Moving beyond communicative language teaching: Anchoring lower-division language instruction in literacy development

Heather W. Allen
• Introduction: collegiate FL education today

• Benefits & limitations of CLT in lower-division FL courses

• Literacy as a framing goal: What is it, why do it in lower-division courses, how literacy-based FL instruction is organized

• Examples of student learning in literacy-oriented lower division French courses
More Than Words

Princeton general-education proposal would require all students -- even those already proficient in a foreign language -- to study a language other than English. Most of the shrinking number of institutions with requirements let students test out of them.

By Colleen Flaherty  // November 2, 2016

46 COMMENTS

Academics

Wharton language requirement reduction stirs debate

By Lexi Lieberman  01/16/17 8:36pm

The Opinion Pages

ROOM for DEBATE

December 28, 2016

Should Foreign Language Classes Be Mandatory in College?

INSIDE HIGHER ED

Push for Language Proficiency

Pitt’s arts and sciences faculty is divided over a proposal to eliminate a high school study exemption from foreign language requirement. Some say high school seat time is poor measure of proficiency, while others fear forcing too many students into language courses.

By Colleen Flaherty  // January 23, 2017

18 COMMENTS
## Characteristics of Bifurcated FL Programs (adapted from Kern, 2000 and Maxim, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introductory and Intermediate Language Courses</th>
<th>Advanced Literature and Culture Courses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Development of functional abilities to communicate everyday needs, thoughts</td>
<td>Development of analytical and critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on language forms and conventions</td>
<td>Focus on cultural and literary sensibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expression of personal opinions and familiar ideas</td>
<td>Expression of new ideas, analysis, and synthesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading and writing as support skills for practice of language forms</td>
<td>Reading and writing as integral to learning literary-cultural content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom organized around language</td>
<td>Classroom organized around content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional texts (ads, weather reports, menus, etc.)</td>
<td>Literary texts (poetry, prose, drama, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative, supportive, small-group environment</td>
<td>Serious, lecture- and discussion-oriented environment</td>
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Paesani, Allen, & Dupuy (2016, p. 2)
This course emphasizes the development of practical communication skills through a variety of lively, interactive activities. By the end of the course, students should be able to talk about themselves, their immediate world, and their interests. The course also provides an introduction to the culture of France and other French speaking countries.

Intensive training and practice in all the language skills, with an initial emphasis on listening and speaking. Emphasis on communicative proficiency, self-expression, and cultural insights.

First in a four-course sequence to develop language skills. Oral and written practice in classroom and language laboratory. Readings in French culture and civilization.

Practice in the four language skills, with concentration on an audio-lingual approach, for students who have no creditable training in French. Includes an introduction to French and francophone culture.
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EXAMPLE 1A:
FROM AN ELEMENTARY FRENCH TEXTBOOK

EXPRESSIONS UTILES  santé

Comment vas-tu ?
Comment ça va ?

Je vais très bien.
Ça va bien.

Je vais bien.
Ça va pas mal.

Je vais assez bien.
Comme ci comme ça.

Je vais mal.
Ça va mal.

Je vais très mal.
Ça va très mal.
**EXAMPLE 1B:**
*FROM AN ELEMENTARY FRENCH TEXTBOOK*

**ACTIVITÉ 7 Ça va ?** With a partner, find out how each of you is feeling given the circumstances indicated.

**Modèle:**
La personne A
un voyage terrible

La personne B
un examen difficile

A: Bonjour, _____, comment vas-tu ?

B: Très mal, et toi ?

A: Moi ? Très, très mal.

La personne A
1. une interview pour un job
2. un accident de bicyclette
3. un pique-nique
4. une absence du professeur

La personne B
1. un dîner dans un restaurant chic
2. un A à un test
3. un gain de 500 dollars
4. une leçon au laboratoire
**EXAMPLE 2:**
FROM AN ELEMENTARY FRENCH TEXTBOOK

**ACTIVITÉ 7 C’est horrible ou c’est génial ?** In groups of three, take turns making statements about the following situations and asking if the other two members of your group agree.

**Modèle:** avoir un chien

A: Je pense qu’avoir un chien, c’est horrible ! Et toi ?
B: Je suis d’accord, je n’aime pas du tout les chiens.
C: Mais non ! Avoir un chien, c’est génial.

1. avoir huit enfants
2. être célibataire
3. vivre à Dakar
4. vivre seul(e)
5. habiter dans une résidence universitaire
6. avoir cinq oiseaux
“Students learn expressions in language based on general categories: assertions about time and seasons, home and household activities, shopping and clothing, and the like. Differences in styles of homes or seasons, although noted, seldom emerge as features to be interrogated in multiple ways for their social, political, economic, or cultural implications within a coherent picture of the FL culture(s). Event recent variants of textbooks that incorporate texts reflecting regional differences in language use … still focus on language as such rather than on language as a plural and flexible ground for communication … they rarely present language directed at particular audiences with identifiable objectives, with media or print texts addressing and realizing varying views about normative correctness or multiple genres reflecting content differences, not only between variant language groups but within their respective societies … the pedagogy of communicative competence still reflects the strong structuralist leanings of its audiolingual predecessors—it focuses on student recall of information rather than on analysis of that information” (p. 247)
“[C]ommunicative competence is neither a realistic nor a sufficient goal for the general education FL requirement. It is unrealistic because neither time nor instructional context is sufficient or appropriate to develop a meaningful and lasting level of proficiency. It is insufficient because short-lived, communicative survival skills are taught without intellectually challenging content and do not provide those intellectually enriching insights into language-related factors that would indeed justify such study as a requirement for all students.” (p. 254)
CLT: BENEFITS & LIMITATIONS

- learning = multi-faceted process of developing the capacity to communicate with others
- learner participation & skill using
- > attention to the collaborative nature of learning
- emphasis on meaning not drills & rote learning
- conceptually vague principles & aims
- overemphasis on oral, functional language use
- restricted role of reading & writing
- superficial treatment of cultural & textual content
“Literacy is the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships. Because it is purpose sensitive, literacy is dynamic—not static—and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge” (Kern, 2000, p. 16)
A RATIONALE FOR FOCUSING ON LITERACY IN LOWER-DIVISION FL COURSES

- An overarching goal of literacy can provide a unifying focus by drawing students’ attention to the interactions among form, context and function in all their uses of language … a focus on literacy removes the artificial separation of skills and content (Kern, 2004, p. 7)

- **textual learning** functions as a vehicle for communicative language use and cultural inquiry

- A literacy perspective entails **moving away from a 4-skills orientation**: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modes (World Readiness Standards, 2015) conceptualize communication to encompass language use, cultural knowledge, and textual conventions
“It offers a way to narrow the long-standing pedagogical gap that has traditionally divided what we do at the early levels of language teaching and what we do at the advanced levels. That is, it offers a way to reconcile the teaching of ‘communication’ with the teaching of ‘textual analysis’” (Kern, 2003, p. 43)
LASSIE! GET HELP!!
“We also showed that IR-induced DNA-damage signaling, as measured by phosphorylation of H2AX on serine 139 (γ-H2AX) was inversely associated with cell cycle G2 delay index.”

PRINCIPLES OF LITERACY (KERN, 2000)

Interaction with the content of texts:

  Language use
  Conventions
  Cultural Knowledge

Through the learning processes of:

  Interpretation
  Collaboration
  Problem Solving
  Reflection & Self Reflection
The content of the text:

- **Language Use** - deliberate misspelling of Cancun
- **Conventions** - advertisement
- **Cultural Knowledge** - SNCF, French road signs
Learning processes:

- **Interpretation**: What meaning emerges from the various elements of this ad?

- **Collaboration**: Who is the audience for this ad and how do non-intended readers of the text understand it?

- **Problem Solving**: How does the slogan “Happily, we don’t just offer the train” relate to Cancun?

- **Reflection & Self-Reflection**: which travel-related cultural practices or perspectives are implied in this ad? How do members of your own culture plan their travels?
HOW DO LEARNERS BECOME LITERATE?

- Engaging in **meaning design** in the FL:
  - making form-meaning connections through textual learning
  - gaining understanding of when L1 meaning making resources (**Available Designs**) are relevant to meaning making in the FL and how they relate
  - acquiring new resources for meaning making in the FL (**Available Designs**), both linguistic and schematic
• provide a means for instructors to systematically guide learners through the multi-dimensional process of meaning design

• facilitate learners’ access to the language, conventions, cultural content and other resources in texts

• engage learners in the processes of interpretation, collaboration, problem solving and reflection
DESIGNING A LITERACY-ORIENTED FRE 101 COURSE

- Revising the course goals & objectives
- Aligning the revised goals & objectives with appropriate assessment tools
- Selecting a different textbook and rethinking its role in the course
- Identifying an appropriate scope and sequence of instruction and writing related chapter-level objectives
- Choosing authentic texts and creating related instructional sequences for culture activities and genre-based writing assignments
- Providing appropriate ongoing professional development, mechanisms for collaboration and lesson sharing, and face time for course teams
- Taking Head TA, TA, and student feedback on the course into consideration
INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE 1: CULTURE ACTIVITIES

Culture Activities: 5 per term, 15% of final grade; include pre-reading/viewing, in-class comprehension and interpretation activities, and post-class reflections; based on authentic texts, multimodal, evaluated using an analytic rubric; 50-100 minutes of class time plus homework

1. French in the world (infographic & video)
2. Gender roles in the French family (Qualtrics survey, web documentary, infographic)
3. Generation Y in Europe / US (Qualtrics survey, website, video)
4. Travel blog writing (French-speaking Canada, website entries)
5. Expatriation (France to Canada, article, infographics, news report)
CULTURE ACTIVITY 2: FRE 101

UNE JOURNÉE MOYENNE

HOMMES
- 11 h 36: Temps physiologique (sommeil, repas)
- 11 h 53: Temps de travail (horaires)
- 0 h 50: Temps de repos
- 0 h 53: Temps de loisirs
- 0 h 57: Temps de marched

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 Qui va garder les enfants ?

Les parents nouvelle génération

Cécile et Mathieu habitent Paris. Elle est scénariste, il est commercial. Ils sont les jeunes parents de Violette, 2 ans et demi, et d’Anouk née en février. Pour accueillir ce nouveau bébé, le couple souhaite se répartir équitablement les tâches de la vie de famille.
Culture Activity 3 Reflection

Generation Y seems very in touch with the issues and addictions that plague their age group. However, in comparison of American and French opinion, the French take a more cynical standpoint on how increasingly complex technology and world issues are affecting their lives. When it comes to personal values, such as what makes one an “adult”, Americans and French believe relatively the same beliefs. However, the largest gap in beliefs, as we noticed in class, was the “En Un Mot” section; the French leaned almost completely negative (“Lost” being their number one adjective) in comparison to Americans. This does not surprise me as an American, as European culture is infamous for being vastly more realistic rather than blatantly optimistic. All in all, I was a bit surprised at the similarities between French and American millennials. Coming from different countries, it is hard to imagine that 18-34 year olds would believe similar things. However, it is also fairly comforting to know that we are all connected by similar likes, dislikes, and beliefs about what our generation can do. There are many issues that we face in this age, and it is nice to know that on a global scale we are on the same page in fixing these issues.
CULTURE ACTIVITIES: LEARNER REFLECTIONS

The big difference between the students of UW-Madison and the young people of France is how we view our own generation. The UW-Madison students said that your generation is open-minded, technologically enhanced, and very individualistic. However, the views from France are very different. They said their own generation is lost, abandoned, and relies on the internet. We both agree that we rely on technology, but disagree on other aspects of our generation. I feel as if the results vary because the UW-Madison survey just asked students who are determined and are aiming for a descent degree and job for their future (otherwise they wouldn’t be studying here), but the French results may be from an anonymous survey given out to the whole generation, some of which are feeling lost with their life. If the survey were given to the whole generation across the United States, I feel the results would be similar. I think many young people in this nation are feeling lost and have no idea what the future holds for them. This is the only information that surprised me from the survey results.
CULTURE ACTIVITIES & LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

- multimodal & based on contemporary authentic texts
- include several principles of literacy: language use, cultural knowledge, interpretation, collaboration, problem solving, & reflection
- incorporate linguistic, sociocultural, and cognitive dimensions of literacy
INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE 2: PROJECTS

Projects: 4 per term, 30% of final grade; include pre-speaking or pre-writing workshops in class (2 per project), written and spoken components, and post-performance reflections; based on authentic texts/situations, evaluated using an analytic rubric

1. *Petite annonce*, colocation (FB posts, colocation in France)
2. Interpersonal conversation family tree and important people in my life
3. Travel video blog (written and spoken model texts, Canada)
4. *Lettre de motivation* for summer job in Europe (CV, lettre de motivation, France)
INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE 2: PROJECTS

- **Genre-based** writing projects: focus on building knowledge of how to make meaning in ways appropriate to specific purposes and audiences, learning the “moves” and conventions associated with specific text types.

- Use of **textual borrowing** activities during pre-writing workshops: Learner appropriation of textual features at the discourse, sentence, and word level for their own language production (Maxim, 2009).

- Instructional model that moves from analysis of model texts to pre-writing to creating a new text.
PROJECT 1: FRE 101

- Week 3 of class, primarily true beginners of French; Chapter 1 of the textbook

- Goal: Create a personal ad searching for a roommate after analyzing several model texts

- 2 in class pre-writing workshops (1.5 class sessions, 75 minutes)

- First draft, post-writing reflection, second draft
Bonjour,


N’hésiter pas à me contacter!

------
Bonjour,


La colocation:
Les coordonnées: 310 State St.
Ville: Madison
Durée de la colocation: 1 an

N'hésitez pas à me contacter à mon email (------@gmail.com) ou à mon téléphone portable (920-242-8140).

Au revoir!
I found this project to be a realistic example of how one would encounter and utilize the French language as a young person in contemporary times. I’ve also always have been a fan of vocabulary so I ended up learning some new adjectives and verbs when writing this. It was also enjoyable inserting humorous honesty about my intentions and aspirations as an artist and learner of French.
use of contemporary authentic texts as models for transformation and creation of students’ own texts

include several principles of literacy: language use, cultural knowledge, interpretation, problem solving, & reflection

incorporate linguistic, sociocultural, and cognitive dimensions of literacy
CONCLUSIONS

- Literacy *can be* a viable framework for lower-division FL courses and curricula; it requires rethinking learning outcomes, assessment, the role of the textbook, and the scope and sequence of content.

- Instructor buy in and collaboration are an essential element of this approach: there must be conditions conducive to shared responsibility, ongoing professional development, and a feedback loop from teachers.

- Embracing text-based instruction and learner engagement in literacy events from the first stages of FL study is a more appropriate pathway to later literary-cultural study in advanced undergraduate FL courses than CLT-based lower-division courses.

- More empirical research is needed on instructor perspectives and experiences, learner perspectives, & learning outcomes related to literacy-based instruction in lower-division FL courses.
Question? Comments?

I am happy to share sample materials for literacy-based instruction and assessment

hwallen@wisc.edu