# CLEAR 20 years
## CENTER FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

**FEATURED THEME**
**TECHNOLOGY IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

## Just try this new app: Surviving technology in today's language classroom

by Merih Sumpter, Wesley Curtis, & Dustin De Felice

Why *surviving*? It sounds rather ominous, perhaps calling to mind technology rising up to subdue the humans who created it. Our intent is not to paint an apocalyptic picture for language educators. Quite the contrary, while technologies continue to develop and permeate an ever-increasing area of the human sphere, they also get deprecated, deactivated, and dethroned. Think of all the changes you've seen as an educator in just the last two decades. Change upon change (often, it seems, simply for the sake of change) has found its way into our classrooms through recommendation, institutional promotion, or plain desperation. Do you find it challenging to keep up with the ever-growing — and shrinking — list of technology aids that are supposed to make teaching more effective and learning easier, quicker, and better? Does it ever seem like the technology designed to facilitate your work has turned into just another responsibility or pedagogical innovation with which you must keep up? If so, you're not alone. For adults who have seen the more rudimentary versions of it, technology now seems to equate to life itself. It is almost impossible for those born after the advent of the World Wide Web and iPhone to imagine life without them. As a result, one could say that 'technology is life,' or at least, that technology impacts every life.

In this article, we seek to dispel myths regarding the use of technology in FL/ESL teaching and offer a set of guidelines that can serve as a heuristic for determining how and when to deploy technology without becoming dependent upon it.

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

> **THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY IS BEST DRIVEN BY THE NEEDS OF THE LANGUAGE LEARNER, SUPPORTING THE KINDS OF INTERACTIONS OUR STUDENTS NEED TO BECOME COLLEGE, CAREER, LIFE, AND WORLD-READY.**

**From ACTFL's Statement on the Role of Technology in Language Learning**

## SUGGESTIONS WANTED!

We strive to publish *CLEAR News* articles that represent current topics in foreign language teaching, and we want to hear from you! If you have an idea for an article or would like to see a particular subject addressed, please let us know at clear@msu.edu. We will consider your idea for future issues of the newsletter.

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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers,

As we publish this issue of *CLEAR News* we are looking for signs of spring here on the Michigan State University campus. This is the last issue of our 2014-18 Title VI grant funding cycle, which will end in August 2018. We and our sister Language Resource Centers are waiting for the new grant competition to be announced and we certainly hope that we will cross paths with you again in the future.

This spring's main article was co-authored by Merih Sumpter, Wesley Curtis, and MSU's own Dustin De Felice. They offer helpful guidelines for the use of technology in the world language classroom, a complex topic that language educators must grapple with every day in their classrooms and lesson planning. We hope you find the article and its recommended technologies useful as you make decisions about how best to incorporate today's myriad options into your classes.

Our summer workshops for 2018 will be offered in two blocks, giving you flexibility to choose which dates work best for your schedule. Four workshops will take place in late June: a two-day expansion of last summer's popular course on ACTFL's World Language Core Practices, then three one-day workshops on the topics of differentiated instruction, teaching reading and writing through genres, and proficiency-oriented games. At the end of July and beginning of August, we will offer an encore of the Core Practices workshop and another two-day workshop on maximizing target language use in the classroom.

CLEAR will be exhibiting at the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Milwaukee in March, and hosting Michigan's World Languages Day conference in April. For those of you not on conference rounds this spring, you can of course always find us at http://clear.msu.edu.

We hope to see you soon, whether at a conference, a workshop, or on social media, and wish you a fruitful spring!

Joy Campbell
*Executive Associate Director*

## TECHNOLOGY MYTHS AND ISSUES UNDERLYING CURRENT TECHNOLOGY USAGE

What are we facing? In Blake's (2008) *Brave new digital classroom*, he summed up the four biggest myths we face in language teaching (see table).

| Blake's Four Myths |
| --- |
| 1.  Technology is monolithic |
| 2. Technology constitutes a methodology |
| 3. Today's technology is all we need to know |
| 4. Technology will replace teachers |

A decade later, all four of these myths persist in various forms. For example, many of us often refer to technology as if it were a monolithic entity with no distinction across devices, uses, or applications. This particular myth is a tricky one, and we found ourselves guilty of perpetuating it within this article. Of course, one can very quickly see the variety of technologies present in language classrooms, as well as in daily life. Take the example of a smartphone app used for tuning a guitar. While this application runs on the same device used to browse the CLEAR website, much of the underlying hardware and software required for tuning the guitar is distinct from that required for Web navigating. Thus, we must be careful to avoid falling into the trap of thinking that there's nothing "my phone" can't do. While a smartphone may be equipped to facilitate L2 interactions, it would not, for that reason, be accurate to state that "technology" is all one needs to become functionally proficient in another language.

Similar to this monolithic myth, many will equate classroom integration of technology to a methodology unto itself. While the use of technology can serve many functions within a learning experience, the replacement of an underlying methodology for teaching is not one of them. In addition to technological variety, educators face the tension of needing to know how to use a particular app or device and/or decisions on the adoption or adaptation of newer ones. In a sense, what an educator knows today is often not enough to carry forward as devices and applications change.

In some ways, almost all of Blake's myths summarized above have softened or eased a bit in the last decade with the exception of his last one: technology will replace teachers. This particular notion, it seems, has not only strengthened, but the idea that an entire language can be learned through an app alone has succeeded in magnifying this myth. Before exploring our guidelines for technology integration, we would like explicitly state that it is our position that technology will not replace you, but it will influence the way in which you interact with your learners, your classroom, and the community at large. In the same way that calculators have not replaced math teachers, language educators will continue to have their place in society.

## FIVE GUIDELINES TO MAINTAIN YOUR SANITY WITH TECHNOLOGY USAGE

| Five Guidlines |
| --- |
| 1.  Avoid technology unless . . . |
| 2. Keep your usage streamlined, small and simple |
| 3. Use it much more than once |
| 4. Make sure it is accessible and user-friendly |
| 5. When all else fails, go back to your objectives |

Open any app store, even the most bare-bones one you can think of, and you will likely be amazed at the dizzying array of tasks that apps have been designed to carry out. There are apps for tracking the ratio of your vehicle's air-fuel mixture, apps for beautifying your photos, and apps for automating your kids' letters to Santa Claus. With so many options, is it any wonder that tech tools can wreak havoc on your sanity and peace of mind? Nowhere is this more applicable than in the sphere of language education. In order to survive, and even thrive, in this environment, we propose the following five guidelines.

### 1ST GUIDELINE:
### Avoid technology unless . . .

Unless it promotes interaction or facilitates tasks leading to language acquisition, technology use is not necessary for a successful language learning experience. This position is supported by the TESOL Technology Standards Framework, the TESOL Technology Standard Book, and is well articulated in ACTFL's Statement on the Role of Technology. We believe, ultimately, that technology should be used only when warranted and it is only warranted when it facilitates the achievement of specific learning outcomes. That is to say that it *can* be used if it facilitates objectives, it *need not* be used unless it is the exclusive vehicle through which objectives can be achieved, and it *must not* be used if it impedes the attainment of objectives. Speaking proficiency is one area of language learning that can be difficult to facilitate in large classes. An example of a technology that can be used to facilitate acquisition and ensure every learner has a chance to fulfill the learning objectives of such classes is the audio dropbox. We recommend tools like the audio recorder in H5P (https://h5p.org/content-types-and-applications), or your students can use their preferred devices and send the completed files to you.
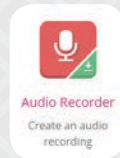
### 2ND GUIDELINE:
### Keep your usage streamlined, small and simple . . .

In order to use any type of technology in the classroom, an educator must be cognizant of a number of factors, including availability of electricity, access to a network, human error (e.g., forgetting a password), and more. As such, we recommend avoiding the tendency for technology projects to have too many steps or too many aspects for students to manage. In a nod toward our fifth guideline, we recommend focusing on the instructional objective as well as the end product. In planning for tech use, ensure the steps are streamlined, the task is small, and the procedures and tools are simple. Following this guideline also aids in ensuring there is a back-up plan for when technology fails—and it

inevitably will—since your planning included streamlined, small, and simple uses. One way we recommend implementing this guideline is to pick a particular file type (e.g., a .pptx, .pdf, etc.) and allow your learners to use the devices/apps they are familiar with. In fact, many apps allow for multiple export options (e.g., G-Suite Tools, MS Office, etc.), which keeps the focus on a simple file output rather than on the particular app(s) used to create it.
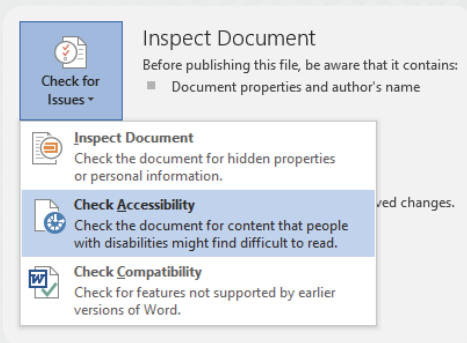
### 3RD GUIDELINE:
### Use it much more than once

With the inherent challenges in leveraging a particular app or device, we recommend planning to use it much more than once. There are a number of benefits to using an app or device, which include developing a sense of familiarity, learning to take full advantage of it, and creating a space to explore language and culture instead of focusing time, effort and energy on the technology itself. By choosing judiciously, implementing many entry points for using the same tool and pushing yourself and learners to explore it, that same tool can serve many functions within the language learning journey. For this guideline, we recommend developing routines that rely on a particular app and sticking to that routine throughout the year. With the variety of game-based learning platforms (e.g., Kahoot, Quizziz, etc.) available, we recommend selecting one and using it regularly.

### 4TH GUIDELINE:
### Make sure it is accessible and user-friendly

Accessibility and user-friendliness are two considerations that interact together in any app or device. In the planning process, an educator should question whether it will work across platforms, devices, and locations. That same instructor should look for accessibility options and/or features that are available as standard options. Additionally, given the number of passwords we must remember, adding yet another required

registration or password may not be welcome for the student or the teacher. As with any classroom tool, the issue of cost may limit availability, while a steep learning curve (for either the educator or the learner) may also play a role in the decision-making process. One last consideration is making use of the apps, devices, or tools already available to learners through institutional support. By reviewing all of these considerations, we can make our materials and content accessible to everyone. We can also engage our learners in experimenting with new things. One good way to start working with this guideline is to run the accessibility



diagnostics built into many apps. For example, MS Word or Adobe Acrobat include such features that are a great first step in ensuring material you create or use will be accessible to many learners.

## 5TH GUIDELINE:
## When all else fails, go back to your objectives

In any educational endeavor, educators must ask what it is they really want, which is usually expressed in terms of the instructional objectives for the lesson, activity, or class. While it might seem logical to have listed this particular guideline as our first one, we did not do so for a reason: we might never try out a new app, device or some other kind of technology if we only had instructional objectives in mind. Educators need motivation to explore and experiment, and sometimes the appeal of a new app, device, or tool is too overwhelming to pass up. In that case, we encourage exploration even though it may not follow the earlier guidelines.

We believe it is also important to note two things: First, when possible, evidence/research should inform beliefs and, therefore, decisions related to technological integration into the curriculum. If we hold strongly to a position that runs counter to evidence, and this prevents us from exploring alternative means, modes, methods, or tools, the onus is on us as educators to evaluate our positions, explore the alternatives, and evolve in our understanding.

Second, if a tool were essential for the attainment of certain objectives (e.g., writing an email to a professor), the instructor would do a disservice to the student by failing to utilize or at least emulate that medium. That is to say that one's own biases must not override one's obligations to equip students for the time in which they live and the market into which they will be entering. This may mean, at times, that we have to incorporate technologies that we don't really use (or even like!) into the curriculum. One of our favorite websites, https://www.wordclouds.com/, is a powerful tool that can inspire your learners in so many ways yet it does not necessarily address a specific learning objective. For example, we put this article into this website and created the following image:
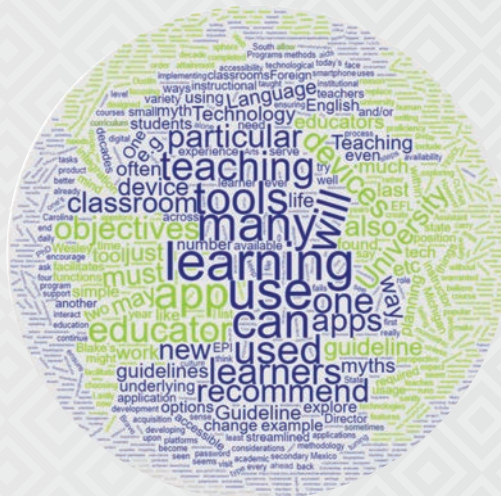


Think about showing learners their words in a visual form or using this website to help them discover the higher frequency words in a reading passage. Or just let your learners have fun with their language!

# WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

As we have mentioned already, the change in apps, devices, operating systems, etc. has been constant and expansive over the last few decades. However, some of the tools seem to be stabilizing, if not in name, then in purpose. For example, have you ever wondered what the most popular/widely used tech tools, devices or apps are each year? For a historical perspective on these tools, visit http://c4lpt.co.uk/top100tools/history/, where you can see that back in 2008 (the year Blake's fundamental work also arrived on scene), the most widely used application for learning was Mozilla's Firefox. Compare that to today's most



popular application: YouTube. What we found fascinating about these yearly lists of top 100 tools was that while some of the tools have changed, the underlying needs for them have not. Learners need ways of locating information, presenting their work, and connecting to others. For an additional perspective on the most used tools, a number of graduate students at Michigan State University have been compiling their own list each semester. Go to https://goo.gl/hy7Vz9 for more inspiration (or trepidation if you are falling on the survival side of our discussion). Lastly, we encourage you to go ahead and try that new app! Or don't. Given the saturation of tech use across so many spheres of our daily lives, you might just ask your learners to put the devices down and talk to each other and to you.

For more resources on this topic please visit our shared Google Folder: goo.gl/xSIWGQ

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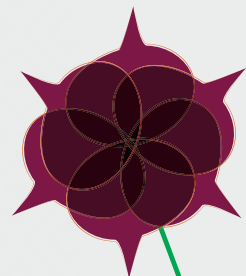
# 2018 Summer Workshop Preview

This year marks CLEAR's 22nd year of offering summer professional development workshops! We enjoy welcoming language educators from across the country to these courses and hope the split schedule will afford some flexibility as you make your summer plans.

## INCREASING PROFICIENCY THROUGH WORLD LANGUAGE CORE PRACTICES

June 25-26, 2018 (two-day workshop, Section 1)

July 30-31, 2018 (Section 2, repeat of June workshop)

Workshop leader: *Erin Parris-Dallia, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools; President, Michigan World Language Association; Fellow, Leadership Initiative for Language Learning*

Looking to up your proficiency game? World Language Core Practices, recently published by ACTFL, are research-supported "teacher moves" that support language learners in gaining proficiency. The practices include using the target language, providing interpersonal communication tasks, employing functional goals and objectives, teaching grammar use in context, using authentic texts, and providing appropriate feedback. Participants in this two-day workshop will explore the reasoning behind World Language Core Practices, the how-to of using them, and planning to nurture more proficient world language students.

## DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

June 27, 2018 (one-day workshop)

Workshop leader: *Julie Foss, Associate Professor of Modern Foreign Languages, Saginaw Valley State University; Former President, Michigan World Language Association*

Each of our students has different needs, levels of readiness, interests, learning styles, and motivations. This one-day workshop is designed to help language teachers meet the challenge of anticipating and responding to these differences. We will examine a variety of ways to differentiate content, process, and product in the language classroom, including planning differentiated units, lessons, activities, and assessments. You will begin putting some of these techniques into action by creating materials for your learners.

## REAL-LIFE GENRES FOR TEACHING READING AND WRITING: FROM NUTRITION LABELS TO RESTAURANT REVIEWS

June 28, 2018 (one-day workshop)

Workshop leader: *Charlene Polio, Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Linguistics & Germanic, Slavic, Asian, & African Languages, Michigan State University; Co-director, CLEAR*

Do you find that your textbooks contain uninspiring dialogs or mundane descriptions of daily routines? Do you have trouble creating writing assignments that move beyond simple narratives or five-paragraph essays? This workshop will use the notion of genre as its starting point: we will not look at literary genres but rather genres such as invitations, cereal boxes, menus, and news articles. We will focus on how to use authentic materials to teach reading for beginners by focusing on predictable genres, and how to help advanced students read more complex genres. Genres analysis will also be used to illustrate how to teach writing by focusing on conventions and context. Examples of activities and materials will be presented throughout the workshop for a range of levels and languages.

## PROFICIENCY-ORIENTED GAMES: HOW TO MAKE GAMES USEFUL AND WHY

June 29, 2018 (one-day workshop)

Workshop leader: *Anne Violin-Wigent, Associate Professor, Department of Romance and Classical Studies, Michigan State University*

This workshop will encourage teachers to use games in the classroom as a means to develop proficiency and incorporate meaningful speaking into activities that are engaging for students at any level. In particular, we will focus on how games can provide a venue for meaningful exchange of information regardless of the level of students. After a brief description and explanation of what games have no value for the classroom, several pedagogically sound games will be presented and analyzed to determine how these games meet the Standards and include all three modes of communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational).

## MAXIMIZING TARGET LANGUAGE USE IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

August 1-2, 2018 (two-day workshop)

Workshop leader: *Melissa Dalton, Lake Orion Community Schools; Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 2017 Teacher of the Year*

Would you like to start the school year with a sequence of target language-rich lessons, conducive to standards-based grading? Get a "90/10" makeover for your classroom during this two-day workshop. Build the foundation with a system to communicate expectations, reward positive process behaviors and develop a supportive classroom community. Participants will learn to recognize and adapt to critical psychological elements in the classroom, foster trust, and lead students to take risks – all key components that enhance proficiency. Benefit from step-by-step consultation throughout the development of instructional plans and apply strategies that can be gradually implemented throughout the school year.

**LEARN MORE** about all of these workshops and find information about accommodations, costs, and discount plans by visiting our website. Go to http://clear.msu.edu and click on "Professional Development" to apply online.

**Early bird deadline:
May 4, 2018**

**Application deadline:
June 1, 2018 for first set,
July 6 for second set**

# CLEAR NEWS

*CLEAR News is a publication of the Center for Language Education and Research and is intended to inform foreign language educators of the Center's ongoing research projects and professional development workshops, to report on current foreign language research and publications and their applicability to the classroom, and to provide a forum for educators to discuss foreign language teaching and learning topics.*

The US Department of Education awards grants through Title VI funding to a small number of institutions for the purpose of establishing, strengthening, and operating language resource and training centers to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages. There are currently sixteen Language Resource Centers nationwide: the ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (AELRC), a consortium of Georgetown University and the Center for Applied Linguistics; the CENTER FOR ADVANCED LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (CALPER) at The Pennsylvania State University; the CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota; the CENTER FOR APPLIED SECOND LANGUAGE STUDIES (CASLS) at the University of Oregon; the CENTER FOR LANGUAGES OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION (CeLCAR) at Indiana University; the CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY (CERCLL) at the University of Arizona; the CENTER FOR INTEGRATED LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES (CILC) at City University of New York; the CENTER FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (CLEAR) at Michigan State University; the CENTER FOR OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND LANGUAGE LEARNING (COERLL) at the University of Texas at Austin; the CENTER FOR URBAN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH (CULTR) at Georgia State University; the NATIONAL AFRICAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NALRC) at Indiana University; the NATIONAL EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES RESOURCE CENTER (NEALRC) at The Ohio State University; the NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NFLRC) at the University of Hawai´i at Mānoa; the NATIONAL HERITAGE LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (NHLRC), a consortium of UCLA and the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching; the NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR ASIAN LANGUAGES (NRCAL) at California State University, Fullerton; and the SLAVIC AND EURASIAN LANGUAGE RESEARCH CENTER (SEELRC) at Duke University.