



AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN
LANGUAGES

NEWSLETTER
from the
DISTANCE LEARNING (DL)
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG)

Fall 2020

Edition Editors: Christopher Hromalik, Julie Damron, Angela Berger, & Victoria Russell

Your DL SIG Officers' Contact Information

Christopher Hromalik, Chair
Onondaga Community College
hromalic@sunyocc.edu
Telephone: (315) 498-2305

Victoria Russell, Past Chair
Valdosta State University
varussell@valdosta.edu
Telephone: 229-333-7357

Julie Damron, Vice Chair
Brigham Young University
Julie_Damron@byu.edu
Telephone: 801-422-7286

Angela Berger, Secretary
PA Distance Learning Charter School
angela.berger@padistance.org
Telephone: 1-888-997-3352, ext. 119

Jennifer Dobberfuhl-Quinlan, Online
Mentoring Program Liaison
Brigham Young University
QuinlanJK@mtc.byu.edu
Telephone: 801-422-6954

In This Issue:

<i>Your DL SIG Officers' Contact Information</i> _____	1
<i>Message from the Chair</i> _____	3
Election Results _____	3
ACTFL DL SIG Conference Sessions _____	4
DL SIG-Sponsored Session _____	4
Other Sessions related to Online Language Education _____	5
Thank you _____	6
<i>Message from the Vice Chair</i> _____	7
<i>Member Spotlight: Victoria Russell and Kathryn Murphy-Judy</i> _____	7
Kathryn Murphy-Judy _____	8
Victoria Russell _____	9
<i>Games in The Remote Language Classroom: Are We Doing It Right?</i> _____	12
<i>Send us Your News</i> _____	16

Message from the Chair



Christopher Hromalik

Greetings from the DL SIG! I hope 2020 is winding down well for each of you!

Many exciting things have taken place in the ACTFL DL SIG over the last few months. DL SIG Members have elected new officers and many of us took part in Virtual ACTFL.

In this newsletter, we also spotlight two prominent DL SIG members, Drs. Kathryn Murphy-Judy and Victoria Russell. In addition, Sarab Al Ani shares eight questions to ask yourself when using games with your language students learning at a distance. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter as much as we have enjoyed compiling it for you.

Election Results

We have two election results to share with you. First, I am pleased to announce that Dr. Kathryn Murphy-Judy was elected as Chair of the ACTFL DL SIG. Dr. Murphy-Judy is an Associate Professor of French at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She is also the Director of the Liberal Studies for Early and Elementary Education at VCU and the Coordinator of Languages in the VCU School of World Studies. Dr. Murphy-Judy served as Vice Chair of the DL SIG through 2018 and has continued to be actively involved in our SIG. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Murphy-Judy on being elected the ACTFL DL SIG Chair.

Please also join me in congratulating Dr. Aria Cabot. Dr. Cabot has been elected to the position of ACTFL DL SIG Secretary and she will serve a two-year term, starting in January 2021. Dr. Cabot has been an active member of the ACTFL DL SIG for many years. She presented at the DL SIG Business Meeting in 2019 and she has served as a reviewer for DL SIG proposals for the ACTFL Annual Convention and World Languages Expo. Please be sure to congratulate Dr. Cabot on being successfully elected to the position of ACTFL DL SIG Secretary.

We are sad to say good-bye to two of our current officers who have done an amazing job in their roles. Angela Berger has served as DL SIG Secretary for two years. Ms. Berger has been highly organized and was always willing to help with any task, including reviewing proposals, taking pictures, and offering feedback and support. She also assisted in multiple tasks every year, including assisting with the selection of DL SIG-sponsored sessions at ACTFL and preparing the menu for our DL SIG Business Meetings. Thank you, Angela, for your dedication to the DL SIG for the last two years.

Dr. Victoria Russell will also be stepping down as Past Chair this year. Dr. Russell has served the DL SIG for many years. She has served in multiple officer roles within the DL SIG since 2013, including Vice Chair, Chair, and Past Chair. Dr. Russell worked tirelessly to build the Distance Learning Mentoring Program from scratch and turn it into a program that is now offered to all of ACTFL's 12,500 members. In addition, she instituted the ACTFL DL SIG / CALICO Online

Teaching Awards and began the tradition of the Member Spotlight in our newsletters. Dr. Russell was successfully elected President-Elect of ACTFL and will transition into this new and exciting role in the New Year. I am truly honored to have had the opportunity to work with Dr. Russell for the last four years and I look forward to continuing to work with her in the future. Thank you, Victoria, for all you have done to make the DL SIG what it is today.

Dr. Julie Damron will continue to serve as Vice Chair for one more year before moving into the Chair position. I will continue on as DL SIG Past Chair for one more year as well. Please contact us if you have suggestions or questions.

Starting next year, there will be changes to the SIG election process. Under the new process, the Vice Chair position will be for a one-year period. The Vice Chair will automatically roll into the position of Chair the following year before moving into the Past Chair position the year after. This will be a three-year term, with one year in each position. Secretary will continue to be a two-year term, renewable for two terms.

ACTFL DL SIG Conference Sessions

ACTFL 2020 was held at a distance this year. I wish I could have taken a walk on the Riverwalk like I did in 2014, but it was great to chat live with presenters during Simulive sessions. It is also good to know I can still access on-demand presentations until December 31st.

If you have not taken advantage of the on-demand features of Virtual ACTFL 2020, here are a few sessions that might be of interest to you. I encourage you to reach out to the presenters and let them know you viewed their presentation. You may also find it beneficial to start an email conversation with them about their work.

I apologize if I missed any DL SIG-member sessions. However, if I did, please feel free to let me know and I'll update this newsletter before my time as DL SIG Chair is up on December 31st.

DL SIG-Sponsored Session

[What The Research Is Telling Us About Online World Language Education](#)

Fri, 11/20: 4:25 PM - 5:10 PM

Session – Simulive

This presentation shows online language educators how to connect theory, research, and practice. Topics include: the state of the field, teacher and student satisfaction, optimal class size, learner anxiety, facilitating the 3 presences, fostering connectedness, effective assessment, and best/core practices. Presenters show how to apply research.

Session Presenter: *Kathryn Murphy-Judy*, Virginia Commonwealth University

Co-Presenter: *Victoria Russell*, Valdosta State University

Other Sessions related to Online Language Education

[An Online Mentoring Program For Language Educators: Information And Updates](#)

Electronic Poster – On Demand

Updates on a national online language mentoring program will be shared. The program is sponsored by ACTFL and designed in collaboration with the National Foreign Language Resource Center. It is open to all ACTFL members. Attendees will learn about the program and its requirements, view example lessons, and learn how to apply as a mentor or mentee.

Electronic Poster Presenter: *Victoria Russell*, Valdosta State University

Co-Presenter(s): *Christopher Hromalik*, Onondaga Community College, *Kathryn Murphy-Judy*, Virginia Commonwealth University, *Ruslan Suvorov*, University of Hawaii at Manoa

[Self-Regulated Language Learning: A Model For Community College Students](#)

Research-Oriented Paper – On Demand

This study explored self-regulated learning (SRL) in the language classroom. Using data from novice-level community college language learners, a model was tested using Structural Equation Modeling. Most paths were significant; however, unlike prior studies with different populations, the paths from SRL to L2 learning outcomes were not significant.

Researcher: *Christopher Hromalik*, Onondaga Community College

Co-Presenter: *Tiffany Koszalka*, Syracuse University

[Free Tech Tools To Create Dynamic Hyperdocs and Microlessons](#)

Electronic Poster – On Demand

Learn how integrate free tech tools to create microlessons that incorporate interactive online language learning activities, virtual tours, guided tutorials and more. These lessons are perfect for outside of class activities or 1:1 learning. Tools include: Wizer.me, EdPuzzle, Nearpod, Vocaroo, Flippity and Flipgrid

Electronic Poster Presenter: *Angela Berger*, Pennsylvania Distance Learning Cyber Charter School

[Language And Cultural Immersion On Short-Term Faculty-Led Study Abroad](#)

Session – Simulive

Means for increasing language proficiency and global and cultural awareness in short-term study abroad experiences. This presentation will introduce methods for increasing language and cultural learning through study abroad experiences of 8 days to 3 weeks, and engage the audience with means for effectively measuring the outcomes of such programs.

Session Presenter: *Christine Nemcik*, Indiana University East

Co-Presenter(s): *Felix Burgos*, Indiana University East, *Dr Dianne Moneyppenny*, Indiana University East

[The Can-Do Statements, Core Practices Tools and Intercultural Teaching](#)

Session – On Demand

This session focuses on supporting teachers in developing their interculturally-oriented classroom practice. Framed by the Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication and notions of core instructional practices, we share and then engage the audience in analysis of a post-secondary, Mandarin class curricular unit as illustrations of both.

Session Presenter: *Ling Zhai*, SUNY at Buffalo

Co-Presenter(s): *Liling Huang*, Boston University, *Erin Kearney*, University at Buffalo

[Let's Communicate! Creating a Communicative Online Foreign Language Class](#)

Session – On Demand

Online foreign language classes are growing in higher education, but some critics say that elementary and intermediate classes should not be taught in an online format since they are not "communicative" enough. Learn how to incorporate communicative activities in online classes. All activities use existing LMS elements or free online components.

Session Presenter: *Erika Stevens*, Walters State Community College

Thank you

I would like to end this Message from the Chair by saying thank you to each of you for your support. I had been a DL SIG member for many years, but it was not until 2014, thanks to the encouragement of Kathryn Murphy-Judy, that I attended my first DL SIG Business Meeting. At that meeting, both Kathryn Murphy-Judy and Victoria Russell encouraged me to become more involved in the DL SIG. They are both featured in the Member Spotlight of this newsletter and I hope their Member Spotlight profile will encourage you, too, to take on a leadership role in the DL SIG.

You can serve ACTFL and the ACTFL DL SIG in many ways – no matter where you are in your career. In 2014, I was both a student (first semester Ph.D. student) and an instructor (I was in my tenth year as a full-time faculty member at Onondaga Community College). Whether you are a student, a new teacher, or an experienced educator, I encourage you to be more involved in the work of the DL SIG. You can review proposals, write an article, post to the community, run for an officer position – any of these experiences can change your life.

I would like to thank all members of the DL SIG for your support while I served as both Secretary and Chair. The last year has been especially challenging for all of us and I thank each of you for all you have taught me. I have grown on both a personal and a professional level, thanks to the DL SIG. It has been an honor to serve as DL SIG Chair for the last two years and I look forward to serving as Past Chair next year.

Message from the Vice Chair



Julie Damron

Hello ACTFL Distance Learning SIG Members. I was looking forward to meeting you or reuniting with you this November at the ACTFL convention. But, as we know, this year's conference was virtual. Here is some helpful post-convention information to enhance your conference experience as you continue to virtually mingle with other DL SIG members.

1. All the sessions are available to view on-demand through the end of the year. Yay!! You can still make a plan of what to attend and view them before the new year.
2. The convention had multiple 'live' sessions a day where the session presenters were watching their recording along with attendees, and answering questions live. All of these sessions were recorded and are available on demand.
3. You can still shop for your favorite books or materials because there are over 100+ exhibitors to take your orders, virtually!
4. There are over 300 session recordings. You can view the [full program online](https://www.actfl.org/convention-and-expo/online-convention-program) (<https://www.actfl.org/convention-and-expo/online-convention-program>). And, did you know that anyone (not just registrants) can go in and search by topic or keyword to see what is available that could be of interest to them?

I hope you had a great 2020 ACTFL convention. Let's meet in person in 2021!

Member Spotlight: Victoria Russell and Kathryn Murphy-Judy

Drs. Victoria Russell and Kathryn Murphy-Judy have been actively involved in the ACTFL Distance Learning SIG for many years.

In this newsletter, we highlight their recent accomplishments, which includes the publication of a new book, [Teaching Language Online: A Guide for Designing, Developing, and Delivering Online, Blended, and Flipped Language Courses](#). In addition to this recent and timely publication, Dr. Russell was elected to the role of President-Elect of ACTFL and Dr. Murphy-Judy was elected Chair of the DL SIG.

Kathryn Murphy-Judy



Kathryn Murphy-Judy

Q: What is your role at Virginia Commonwealth University?

I've had several roles at VCU since I first arrived in 1994. Originally, I was hired to create an intensive French program, infusing it with technology-enhanced language learning. VCU was an early adopter of web-based teaching and learning, thanks to Dr. Robert Godwin-Jones. By the late 1990s, I had created many websites for teaching and learning French, as well as for faculty professional development in web-based language pedagogy. Not long after, the VCU School of Education asked me to take over the Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages course for its Master in Teaching program. In 2007 I became Director of Liberal Studies for Early & Elementary Education (LSEE) after leading a college's faculty team in the co-creation of a new, combined, Early & Elementary Education Bachelors / Master's degree program. I stepped down as the LSEE Director to build a two-year online French program for the

first and second year curricula. Most recently, I've been working on a grant funded project to create student-created open educational resource (OER) e-textbooks and serving as the Coordinator of Languages for French in the VCU School of World Studies.

Q: You recently co-authored a book with Victoria Russell. Could you please tell us about your experience writing this book and what you learned along the way?

I thoroughly enjoy and benefit from collaboration with colleagues. Working with Victoria has been especially rewarding. We brought together diverse backgrounds and competencies to craft a thorough guide to the design, development, teaching and evaluation of online language teaching. Victoria had a sabbatical semester in the spring of 2019 and I was granted research leave for that fall. That allowed us to move the project forward in important ways. We met as often as we could F2F at national conferences, like ACTFL and CALICO, to share chapters and work toward achieving a single voice. Of course, we called and emailed constantly. I already respected Victoria and her work before we began this project (we had served together in the leadership of the DL SIG and had co-created its mentoring program with the SIG and the NFLRC); my respect grew by leaps and bounds as she proved a generous and rigorous collaborator. I suffer from Multiple Sclerosis, which for me means lapses in short term memory. Victoria demonstrated phenomenal patience with my brain issues, as well as insisting that I pay attention to my fatigue levels.

Q: What is something you learned about online language teaching while conducting research for your book that you feel could be helpful to DL SIG members?

Due to what is happening in post-secondary education right now, as enrollments are plummeting and most of us continue to teach either online or remotely, I think the research on classroom size needs to be pointed out to language program chairs as they react to upper administration demands

for larger class sizes regardless of discipline. Language faculty and their leaders have to repeat the MLA, ACTFL and other guidelines regarding language class size limits—fifteen per ACTFL (2010)—all the while calculating the online factor, which may well call for even smaller numbers. If nothing else, we may be called upon to figure out session dynamics and logistics that can reduce synchronous session attendance/participation to a healthy level, for example by creating two groups, each one meeting synchronously with the instructor while the other group works on asynchronous lessons. Bottom line, however, is that communicative language teaching and learning, regardless of the mode of delivery, trumps grammar/translation, rote memorization, and fill in the blank approaches. Active communication does not happen in large lectures.

Q: In addition to your work as a pioneer of distance language education, you have also dedicated much of your career to the professional development and mentorship of others in the field. What advice would you offer to junior faculty who are at the start of their careers in distance language education?

Junior faculty have a significant leg up on some of us old-timers! Many of the technologies and affordances are commonplace for post-boomer generations. Still, all of us have to stay ‘fresh’. We need to keep pace with the new trends and where our learners are excited about communicating and learning. I work with a team of undergraduates on co-creating OER lessons. They have relevant opinions on what works and doesn’t work with their peers. Moreover, they have the time and the familiarity with ever-evolving technologies, medias, and practices. They are our best allies not only for the modes of communication but also for the content that will engage their fellow students and importantly help us avoid potentially offensive or micro-aggressive words and actions. Positioning ourselves behind the desk (or Zoom camera) in a traditional controlling role is no longer suitable for twenty-first century teaching and learning.

Still, to my junior colleagues, I also advise patience. There can still be, although far less so nowadays, push back from the old-guard. Please have patience with those of my generation who are deathly afraid of all the new-fangled machines and the social changes (but don’t tolerate exclusive or discriminatory actions). Focus on moving your work and practices forward. Do action research (if you don’t have a full-fledged research project) that will let you demonstrate how your work and changes to curricula and delivery are improving student learning outcomes. In the end, it is student learning that is important.

Victoria Russell

Q: What is your role at Valdosta State University (VSU) and the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA)?

At VSU, I serve as Coordinator of Online Programs. We have fully online Bachelor’s degree programs in Spanish and French, online certificates in TESOL and Spanish for Professionals, and fully online M.A.T.s in Foreign Language Education (Spanish and French) and in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). In Georgia, ESOL is now an initial certification area for K-12 public schools.

I came to VSU in 2010 to help get their online programs off the ground. It was quite a challenge because at first, there was some resistance among the faculty to online teaching. However, when enrollments began to sharply decline in 2013 and 2014 and faculty lines were lost in 2015, everyone quickly came around! As a team, we built the eLanguages collaborative, offering Spanish and French undergraduate coursework to partner institutions in the University System of Georgia. We were able to boost our credit hour production this way. However, our largest boost to enrollments came when we initiated the online M.A.T. programs. Georgia certification is accepted in all of the surrounding states, so not only do we enroll students from across our state, but we are also able to accept students from Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee. Most of our teacher candidates are teaching on temporary certificates and they are interested in obtaining a Master's degree while seeking state certification in Spanish, French, or ESOL.



Victoria Russell

My main roles at VSU are to support faculty in their online teaching, to teach coursework for our online M.A.T. programs, and to teach Spanish online. In addition, I direct the VSU-sponsored summer study abroad program in Cádiz, Spain. Therefore, I wear many hats and there is never a dull moment! I cannot stress how important teamwork is when delivering courses and programs online. As a faculty, we constantly teach each other new technology tools and applications. We also brainstorm to solve problems related to our online course delivery and we are also always trying to learn and grow in our understanding of online language pedagogy.

At USAFA, I have been assisting with the Department of Foreign Language and International Program's transition from in-person to online teaching. I spend a lot of time on development (courses, materials, and assessments) and I have also provided numerous training workshops for faculty on online language education. Finally, I teach their first-year Spanish courses online with daily, synchronous delivery. I was very excited to be able to implement online integrated performance assessments during the fall semester. That is something that I plan to bring back to my home campus next year.

Q: You recently co-authored a book with Kathryn Murphy-Judy. Could you please tell us more about this book?

On September 4, our book, *Teaching Language Online: A Guide for Designing, Developing, and Delivering Online, Blended, and Flipped Language Courses*, was published by Routledge. The book helps readers learn how to build effective online language courses that adhere to the communicative language teaching approach. "Grounded in the principles of instructional design and communicative language teaching, this book serves as a compendium of best practices, research, and strategies for creating learner-centered online language instruction that builds students' proficiency within meaningful cultural contexts" (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). We incorporated national and international standards and proficiency guidelines for the instruction of

world languages and English as a second or foreign language; therefore, it should have a wide appeal to language educators who are in need of professional development in online language pedagogy—a critical topic during the current global pandemic that has propelled an exponential growth in online teaching and learning worldwide. More about the book is available here:

<https://www.routledge.com/Teaching-Language-Online-A-Guide-for-Designing-Developing-and-Delivering/Russell-Murphy-Judy/p/book/9781138387003>

Our combined online teaching experience exceeds 50 years! Kathryn and I have been designing, developing and delivering quality online language instruction for a long time and we wanted to share with others what works. While we often approached topics differently—Kathryn has a background in French literature (she has a very French way of thinking and writing, which I love) and my field is second language acquisition and instructional technology—we were always on the same page about the fact that online language learning can be as, if not more, effective than traditional instruction, provided that language educators have sufficient knowledge of sound instructional design principles, online language pedagogy, the tenets of communicative language teaching, and a good understanding of professional standards and proficiency guidelines. In the book, we also provide information on where and how instructors can obtain professional development in online language pedagogy. We brought all of our combined knowledge and experience together with this book and we hope that it helps many others enact effective and engaging online language instruction.

Q: What is something you learned about online language teaching while conducting research for your book that you feel could be helpful to DL SIG members?

I think I learned the most by reading and editing the chapters that were written by my co-author (Chapters 1 and 2). I was constantly amazed by her vast knowledge base in instructional design and development. Kathryn really helps readers design and develop a course from scratch. She also provided very helpful guiding questions (on analysis) that everyone should think about prior to creating an online course or program.

I also read a lot about integrated performance assessments (IPAs) while I was writing Chapter 5; and after doing so, I began to implement them into my own online Spanish courses. I really think that IPAs are a better type of assessment for language courses because they are communicative and they are graded holistically. I use the ACTFL Performance Descriptors to create my grading rubric criteria so I know that my expectations are on point for students' proficiency level. Also, it is really exciting to watch students' interpersonal and presentational videos. I learn a lot about their strengths and weaknesses through their IPA videos and I am able to provide more explicit feedback to help them improve in their speaking skills through the IPA assessments.

Q: As Chair of the DL SIG, you proposed the Distance Learning Mentoring Program and spent countless hours leading the effort to create this program. You have also served as a Distance Learning mentor. What advice would you give to new online language teachers?

Ask for help! The DL SIG community is extremely supportive. Those of us who teach online know the struggles and pitfalls and we are always ready and willing to help others. Any questions that you have can be posted to the online DL SIG community. I would also suggest asking for materials

and resources from colleagues because it is very time-consuming and difficult to create everything from scratch. Moreover, it is essential to have the support of your administration and colleagues in order to design a successful online program. A good online program has courses that are well sequenced and articulated and it takes a team effort to do that. Finally, join the ACTFL Online Mentoring program as a mentee!

Games in The Remote Language Classroom: Are We Doing It Right?

Sarab Al Ani is a senior lecturer II in Arabic who has been teaching at Yale University for ten years. Her current research interests focus on using technology for language teaching, overcoming challenges that face students of Arabic in the U.S., the means to achieve desired language skills with minimum of difficulty, and optimum methods of testing.

In this article, she shares eight questions to ask yourself as you consider using games at a distance with your online students. Read on and see what score you earn.



Sarab Al Ani

Many webinars and resources since March 2020 have been devoted to considering the topic of learners' engagement in the language classroom during remote learning. One strategy of engaging learners as they learn a foreign language is using games. As a matter of fact, it is a strategy that is used by many language educators, even before all instruction moved online. Ask any ten random language educators teaching ten different languages about the many benefits of using games in the language classroom and they will surprise you with the amount of knowledge they have on the subject. They will have no problem asserting that using games to teach language helps create context for meaningful communication, provides comprehensible input, and encourages collaboration. They will tell you that games are learner centered, level flexible, engaging, interesting, exciting, and fun.

Language educators who had not previously taught remotely are, of course, more comfortable using tools and strategies that they were accustomed to and have mastered in the face-to-face classroom. As the transition took place, language educators were doing their absolute best to transform these tools and those strategies optimally, while at the same time putting the learners and their various needs first. Therefore, it is sometimes useful to contemplate the question: am I doing it right? How successful have I been in adapting the tools and strategies that I have been using in my face-to-face classroom as I transformed them to the online domain?

Rankin, Gold & Gooch (2006, p.36) say: "Rather than blindly assuming that the benefits of games will transfer to learning in any domain for students of various backgrounds, both educators and designers of instructional technology must develop appropriate methodology for evaluating games as learning artifacts". Therefore, in this short piece we will try to take a quick look at some research

findings and recommendations in terms of using games in the language classroom and highlight some of the suggestions that studies have offered, hoping that it provides you – the language educator – with new consideration for using games as you teach language remotely, especially when it comes to some aspects that are less familiar.

Let us do so in the form of a game. As you go through the questions below, give yourself a point for each one you got right. At the end we will see how you scored.

1. Have you been explaining the instruction in the students' native language?

The question of using the native language in the language classroom weighs heavily on the mind of language educators. Should I or should I not use the L1 in the classroom? If I use it, how much of it is okay? And when is it okay to use it?

When it comes to using games in the language classroom, research tells us that it is essential to explain the rules and instructions of the game to the learner and make sure that everyone has comprehended them prior to starting the game (Cam & Tran, 2017; Hong, 2002). For this purpose, using learner's native language is functional, beneficial and time saving (Hong, 2002). If you are not comfortable using the L1 to explain the rules and instructions of the games you are using in your classroom, research suggests you demonstrate rather than explain (Hong, 2002). If you have been using the L1 to explain the rules and instructions of the game you are using, then you have been doing it right.

2. Have you been including easy challenges?

The game you are using in your remote language classroom has several questions, riddles or challenges, and as you are creating your game you say to yourself: "I will throw a couple of real



easy ones in there.” Have you done that? If your answer is yes, then you have actually been doing it right.

Research tells us that including easy (or easier) questions in the game is beneficial because these questions provide players with scaffolding and encourages them to engage in the game and interact with one other (Blake, 2011). This scaffolding, research tells us, leads to players engaging in negotiation of meaning with the same success as learners playing the game in a face-to-face setting (Blake, 2011; Yanguags, 2010).

3. Have you been using a game in the first few minutes or last few minutes of your class meeting?

This one is actually a trick question. It does not matter per se whether you have been using a game in the first several minutes or last several minutes of your class meeting time.

However, what matters is that you do not use games in your language classroom with the mere purpose of *filling time*, which might take place during the first part of the class meeting time or the very last. Games in the language classroom must not be thought of as the ultimate go-to activity when we have nothing else (or better) to do (Simpson, 2015). Rather, they need be designed consciously, chosen carefully, and planned purposefully (Simpson, 2015). Moreover, educators need to consider the benefit intended from using a specific game (revision, practice, recall, oral communication) and then pick a time to use it that might be optimal for this benefit (Simpson, 2015).

4. Have you been using games that include players other than the students in your class?

Perhaps you should! This is what researchers who examine the use of telecollaboration stress. “Telecollaboration involves the use of Internet communication tools by internationally-dispersed students of language in institutionalized settings in order to promote the development of (a) foreign language (FL) linguistic competence and (b) intercultural competence” (Belz, 2003, p.68). In addition to the familiar open-ended-question task, partners who are working telecollaboratively can benefit considerably from a variety of games or game-like tasks, such as Jigsaw and spot-the-difference activities, to ensure development in both linguistic and intercultural competence (Blake, 2011).

5. Have you been using the same game(s) repeatedly?

Are you one of the educators who, upon finding a game that works for their students, starts exploiting it intently? You might create several versions of it, or use it to focus on several skills or knowledge areas? If you identify with this group, guess what? You were on to something the whole time.

Among the reason learners hesitate and sometimes fail to participate in a class game is because they are not familiar with its instructions or rules. In this regard, using the same game several times and across a number of skills or knowledge areas provides the learners with the opportunity they need to be familiar with the rules and instructions of the game. The more times the learners encounter the same game, the more confident they become when playing it (Cam & Tran, 2017)

6. Have you been using traditional computer-assisted games?

Tell me that you remember this! It is March 2020, all instruction (or almost all) moves to be done remotely and your email inbox gets flooded with information about this game and that tool. Many, if not all, of these games and tools are new to you. They look cool and you wish you can use all of them, but realize that you realistically cannot. Some of them are pretty complex while others are less so.

Whether or not you have decided to adopt some of these new games, you should know that research actually tells us that language learners in the beginning stages of learning a language “might benefit from a more traditional computer-assisted language learning environment, featuring structured learning modules that explicitly identify learning objectives and supply detailed explanations of the target language” (Rankin, Gold, & Gooch, 2006, p.37).

7. Have you been using computer games with background sound(s) or music?

Some of the computer games that we use in the language classroom nowadays have sounds and music built into them. In these games, as players play the game and progress in it, they hear continuous background music. They might also hear a certain sound upon encountering success or when the game ends. Kahoot and Blooket are examples of these games that include sounds or music and that are quite popular nowadays. Sometimes these sounds are optional, and the educator might be able to pick an option to mute them. So, should we mute or keep these sounds or music?

Research tells us that high volume and timed sound effects (synchronized game sound with visual moment) might promote fear, while acousmatic and untimed sound effects evoke suspense. Medium volume sound effects might help in creating a feeling of anxiety. If you are going to include the sound effects in your game, know that low volume is the best in terms of avoiding fear, anxiety or suspense, since most of the time it gets drowned out by other sounds in the surroundings (Toprac & Abdel-Meguid, 2011).

8. Have you been using games outside class meetings?

The benefits of using games in the language classroom that I mentioned at the very beginning of this article might make many educators strongly inclined to using games during class meeting time. This might be mainly due to the benefits that are related to communication and collaboration. If you have been using games during class time, you were doing it right. However, it might prove useful to learn that using games outside class time as an assignment that learners must complete on their own is also beneficial in lieu of the traditional homework as learners still need an engaging way to recall, practice and master (Wallinger, 2000).

So, how did you score? However high or low you scored, I hope that you have now added more to your knowledge concerning successful use of games in your language classroom.

References

Belz, J. A. (2003). Linguistic perspectives on the development of intercultural competence in telecollaboration. *Language Learning & Technology*, 7(2), 68-117.

- Blake, R. J. (2011). Current trends in online language learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31(1), 19-35.
- Cam, L., & Tran, T. M. T. (2017). An evaluation of using games in teaching English grammar for first year English-majored students at Dong Nai Technology University. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 16(7), 55-71.
- Cam, L., & Tran, T. M. T. (2017). An evaluation of using games in teaching English grammar for first year English-majored students at Dong Nai Technology University. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 16(7), 55-71.
- Hong, L. (2002). Using games in teaching English to young learners. *The Internet TESL Journal* (August, 8), [On-line serial]: Retrieved on 22-February-2008, at URL: <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Lin-UsingGames.html>
- Rankin, Y. A., Gold, R., & Gooch, B. (2006). 3D role-playing games as language learning tools. *Eurographics (Education Papers)*, 25(3), 33-38.
- Simpson, A. J. (2015). *Using games in the language classroom*.
- Toprac, P., & Abdel-Meguid, A. (2011). Causing fear, suspense, and anxiety using sound design in computer games. In *Game sound technology and player interaction: Concepts and developments* (pp. 176-191). IGI Global.
- Wallinger, L. M. (2000). The role of homework in foreign language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 33(5), 483-496.

Send us Your News

We are very happy to serve as a point of dissemination for information from and achievements of our members. Please send us any information you would like to include in the DL SIG newsletter. We welcome information on:

- Awards you have received
- Research projects you are engaged in
- Your publications or talks with a focus on distance learning
- Your innovative use of technology for online teaching
- Conferences you are hosting

If we get your information in time to include it in the next newsletter, we will. Otherwise, we will include it in the subsequent newsletter. So, send us your news! Furthermore, if you would like to spotlight your work in online or distance education in an upcoming issue of the DL SIG newsletter, please [email Chris](mailto:hromalic@sunyocc.edu) at hromalic@sunyocc.edu.