story. For example, the unit could start by meeting a puppet, Policeman Bob, who is tired of working with bad guys and wants to do something else to help make people happy. Policeman Bob needs to learn about new career options. This is our beginning. Next, for the Middle, students use picture files to learn the names of professions in Spanish and then play Bingo with cards that have images of the professions to use this new knowledge and have dress up clothes to say what

they are. Students could then have a manipulative where they put different hats on a cut out figure based on what the profession is (see Figure 1 below), while starting to learn some Spanish words for the profession.



**FIGURE 1: DRESSING A PROFESSION**

Students put the different hat on the profession based on what the teacher says. The words above the head are a word bank to support the development of the learners' Language Arts skills, although the learner is not expected to know how to read these words yet.

Then students then start to learn actions for what the professions do. To make a long lesson short, at the end of the lesson, the puppet, Policeman Bob, will discover more about the profession of being a singer! He has always wanted to sing and now he knows he can be a mariachi singer. (This is our end). It is thanks to the students' ability to use the language and describe what each profession does that Policeman Bob learned about professions and can be happy with a career change. Perhaps a "career change" is not a fascinating topic to a 5-year-old, but we are discussing topics that they are learning about in their other classes. We also have the binary—good versus bad, happy versus sad, and we have a story form unit plan in which the problem is only resolved with the help of the students explaining, in the target language, career options available to Policeman Bob.

*Kelly: What would a typical class session look like when teaching early language learners using these principles?*

Paula: The younger the learner, the more need for consistent routines and procedures they can expect. In fact, we

recommend that learners in grades pre-Kindergarten through third start each lesson with an opening routine. The opening routine typically consists of the following elements:

1. A welcoming song. This can be used to transition into target language use instruction in a way that makes learners comfortable since they can quickly memorize it. Here is an example of a French song I start with, sung to the tune of Frère Jacques; each verse is repeated:

SONG: Bonjour les amis  
 Bonjour les amis [Hello friends]  
 Bonjour les amis [Hello friends]  
 Comment allez-vous? [How are you ?]  
 Comment allez-vous? [How are you ?]  
 Très bien, merci [Very well, Thank you]  
 Très bien, merci [Very well, Thank you]  
 On est prêt! [We are ready (to learn)]  
 Très bien, merci [Very well, Thank you]  
 José-Luis Orozco offers a fantastic Spanish opening song, among his many other wonderful songs for

children found on YouTube.

2. Presentation of the calendar and weather. I suggest this be a manipulative that requires the involvement of a few volunteer learners to come up and hold the calendar board, select the date, and select the weather before the whole class responds to questions about the date and weather in a choral response. Here (left) are examples of a 2-sided weather (Figure 2) and calendar (Figure 3) poster.

3. A “Total

Physical Response” activity to recall vocabulary taught in a previous lesson or to introduce new material. A TPR activity simply means that learners act out a motion that the instructor has taught them that embodies the word. For example, the motion for “fireman” could be having the students pretend to blow out a fire.

4. The core of the lesson is typically the Present-Practice-Produce form of the lesson with new material introduced, practiced and then informally assessed with pair work.

5. Lastly, there is a closing song to establish a routine with learners. For example my closing song is:

SONG: Au revoir les amis  
 Au revoir, Au revoir [Good bye, Good bye]  
 On a bien chanté [We all sang well]  
 Au revoir, Au revoir [Good bye, Good bye]  
 On s’est bien amusé [We all had a good time]  
 Au revoir, Au revoir [Good bye, Good bye]  
 On rechantera

bientôt [We will sing again soon]

*Kelly: Could you give some examples of how you might infuse creativity and kinesthetic activities to introduce a new topic to early language learners?*

Paula: Yes, this is my favorite part of creatively engaging learners. We may start by introducing new vocabulary by pulling items out of a “Mystery Box” (Figure 4) that could be in the form of a suitcase (Figure 5) depending on the thematic unit. For example, if the thematic unit were “Animals,” I would

pull stuffed animals out of the Mystery Box. If it were “Clothing,” I would take clothes out of a suitcase to demonstrate what I would need to prepare for my secret destination that they would have to figure out.

Another way to introduce a new unit is to introduce the aforementioned story form with the use of a “Flannel Board” (Figure 6) or a “Big Book.” It is also sometimes just interesting to use a story that is famil-



**FIGURE 2**

Weather poster where students place the Velcro-backed nice or bad weather image on the top pane of the window, then the more specific Velcro-backed image of whether it is hot, cold, windy, or rainy in the bottom window pane.

**FIGURE 3**

Calendar where students take the Velcro-backed month and date of the calendar and place it in the saying above. Note: The moveable pieces are made out of cut-up cardboard “laminated” with packing tape and a strip of Velcro glued to the back.



**FIGURE 4: MYSTERY BOX**



**FIGURE 5: SUITCASE FOR SECRET TRAVEL DESTINATION**



iar to learners that demonstrates the vocabulary or structures they will encounter. For maximum learning with a familiar story, it is important to choose a

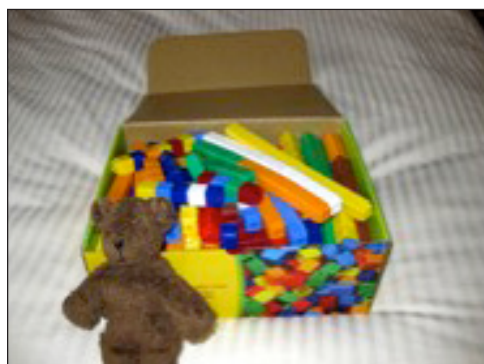


**FIGURE 6 & CAPTION: FLANNEL (OR FELT) BOARD**

What Do You See?), (3) lends to dramatization or pantomime, (4) lends to heavy use of visuals for content and progression).

*Kelly: What types of manipulatives do you use in your instruction?*

Paula: To continue with the ideal story notion I just mentioned in the previous question, I like to use manipulatives with stories. For example, when reading Brown Bear, Brown Bear in French, I have stuffed animals or plastic figurines for each of the characters mentioned. After reading the story, I practice the animal names with students listening and repeating while looking at each animal toy that I take from my Mystery Box. Then, I pull them out one by one and the first person who names it gets to hold the animal up while I read the story again. I also use counting manipulatives in stories. For example, when reading



**FIGURE 7**  
Linking blocks serve as manipulatives to represent each item the hungry caterpillar eats in La Oruga Muy Hambrienta.

blocks (Figure 7), like in the image below, and they need to put together the same number of each color fruit they hear from the story. A student volunteer who can name everything the caterpillar ate in the story—scaffolded by the linking blocks he or she put together while listening to the story—gets to wear

story that is (1) predictable, or familiar, (2) has repetitive structures (such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear,

the butterfly wings I have hanging in my class.

In addition to manipulatives for interpretive storytelling tasks, I also have students in my foreign language teaching methods course do a paper plate assignment to show that you do not need to invest a lot of money to make manipulatives. Furthermore, advanced elementary learners could possibly make these manipulatives in their art class for the language teacher to use in subsequent lessons. The paper plate examples shown below are for spontaneously describing clothing (Figure 8), sports activities (Figure 9) or describing facial characteristics (Figure 10).

Another activity young learners enjoy when learning clothing items is “Dress the Bear (Figure 11). Students can color and cut out clothing options for “the bear” that I like to have laminated for them to use, but they could cut out their own bear as well. Templates for Dress the Bear are readily available with an Internet search. Once the clothing options and the bears are ready, this works as a partner activity where one partner tells the other how to dress the bear.

A favorite class activity is to find where something is hiding in a manipulative. For example, in the “Where in the House” activity in Figure 12, there are flaps that lift up and the teacher can put post-its under each flap for the object that is hidden. Students can guess either the number on the flap, the color of the flap or tell me the row and column they want to look in to find a missing object. Perhaps the story line could be, “where is Santa Claus?” Students would guess which floor he is on, which room he is in, etc. Figure 13 shows the back of the “House.” Here I taped the flaps to the back of the board after inserting them



**FIGURE 8: DESCRIBING CLOTHING**



**FIGURE 9: DESCRIBING FACES**



**FIGURE 10: DESCRIBING ACTIVITIES**



**FIGURE 11: DRESS THE BEAR**

through slits.

Another manipulative activity we create for the whole class to do a floor activity together is a “Shower Curtain” activity.

This could be a city drawn out with a Sharpie on a Shower Curtain and learners can take turns driving their cars around the city based on their partners’ instructions.

Over-the-door clear plastic shoe organizers make for wonderful manipulative holders where students need to move objects up or down, to the right or left...the possibilities are endless

with activities one can do with a cheap shower curtain or shoe organizer from a dollar store. In fact, one of the activities students do in my Pre-K to Grade 8 Methods class is to go to a dollar store and come up with a manipulative activity that learners can do to make them produce the language with an items under five dollars. For such a small financial investment, the learning gains can be quite large in a well designed activity that allows learners

to manipulate materials while authentically producing the language.

*Kelly: Do you have any tips for keeping the classroom in the L2 during these types of innovative activities?*

Some general rules for making our language instruction comprehensible are to (1) use caretaker speech, meaning simple, direct language use; (2) break down directions and new information into small, incremental steps or just skip directions and MODEL what you want your learners to do; (3) make lavish use of concrete materials, visuals, gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movement, and most importantly, (4) model, model—model what you want the learners to do, what their pair work should look like, what the activity should look like, what the end product should look like. Rather than explaining everything in English or target language use that is too complicated for the learners, just MODEL, MODEL, MODEL. Furthermore, continual and constant target language use is essential. I advise Methods students to try to keep any English they need to learn between 5-30 seconds maximum. I also have students in my Methods classes create a 2-sided flag that they keep up in the target language side (with a flag from a target culture), but pick up and flip to the U.S. flag on the opposite side when they need to speak English. This creates a clear visual for learners that the target language is spoken inside the classroom except under extreme situations where a flag must be changed. The younger the learner, the

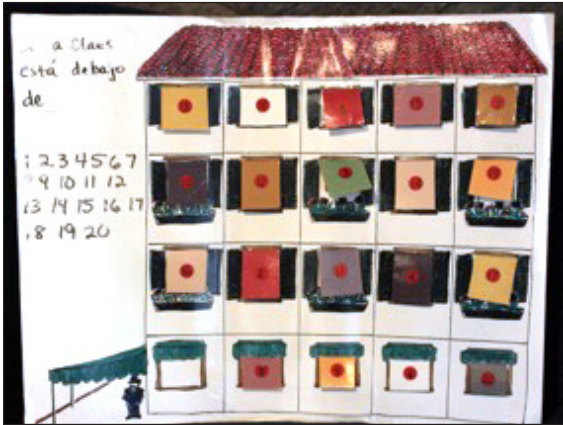
less resistance they typically have to target language use. If learners start complaining about target language use, it likely means that the instructor needs to find more ways to make his or her language use more comprehensible to the learners with more visuals or more modeling.

We know from second language acquisition research that the best age to learn a language is the youngest possible. This does not mean that older learners will not be successful. However, I firmly believe that teachers who get to implement creative and kinesthetic activities into their classroom are the luckiest language teachers because they will likely see learning gains occur more quickly than working with older students, and they are also likely to have more fun! If ever a teacher is feeling tired or losing inspiration, I always recommend going to <http://learner.org/resources/series185.html> to see best teaching practices in actual classrooms.

Lastly, I would like thank all the students who have shared their ideas and, especially, the retired teachers who have brought their materials to my institution for use in my Methods courses. Your creativity, materials and best-teaching practices now extend beyond our institution and to the NNELL readership! Thank you!

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**FIGURE 12: WHERE IN THE HOUSE ACTIVITY**



**FIGURE 13: SLITS IN THE BACK OF THE HOUSE**



# 2015 NNELL Award for Outstanding Support of Early Language Learning

Carmen Fariña is the recipient of the 2015 NNELL Award for Outstanding Support of Early Language Learning. Ms. Fariña is the Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, one of the largest and most diverse school systems in our country. She is a lifelong educator who has served as teacher, principal, superintendent, Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, and now Chancellor. As a child of immigrants herself, Fariña understands the importance of quality early language instruction. In order to allow New York City's public school children to be prepared for the needs of the globalized economy, Chancellor Fariña announced a new initiative to grow 40

additional dual language immersion programs within their district for 2015-16. Of these, there are 23 elementary schools, three high schools, 13 middle schools, and one K-12 school. The Dual Language programs include Mandarin, French, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Japanese, and Spanish. Chancellor Fariña's bold vocal support for the fundamental need for early and comprehensive language and cultural education is crucial to our profession's advocacy cause. School districts from all over the country will look to New York as they bring this type of globally aware programming and leadership to all children's education.



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**VIRTUOSO™ DIGITAL  
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# NELL Summer Institute 2015

by Kate Krotzer

The National Network for Early Language Learning (NELL) had its Summer Institute in Glastonbury, CT on July 10-12, 2015. Over 50 early foreign languages educators attended the event and benefited from several networking opportunities and very timely and useful professional development workshops.

On Friday, the event kicked off with *Early Language Learning Embraces the Common Core* by Christi Moraga who shared a teacher's perspective of incorporating these new standards in the language classroom. Barbara Jones from Santillana presented *Literacy and the Common Core*, discussing how to use literature to make connections across content and skill areas.

Attendees also enjoyed a session entitled *Advocacy in the Land of Aaahs* by Diane DeNoon, who spoke about her own district and ways to highlight our programs each and every day with our students, parents and colleagues. Marcela Summerville also shared advocacy techniques in her presentation, *Advocating for Early Start Programs*.

Saturday morning began with an update from Jacque Bott Van Houten, ACTFL president, on new initiatives as well as her



own district's work with the NCSSFL ACTFL Can Do statements. Kate Krotzer continued on the theme of literacy and the common core with her presentation, *Common Core and FLES: Language Learning and Nonfiction Texts*. Participants collaborated and worked hard on developing new ideas

during each of these presentations to bring to their classes in the fall--creating Can Do statements, promoting language learning with parents, and finding books and texts to support their units.

Saturday afternoon, Ken Hughes brought his energy to present *Movie Making and Green Screens* showing attendees how to make movies right in their own classrooms!

The weekend was wrapped up on Sunday with Laura Terrill and her presentation, *The Power of the Image*. Through the use of images in the foreign language classroom, she explored many ways to incorporate the three modes of communication and interculturality as students build proficiency.

NELL is dedicated to its mission of providing leadership to advocate for and support successful early language learning and teaching and through this Summer Institute was able to engage and prepare language teachers to start off their school year's strong!





# THE EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

# IS IT REALLY WORTH IT

*by Delandris Jones and Danielle Boston*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The correspondence between Collège la Charme and Meadow Glen Middle School began in 2012 via Skype for Educators. The initial plan was simply to give the students an authentic audience with which they could experience each other's cultures and communities. The teachers feel very strongly about providing students with these types of innovative, communicative activities. The correspondences were so great that we knew it was time to take it to a new level.

In October 2014, Meadow Glen Middle School of Lexington, S.C., embarked on the school's first ever exchange program. This program would enrich the lives of many teachers and students alike. Twenty-five American students in grades 6-8 hosted 25 French students from Collège la Charme. This French middle school is located in Clermont-Ferrand, France. The French students were accompanied by 3 teachers and their principal. We also worked with two other amazing French teachers at Meadow Glen Middle School (Mr. Eric Ruppe and Mrs. Shannon Gowe). Throughout the nine

days, students and teachers would experience a variety of local and long-distance activities that helped foster relationships through authentic interaction in the French and English languages.

## **PLANNING STAGES**

The planning stage for our particular

exchange program started about nine months in advance of their visit. We started by promoting the experience through our French classes and holding a general interest meeting. Once we had 25 students and families who committed to hosting, we were already about five months into the planning process. As we were generating interest among our school community, we were simultaneously working on transportation and finalizing the itinerary for local events and our Washington D.C. trip.

Once we had all the information about our committed participants, the matching process began. Our criteria for matching American students to their French exchange student were gender, age, and proficiency level. In order for a matching system to be successful, there needs to be clear and frequent communication between the students' teachers who know more about their personalities and proficiency levels. Once the matching list was finalized it was released to the anxious students and parents. Starting two months before the exchange, we held bi-weekly parent meetings. Each meeting had a theme such as what to expect, how to communicate, logis-





tics, etc. We received very warm feedback from parents and students about our efforts to prepare them and keep them informed about the exchange experience.

Looking back at the preparation portion of this program, we cannot express the importance of organization, record keeping, and budgeting. Each teacher was provided with a binder containing rosters, passports, itineraries, contracts, emergency contact information, medical information, and checklists. This information is essential to have at your fingertips should an unforeseen situation arise.

### EXCHANGE WEEK EXPERIENCE

Throughout the week, the French teachers and students enjoyed a variety of local activities in Columbia, SC. They were transported from the school to the daily destination by buses provided by the school district (at the Exchange's expense), which made it convenient for all. They specifically liked activities that may seem simple but are actually very unique to American culture. For example, they *adored* visiting the restaurant Krispy Kreme, getting to try on cool police gear and attending the state fair. One of the keys to a successful exchange is

keeping your visitors engaged. This requires a lot of planning up front, but the daily stories full of fun and excitement make it well worth it.

The exchange culminated in a trip to Washington, D.C. with all of the American and French students as well as teachers. Why Washington? Given that the students had been learning about the relationship between Marquis de LaFayette and George Washington, this was the perfect opportunity for them. This was the most costly portion of the exchange by far, at a cost of \$300 per student, but this was definitely





an experience to remember. We traveled overnight by chartered bus and we were able to spend two full days in the city. We saw all of the major monuments and tourist attractions, which were wonderful, but found that students and teachers were equally happy spending time together dining or walking around one of the Smithsonians.

We were able to keep in contact throughout the entire nine days with parents using Remind 101, a free and safe way to communicate via text message. The parents appreciated that they were always well informed on the various activities and daily schedules. This resource helped the entire exchange run smoothly and helped to put everyone at ease. As we reflect on

our exchange experience, we realize that the simple activities were the biggest hits with teachers and students alike! Just like teaching, you will always need to monitor and adjust to find what works best for your group, but we found that our group was most content while eating, shopping, and experiencing authentic southern hospitality.

#### ***Student relationships***

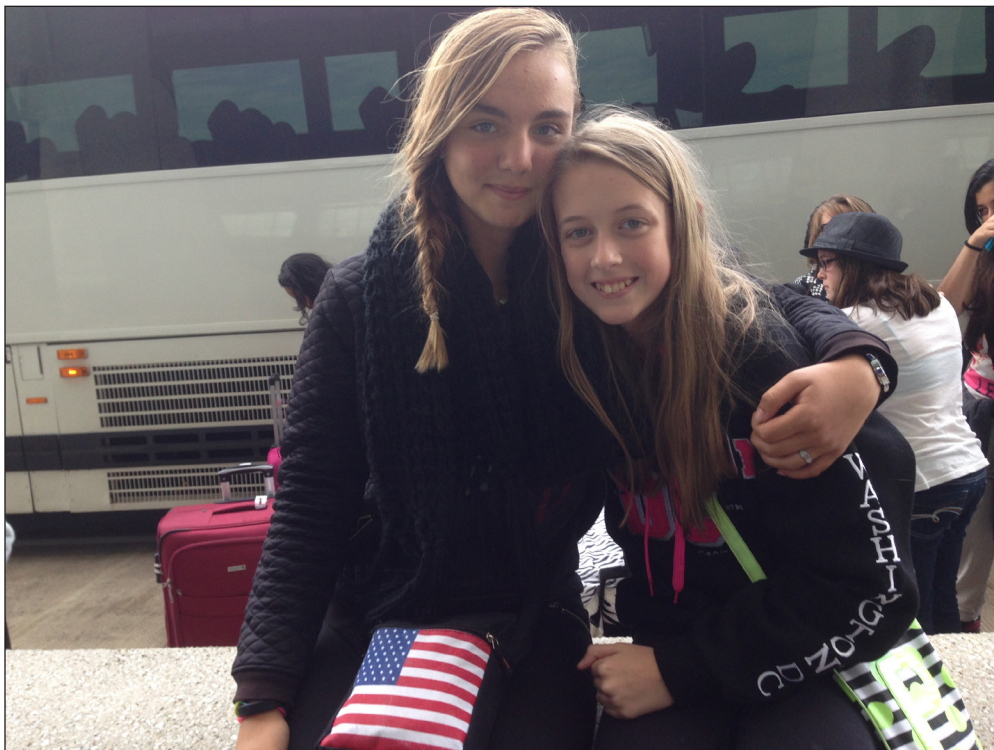
Fostering solid student relationships was a big part of the success of the exchange program and one of our major goals. In order for students to feel comfortable with each other, we needed to make sure they communicated with each other before the exchange week. We were able to put the American host students in contact with

their French exchange student via email. We set aside class time to help them send emails back and forth. This allowed students to introduce themselves to each other and share some basic information. Prior communication eased the nerves of students, parents, and teachers, as well as created excitement between both schools.

#### **CONCLUSION AND TAKE-AWAYS**

Throughout the week it was amazing to see so many friendships bloom before our eyes. The comradery between the French and American students was truly amazing. Although cross- language communication was difficult at times due to varied proficiency levels, the students persevered, showed determination and found ways to





bond with each other. As the week came to an end, many of the students had anxiety about leaving the experience behind. As we pulled up to the airport to say our final goodbyes, there were copious amounts of tears and heartwarming conversations between both the teachers and students. It was at this very moment that all of the American teachers looked at each other and said, "This is it!" It was also then that we acknowledged that the long nights leading up to their arrival (and when they were here) coupled with the hard work that had

been invested into this endeavor were all well worth it. These students had made genuine, life-long bonds! To this day, many of our students and families still Skype and have phone conversations on a regular basis.

An exchange program can create lifelong bonds and instill a love for traveling and language learning through experiencing a new culture. Simply witnessing the French and American students create friendships while using each other's language, despite their cultures differences, was the highlight of the exchange and is a testament to our

### **Delandris Jones,**

The French Exchange Founder and Director, graduated from Wofford College, where he studied both French and Biology. While studying French, he had the opportunity to study abroad in Chicoutimi, QC. In addition to studying the language, he developed a love for the French culture. Monsieur Jones began his teaching career as the French Teacher at Cheraw High School where he was the only French teacher in the county. Jones has been a French teacher at Meadow Glen Middle since its inception, in 2012. His teaching style is unique in that he enjoys teaching through a communication based approach, music and project-based learning. He believes that both methods provide for successful language retention and acquisition. Jones has facilitated various workshops and has advised several school districts on implementation strategies using the proficiency based approach. Jones is currently pursuing doctoral studies in Curriculum and Instruction. Monsieur Jones is the World Languages Department Chair (of eleven language teachers), and he loves working with his amazing team of educators in their journey of developing quality 21st century global citizens.



### **Danielle Boston**

graduated from Clemson University, where she studied Secondary Education for French. While in this program, she studied abroad in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium for one semester. After college, her passion for the French language and culture led her to Meadow Glen Middle School in Lexington, Sc. There, she was a co-director of the exchange program and helped organize many other French department activities. She is currently teaching at Berkeley High School in Moncks Corner, S.C., as well as pursuing her master's degree in world language education through Michigan State University. She hopes to inspire her students to see the world and continue their language studies beyond middle and high school by making language learning fun!



district's vision, which is to create a new generation of leaders and global citizens who are self-directed, creative, collaborative, caring, and multilingual.

So, is the exchange experience worth it?  
Y-E-S!

Would we do it again?

A-B-S-O-L-U-T-E-L-Y!

# Teachers' Identities AND Creative Teaching IN Language Immersion Classrooms

by Dr. Kaishan Kong

Language immersion programs are growing rapidly in the United States and students' academic achievement is becoming more evident, but critical problems still exist, one of which is how teachers view their roles as both a content and language teacher. The concern of integrating content teaching and language teaching has inspired a large number of studies; however, a considerable amount of literature is heavily concentrated on the learners or the professional development of teachers; less light is shed on the importance of relating the teachers' identities with pedagogies (Cammarata and Tedick; Danielewicz; Fortune, Tedick and Walker; Walker and Tedick). Immersion teachers' identities refer to their perception of immersion education and their roles in this context.

The connection between teachers' identities and their influence on creative teaching can be found in literature on identity negotiation theory (Norton) and relationship between teachers' understanding of themselves, knowledge and teaching practice (Johnson and Golombek). Informed by the relevant literature, this qualitative

inquiry explores two Chinese immersion kindergarten teachers' perception on their roles in the immersion environment and their creative pedagogies. Research questions include: (1) How do the Chinese immersion teachers view their roles as both content teacher and language teacher? (2) How do their perspectives on their identities influence their instructional approaches in the immersion classroom?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Immersion education*

Immersion is a form of bilingual education where students receive at least half of the subject instruction through a language they learn as a second, foreign, heritage or indigenous language; additionally, students will receive instruction in the majority language used in the community (Cammarata and Tedick; Lyster). Numerous empirical studies discuss predominant advantages of immersion education in helping students in linguistic, cultural, cognitive and psychological aspects (i.e., Cummins; Lambert; Lindholm-Leary; Lindholm-Leary and Howard); however, critics raised some salient problems in immersion education. Most of the problems are related to students' unsat-



isfactory linguistic development (i.e. Harley, Allen, Cummins and Swain; Lyster).

These problems uncover a more profound concern: the balance of content and language in immersion teaching. "How to promote a successful learning environment in which both language and content develop simultaneously and successfully continues to be the crux of immersion language teaching" (Walker and Tedick 22). Research identifies a prevailing predicament wherein immersion teachers struggle to simultaneously balance their role as a content teacher and a language teacher (Cammarata and Tedick; Swain and Johnson). Increasing research on immersion teachers' personal and professional experiences gives rise to the uniqueness of their identity.

### **Teacher's identity**

Norton believes that identity is a person's understanding of himself or herself in relation to the outside world and across the time. Many scholars echo this belief that identity is a person's sense of who they are in relation to the social world and the time, which explains that identities can be formed and developed through dynamic and relevant social interaction (Atkinson; Lee and Anderson; Ushioda). Studies have been conducted to explore how teachers' multiple identities (gender, class, race, sexual orientation, culture) are constructed and negotiated through the process of instruction and interaction in bilingual contexts (Morgan).

Recently, researchers have developed more in-depth understanding of how immersion teachers perceive their own roles. One example is Walker and Tedick's inquiry into immersion teachers' understanding of balancing content and language instruction through in-depth conversations with six elementary immersion teachers (Walker and Tedick). They found out that how teachers perceive their dual role as a content teacher and language teacher is one of the major factors that will influence the effectiveness of the teaching. In the same light, Cammarata and Tedick conducted a phenomenological study to probe into Spanish and French teachers' challenges of integrating content and language through their lived experiences. Even though these studies adopted dissimilar theoretical and methodological lenses, they both illuminate the importance of associating teachers' backgrounds, philosophies, experience, language proficiency and their decisions in

balancing language and content in immersion context.

### **Identity and instruction**

Teachers' beliefs, knowledge and attitudes are not isolated in affecting their actual practice in the classroom. On the contrary, it is the teacher's whole identity that determines the priority of teaching and related teaching decisions (Van Den Berg).

Diverse bodies of literature have reviewed teachers' identities in relation to pedagogies. Simon suggested a move from teacher identity *and* pedagogy to a notion of teacher identity *as* pedagogy. Morgan agreed with Simon that a teacher's identity, his or her image-text, could serve as valuable pedagogical resources for bilingual and second language education. Since extensive research demystifies the relationship between a teacher's identity and language instruction, it becomes more apparent that understanding teachers is crucial in understanding language instruction and learning, and to understand teachers we need to understand their multifaceted identities: their professional self, cultural self, political self, and individual self (Varghese et. al).

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Set in an early total Chinese immersion program in the U.S., this study investigates two kindergarten teachers' perception of their roles as content and language teacher in relation to their selection of pedagogy. The first participant Dong had seven years of Chinese immersion teaching experience in the U.S. and prior to that, she had had other bilingual teaching experience in an Asian country. The second participant Yang had two years of Chinese immersion teaching experience in the U.S. and also had other bilingual experience in Europe and the Middle East before moving to the U.S.. Data collection included class observation, semi-structured interviews and class materials as supportive documents. The following section will discuss the major themes that emerged from the data.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***Dual roles as a language and content teacher***

During the interview, both Dong and Yang clearly stated that they considered immersion teachers playing dual roles as a language and content teacher simultaneously. As Dong stated,

我觉得应该是齐头并进。我们沉浸式老师，教数学也是用中文来讲，科学

也是用中文来讲。我觉得讲数学或者讲科学的过程中本身就是提高语言，帮助学生提高他们的语言能力 (I think these two roles should go hand in hand. We are immersion teachers, teaching math in Chinese and teaching science also in Chinese. I think the process of teaching math and science itself is improving language, helping students to improve their language proficiency).

Dong did not see the separation of teaching math and language; instead, she considered herself doing two jobs at the same time. Yang echoed,

应该是两者都兼顾，因为要通过不同的科目才能扩展语言的能力。不可能单单通过中文的教学来让他们学习。要通过discipline的学习。特别是我们kindergarten的话，孩子的语言掌握的途径，不单单是从中文课，还有很多是通过数学课。通过数学课的趣味性和变化性，让孩子在语言的听力和表达能力上都有帮助。(We teachers should handle both roles because language ability can be developed only through various disciplines. Learning occurs not through only Chinese language class, but through disciplinary learning. Especially for kindergarteners, kids' mastery of language occurs not only in Chinese language class but in math class. The fun and variability of math class is helpful to children's listening and communication skills).

How immersion teachers view their dual roles as language teacher and content teacher is shaped through their personal experiences, ethnic cultural values, educational background and professional interaction with colleagues, students and their parents. Dong and Yang, both immigrants from China, received education in Chinese and worked in the same field. These personal experience and educational background had profound impact on how they viewed their professional responsibilities as immersion teachers.

In return, their sense of professional self affected their classroom instruction. According to Van Den Berg,

The professional behavior of teachers is assumed to be jointly determined by their earlier experiences and their current expectations with regard to the future. People have, after all, a life history, and this history is—for most professions—essential for understanding their professional development and expectations for the future. (588)

Both teachers had background in bilin-

gual education in other countries, and their success in the past was informing them the importance of dual roles. To achieve both the content and the language goals, these two teachers stressed the essential importance of creating meaningful activities that could enhance content understanding and linguistic skills.

### ***Creative and meaningful activities to ensure students' understanding of the content***

Tsang stated, "What teachers think and believe shapes the way they understand teaching and the priorities they give to different dimensions of teaching" (164).

*Priorities* is a keyword in Tsang's statement as it accentuates teachers' selection of pedagogy inspired by their identities. As discussed in the previous theme, the two participants understood the uniqueness as an immersion teacher; therefore, they intentionally created activities that were different from traditional foreign language class.

For instance, when teaching map, instead of teaching students how to say map in Chinese, Yang asked students "你坐过飞机吗? 从飞机上往下看你会看到什么? 你看到的树是绿色的圆形还是站着的一棵树? (Have you taken a plane before? What can you see below from the plane? Do you see trees as circles or as upstanding?)" And students answered that trees looked like a circle and the houses were in square or rectangle shapes. She explained that encouraging students to consider a map from a bird's view could help students understand the concept of map in a more dynamic dimension. To further connect students' concept of map with everyday life, she created an activity that required children to draw the map of their neighborhood. Children used squares to represent their house, drew trees and used various colors to represent different roads. According to her, these activities activated students' multiple senses when learning the concept to achieve more profound understanding. In the meanwhile, multiple categories of vocabulary such as colors and shapes were reviewed. When asked if the language was too difficult for kindergarteners, she emphasized the importance of reflective and adaptive teaching. Over the years, she reflected and adapted her language to suit the students' level. Her example lent support to Johnson and Golombek's notion that teachers' evolving knowledge and teaching grow through their professional lives.

Creativity and meaningfulness also emerged in Dong's teaching when she connected science, math and children's personal life in class. When she taught animals, she gave each animal a Chinese name and integrated Chinese into math learning. For example, she said, "安娜有三只小青蛙, 美丽又送给了安娜一只小青蛙, 那么安娜一共有几只小青蛙? (Anna has three little frogs. Meili also gives Anna one little frog. Then how many frogs does Anna have?)" She said that students were very excited to hear their names mentioned in class, and looked forward to seeing whose names would be mentioned in the next class. Dong said, "因为他们学了青蛙, 所以我把青蛙放在了数学题里面, 我把中文和数学加在一起, 让他们觉得数学不是一种负担, 而是很盼望下一个数学课。 (Because they had learned the Chinese word for frog, by putting the word frog in a math problem, I got to connect Chinese with math. They didn't find learning math as a burden but something they looked forward to.)" Small creativity and connection increased students' engagement in solving math problems.

In the bilingual classroom, the teacher's participation in the context and interaction with the students contributes to his or her sense of who he or she is (Morgan). In this study, both participants' pedagogy in class reflected their sense of professional self. Yang's example of using multiple activities to teach the concept of map and Dong's pedagogy of connecting disciplines and children's names displayed their dedication to nurture students' profound understanding of content while at the same time reviewing language. Being a content and language teacher required them to create hands-on and personal-related activities.

### ***Creativity and intentionality for students' language practice.***

Dong and Yang were certain that ensuring students' understanding of content was not and should not be at the cost of their language learning. Instead, they emphasized that language learning in an immersion context required creativity and intentionality. Dong said, to assess students' language proficiency in introducing family members, she would not simply ask students to recite the Chinese vocabulary for members; instead, she invited each student to bring their family photos to class and introduced the photos in public. She explained that having students introduce the photos would allow

her to see if they truly connected concept with language, as she said, "让小朋友自己来表达, 来介绍自己的家庭成员。从这个你就可以检查他们是否理解了。 (Having the kids to express ideas, to introduce their family member, would allow you to assess if they truly understood.)"

Similarly, when Yang was teaching similarity and difference, she created an activity for students to find a friend holding the same photo and another friend holding a different photo. To the observer, it was obvious that students understood the teacher's instruction and completed the task accordingly. However, students had challenges in using the complex structure to express similarities and differences, as was expected by Yang. When interviewed, Yang noted the linguistic challenges and said she would try other approaches to help students practice the very linguistic point. "Given imposition of the additional language as a medium of instruction, a different kind of teaching takes place and new issues arise" (Walker and Tedick 22). Yang's example showed her creativity in teaching students comparison and contrast, but a new issue arose, which was the complexity of language. Even though the result was not as successful as she had expected, it displayed Yang's intentionality to develop students' linguistic ability and her understanding of the importance of language.

Additionally, both participants' emphasis on language practice was also reflected in their avoidance of using oversimplified language. Even though they were teaching kindergarteners, they underscored the importance of authentic language for early learners from the beginning stage. Dong stated, "我不会用一般小baby的语言和他们讲话, 因为他们马上要上一年级了, 如果一年级老师用很普通的学校语言和他们讲话, 他们未必能接受得了。 (I would not use little baby's language to talk to them; otherwise, when they progress to the first grade, if their first grade teacher speaks to them in normal language, they would not be able to understand.)"

In the exploration of teacher identity and instruction, Cummins asserted that academic achievement is related to teacher-student identity negotiation. Morgan complemented Cummins' framework by saying that "[s]eating arrangements, classroom materials, peer relations, extra curricular activities, in addition to home and community language practices, family relations

and personal experiences all potentially influence the interpersonal meanings given and received in class" (177). When Dong and Yang conversed with the kindergarteners in authentic language, they behaved in the same way as average teachers in China would do with their students, so as to distinguish themselves from foreign language teachers who may use easier language to ensure understanding. In the meanwhile, they were negotiating students' identity as if they were average students in China, instead of foreign language learners. Their intentionality and creativity reflected the teacher-student identity negotiation noted by Cummins. Class observation clearly showed that students were very comfortable with their teacher speaking Chinese with them.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, both participants perceived themselves as both a content and language teacher in the immersion kindergarten; therefore, their dual identities inspired them to be creative in class activities to ensure students' content and language learning develop simultaneously. Not only did they create various activities to nurture students' multi-dimensional understanding of a concept, they also paid close attention to assess students' linguistic development as they discussed content.

Schifter perceived the plurality of teacher's professional identity in terms of the multiple roles the teacher has to play in tutoring the students, managing the classroom and collaborating with other colleagues. Dong and Yang also underscored the importance of constant reflection on a professional and personal level. Reflection enables teachers to negotiate their multiple identities, adjust their teaching pedagogies and grow as an individual and team player.

"Teacher professional identity is how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others. It is a construct of professional self that evolves over career stages ... and can be shaped by school, reform, and political contexts" (Lasky 901). This study is significant in sharing two in-service immersion kindergarten teachers' perceptions of their roles and exploration of best practice. The purpose is to contribute to the knowledge base of immersion teaching and to call for more light to be cast on teachers' identities and pedagogical effectiveness.

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# Activating the imagination inside the world language classroom

by Claire Mitchell

"Imagination is powerful. [...] Imagination works best when it activates emotion..."

(MacIntyre & Gergesen 193)

Imagination.

Creation. Innovation.

These three words and their relationship with one another have powerful possibilities in education. When we tap into a learner's imagination, we are able to guide them to become creators and innovators. Specifically, inside the world language classroom, cultivating learners' imagination enables them to visualize themselves as language users, which is important if we want them to extend beyond the four walls of the classroom and see themselves from a new perspective. When learners can see themselves as language users, they take ownership of their learning experience and become more invested in and engaged with the topic being studied. This heightened sense of investment in turn leads to creation and innovation, further propelling them to use the language in new and exciting ways.

***How do we elicit and nurture this type of imagination inside the classroom?***

Even though eliciting learners' imagination can have positive effects in the world language classroom, the question still remains – how do we as educators create this type of imaginative environment? Considering the prominent role technology plays in the lives of learners today, an easy way to develop imagination is by using digital tools in the world language learning experience. Technology has become a way of life for learners today. From Siri on the iPhone to the new Alexa on Amazon, even our everyday tasks involve some form of technology. So why not use these resources to our advantage in world language learning? Technology use is advantageous because it provides a window into a new and unknown world, and it encourages learners to explore. But explore what exactly? What do we

want learners to explore and why do we want them to do it?

***Imagination and creation tied to culture***

When activating learners' imagination, it needs to be tied into cultural learning so that they develop and grow in their cultural awareness. This type of awareness centers on the ability to recognize, respect, and understand cultural differences and is important in a world where people from different backgrounds connect and interact with one another more often. As noted in the ACTFL Global Position Statement, the possibility of interacting with people who speak different languages and are from different cultures increases on a daily basis. Therefore, learners must possess cultural awareness in order to be successful in today's societies that are multicultural and multilingual. A unique way to cultivate these skills from within the four walls of their world language classroom is through the use of technology, and more specifically, through social media. By using social media in the world language classroom, students begin to see a connection between how they learn a language and their worlds beyond the classroom. Furthermore, the very reason students are drawn to social media is because it offers opportunities to collaborate, connect, and interact in diverse virtual contexts.

## **Learners as creators and innovators on Pinterest**

In my own Spanish language classroom, I used Pinterest to activate learners' imagination. Pinterest is a social media tool centered on discovery and evokes the imagination through the use of visual imagery such as photos and videos. The premise of Pinterest is that users can create pinboards that are thematic and then pin videos and images to these pinboards that represent a particular theme (Mitchell 42). Due to its inherently explorative nature, it helps learners visualize themselves in the cultural environment they are investigating because it gives them an insider's view to the culture. Pinterest provides a different viewpoint than what learners are used to because they have the opportunity to choose what interests them, investigate this topic, and see what it is like "firsthand" from within their language classroom. Another benefit of Pinterest is that it encourages learners to work together to achieve a collective goal, which ties into learners as language users. When working together on Pinterest, they use the language not only to explore the target culture but also to achieve their goals inside the classroom (i.e., accomplishing tasks and completing activities).

### **Activating the imagination through Pinterest**

At the university level, learners used Pinterest to explore the target culture and visualize themselves integrating into that culture (Mitchell 43). At the K-8 level, educators can use Pinterest in a number of ways as well. For example, educators can create cultural projects where learners explore specific topics such as music, art, or food via Pinterest. Learners can delve into the target culture and find specific examples of products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture. They can then pin different images and videos to pinboards created by the teacher or work in groups to create their own group pinboards that they later share with their classmates. Inside the classroom, the use of Pinterest can encourage a collaborative environment where learners lead discussions about what they found on Pinterest and how it is representative of the target culture. These types of discussions can further guide learners to see themselves as language users, which in turn empowers them to take ownership of their learning.

Typically, no matter the level of language learning, a popular topic taught, and that

students enjoy learning about, centers on food. Educators can therefore use Pinterest to teach a unit on food while developing learners' imagination and cultural awareness. The original topic of the following suggested project was part of the curriculum in an introductory French course at The University of Alabama\*. However, I adapt the version below by providing examples for the K-8 setting and include the use of Pinterest as a part of the project.

For the purpose of explaining this project, I highlight how to use it in a Spanish-speaking classroom, but it is important to note that this type of activity can easily be incorporated into any world language classroom. To begin, educators can set the stage for learners by telling them to imagine they are going to be on the show *MasterChef Junior* and will be making a dish that is unique to the Spanish-speaking world. Educators can either allow learners to choose the Spanish-speaking country they want to investigate or assign a country to each group. Then learners can begin their own quest for knowledge by exploring the Internet for foods that they think are interesting and that are unique to their specific Spanish-speaking country. To develop learners' linguistic knowledge, they can also write a short description in the target language about the food or write the vocabulary words on the pin of each food or dish. After the pinboards are complete, learners can then use this knowledge to complete a written activity depending on their level. For primary school, a suggested written activity centers on creating recipe cards in the target language. For older primary school and even into junior high/middle school, learners could develop a brief script that guides them later in the creation of an oral activity. The suggested oral activity for all levels could be to hold a mock *MasterChef Junior* show, create one of the foods, and have all of the classmates act as judges of different dishes. In this context, learners use their language to talk about the foods, ask questions, and use relevant linguistic and cultural knowledge to complete the activity.

Finally, in order to connect the cultural products and practices with the cultural perspectives, younger learners and teachers could work together to read about why these foods are popular and why people eat them. For older learners, they could write journals in English that discuss what they learned while investigating the target culture via

Pinterest. This type of journal entry could tie the cultural products, practices, and perspectives together through guided prompts that focus on the same objective of leading learners to understand more about why these foods are popular and why people eat them.

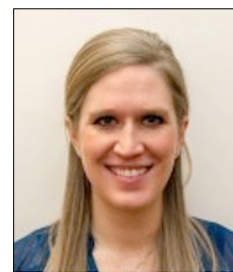
In conclusion, using Pinterest in the world language classroom has limitless opportunities for connecting students to their learning experience and to the outside world. In particular, Pinterest provides a window into the real world and shows how people use the target language on a daily basis. By incorporating these types of activities into the classroom, learners not only grow in their linguistic development, but they also develop their global competence because they use the language in relevant and meaningful interactions that have real-life purpose.

\*The original activity topic was created by Dr. Isabelle Drewelow, Assistant Professor of French and French Language Program Director for Beginning and Intermediate Instruction at The University of Alabama. Learners, who were university-level students enrolled in introductory French, imagined they were going to be on the show *Masterchef* as part of a project where they learned about different French cuisine.

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