Addressing the Language Literature Divide through Multiliteracies Pedagogy

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Addressing the Language-Literature Divide through Multiliteracies Pedagogy

Heather Willis Allen
March 19, 2018
OVERVIEW

• Introduction: Challenges in collegiate FL programs today

• Literacy as a framing curricular goal: Why do it, what is it, how is multiliteracies pedagogy organized?

• Doing multiliteracies in French 101 – an instructional example

• Conclusions
The Opinion Pages
ROOM for DEBATE

SHOULD FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES BE MANDATORY IN COLLEGE?

Admissions Insider: Is Computer Science a Foreign Language?
By Scott Jaschik // November 27, 2017

Foreign Language Enrollments Drop Sharply
From 2013 to 2016, enrollments fell 9.2 percent. Declines include Spanish, still the most commonly taught language.
By Scott Jaschik // March 7, 2018
Collegiate FL enrollments (MLA, 2018)

- From Fall 2013 to 2016: -9.2% (-7.3% four-year institutions)

- “[S]econd-largest decline in the history of the census” (p. 2); “a trend rather than a blip” (p. 2), “the beginning of a sustained downward trend” (p. 9)

- French: -11%; Italian: -20%; Spanish: -10%; German -7%

- Decreasing advanced undergraduate enrollments between 2013 & 2016 (French, German, Spanish: 5/1; Italian 10/1)
What do undergraduate students value in the FL curriculum?

- Most important communicative modes among introductory-level FL learners: interpretive (95%), interpersonal (90%), presentational (52%) [vs. expectation of accomplishment: 71%, 80%, 39%] (Magnan, Murphy, Sahakyan, & Kim, 2012)

- Mostly highly valued language & content goal areas among introductory- & advanced-level FL learners: interpersonal communication 4.30 / 5.00; grammar 4.28; discourse competence 4.23; cultural practices 4.07 (Mills & Moulton, 2017)

- Most important curricular components among jr. and sr. Spanish majors: advanced conversation, grammar, & composition (Hertel & Dings, 2017)
“Departments find it increasingly difficult to inspire beginning language learners to continue their studies in the upper-level curriculum and crown their efforts with a baccalaureate in a foreign language … departments should establish and sustain integrated undergraduate curricula … collectively developing and implementing innovative undergraduate curricula will not only increase the number of undergraduate students but also improve the academic quality of the entire department.”

(Urlaub, 2014, pp. 123, 130)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Bifurcated FL Programs (adapted from Kern, 2000 and Maxim, 2006)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introductory and Intermediate Language Courses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of functional abilities to communicate everyday needs, thoughts</td>
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<td>Focus on language forms and conventions</td>
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<td>Expression of personal opinions and familiar ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading and writing as support skills for practice of language forms</td>
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<td>Classroom organized around language</td>
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<td>Functional texts (ads, weather reports, menus, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative, supportive, small-group environment</td>
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Paesani, Allen, & Dupuy (2016, p. 2)
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:
COLLEGIATE ELEMENTARY FRENCH

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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“[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.” (Schulz, 2006, p. 254)
“With the appearance of CLT in the 1970s the ground was set for an even greater separation between instruction at lower and upper ends of the curriculum … the adoption of CLT in the lower levels of the curriculum resulted in an unbalanced focus on oral communication … that undermined the role of reading and writing and, more generally, of literacy practices in the lower levels of the curriculum” (Kumagai & López-Sánchez, 2016, pp. 1-2)
“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)
3 DIMENSIONS OF LITERACY (KERN, 2000)

- LINGUISTIC
- COGNITIVE
- SOCIOCULTURAL
WHY ‘MULTI’ LITERACIES?

“The term ‘Multiliteracies’ refers to two major aspects of meaning-making today. The first is *social diversity*, or the variability of conventions of meaning in different cultural, social or domain-specific situations ... Communication increasingly requires that learners are able to figure out differences in patterns of meaning from one context to another and communicate across these differences as their lives require ... The second aspect is *multimodality* ... Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal—in which written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural and other patterns of meaning ... we need to supplement traditional reading and writing skills with multimodal communication.”

(Kalantzis, M., Cope, B., Chan, E., & Dalley-Trim, 2016, pp. 1-2)
Engaging in meaning design in the FL:

• Acquiring new FL Available Designs, or meaning-making resources both linguistic and schematic, through participation in literacy events (New London Group, 1996)

• Gaining understanding of when Available Designs from the L1 and culture are relevant to FL meaning making and when they are not

• Engaging in perspective-taking, by shifting their point of view and gaining awareness of the existence of different meaning-making resources (Kearney, 2012)
ORGANIZING LITERACY-BASED INSTRUCTION

- provide a means for instructors to guide learners through the multi-dimensional process of meaning design
- facilitate learners’ access to the language, conventions, cultural content & other resources in texts
- engage learners in the processes of interpretation, collaboration, problem solving and reflection

Kalantzis et. al. (2016), New London Group (1996)
DESIGNING A MULTILITERACIES-FOCUSED ELEMENTARY FRENCH COURSE

- Revising course goals, objectives, & assessment tools
- Selecting a new textbook & reducing coverage
- Designing chapter- & lesson-level objectives
- Choosing texts & developing instructional sequences for culture activities, genre-based projects, and written exams
- Providing professional development opportunities, mechanisms for lesson sharing & face time for course teams
- Reflecting on Head TA, TA, & student feedback
- Collecting evidence of student learning & perceptions of multiliteracies pedagogy & TA experiences & perceptions carrying out this pedagogy
| Days 1-3   | “Pour commencer”       | Situated practice & overt instruction, textbook / online workbook |
|           |                        | Emphasis on learning to use new Available Designs                |
| Days 4-6  | “Pour aller plus loin” | Situated practice & overt instruction, textbook / online workbook |
|           |                        | Emphasis on learning to use new Available Designs                |
| Days 7-8  | “À la découverte” &    | Situated practice & critical framing                              |
|           | Culture Activity       | Emphasis on exploring sociocultural dimension of literacy         |
| Days 9-10 | Genre-based oral       | Situated practice, overt instruction, transformed practice        |
|           | or writing project     | Emphasis on cognitive dimension of literacy, creation of new texts, reflection on performance |
INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE: 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 (infographics, print ads, video)
2. Gender & language (Qualtrics survey, web documentary, infographic)
3. Generation Y in Europe / US (Qualtrics survey, Génération Quoi website, video)
4. Travel blog writing (French-speaking Canada, website entries)
5. Expatriation (France to Canada, article, infographics, news report)
PARTS III & IV – CULTURE ACTIVITY 1
I do not agree that France is the center of the French speaking world—or, well, at least it isn’t anymore. At one time, certainly, but in the process of globalization and colonialization, French language and culture both have become so widespread to the point that there are only around 1/3 of all French speakers living in France. Also, it is silly to say that because French also is present on 5 continents! Something that further convinced me outside of those statistics was the video we watched in class where people of all ethnicities aged, and backgrounds spoke French—and certainly not all of them lived there! I believe this was the message that this activity set out to prove to us new French students. This activity personally reinforced my prior understanding of French because I have family from Africa who speak French primarily and I knew that France has one of the most rich and vast historical stories from previous history classes I’ve taken, along with my own personal research.

This information that was presented to us in cultural activity I definitely complimented what I have learned already in this class as well as what tour guides told me while I traveled to France this summer. I’m excited to learn more surprising things about French culture as the semester goes on.
CULTURE ACTIVITIES: LEARNER DATA

Rank the relative importance of the following components of FRE 101 for you (Likert-type scale, 5 levels, Not At All Important to Very Important). Summary below includes rankings of Important and Very Important only. N=33 FRE 101 learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Semester’s start</th>
<th>Semester’s end</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being able to speak French</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to read French</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of audio &amp; video texts</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>+3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being able to write in French</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about cultures of French-speaking world</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>+24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning vocabulary &amp; grammar</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“It was something I didn’t realize we would be doing in French 101. I came in thinking we would just be doing the typical learn the grammar/language of French, but now that it is the end of the semester, the cultural activities were what I enjoyed most and I feel like they 1. are relevant and 2. made the most impact on my learning and my worldview.”
CONCLUSIONS

• Text-based instruction and learner engagement in literacy events from the first stages of FL study represent a more appropriate pathway to later literary-cultural study than CLT-based courses.

• Literacy can be a viable framework for undergraduate FL curricula; in introductory levels, it requires rethinking learning outcomes, assessment, the textbook’s role, and textual content.

• Instructor buy in and collaboration are essential for this approach’s viability: there must be conditions conducive to shared responsibility, ongoing professional development, and a feedback loop from teachers.

• More research is needed on instructor perspectives and experiences, learner perspectives, & learning outcomes related to literacy-based instruction undergraduate FL courses.
THANK YOU

Question? Comments?

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