

Reflections on a 21st Century Assignment in French

By Diane Paravazian

Introduction

In the context of globalization in and in the post 9/11 environment, [...] the usefulness of studying languages other than English is no longer contested. The goals and the means of language study, however, continue to be hotly debated. Divergent views concerning language and its many functions are reflected in differing approaches to the study of language. At one end, language is considered to be principally instrumental, a skill to use for communicating thought and information. At the opposite end, language is understood as an essential element of a human being's thought processes, perceptions and self-expressions; and as such it is considered to be at the core of translingual and transcultural competence. While we use language to communicate our needs to others, language simultaneously reveals us to others and to ourselves. Language is a complex multifunctional phenomenon that links an individual to other individuals, to communities, and to national cultures. (MLA Report 2007 2)

The MLA Report is even more important today in light of further globalization as evidenced by the 2008 financial crisis and events leading up to and including today's increasingly complex international reality. The response of the academic community has been mixed and equally as complex. Some universities have or are in the process of eliminating language programs, while others globalize their curricula with or without language requirements. Professional organizations have addressed the overall climate by taking a deeper look at language teaching and learning and by encouraging innovation and goal-oriented improvement of curricula as the Report recommends. The American Council on The Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has launched a National Research Agenda (*Foreign Language Annals*, Summer 2012). *Recherches et applications of Le Français dans Le Monde*, No 54, focuses on "Mutations technologiques, nouvelles pratiques sociales et didactique des langues" in this year's July issue, and the *French Review* has devoted an issue to the reflection of teaching French in the United States (Volume 86, Number 6, May 2013). The theme of the 2013 AATF Conference, Teaching French in the 21st Century, clearly addresses this trend and invites continued efforts and innovation.

This paper is a reflection on an assignment in response to the MLA Report, recent publications, the current overall climate in language learning and teaching, as well as the conversation on the use of technology in education. The discussion that follows includes:

1. Assignment description, rationale, participants, preparation and student response;
2. Reflections on the experience of actualizing the assignment and assessment;
3. Next steps for the project.

The Assignment: From Description and Rationale and Student Response

Description and Rationale

The assignment is intended as a mid-semester assessment at the intermediate-advanced level of proficiency in a grammar review course. The course design follows the major precepts in Wiggins and McTighe's *Understanding by Design*. A mid-term assessment therefore allows us to move back to step 1, "Identify desired results" and forward to Step 3, the planning of "learning experiences and instruction" in the course. This assignment is at the midpoint of Step 2, and constitutes "Assessment Evidence" (Wiggins and McTighe 18).

The instructions to students for this group project are:

1. Select structures and vocabulary studied which you would like to practice, as well as appropriate technology which can show gesture and movement along with speech;
2. Design a scene or scenes which allow you to use the selected language aspects beyond the classroom and which include elements of francophone culture(s);
3. Include the participation of learners at different levels of proficiency;
4. Consult and collaborate with the education technology specialist and the instructor of the course;
5. Create a group project which illustrates proficiency in both language and culture, which demonstrates aspects of significant learning and which can be included in your e-portfolios to show potential for advanced studies or future employment.

At this point of the course, students are familiar with the MLA quote, L. Dee Fink's basic taxonomy of significant learning (Fink 27-57) and the objectives of the course. A review of these along with a discussion of the assignment objectives should help provide initial answers to the key question learners are likely to have in mind: "What is the point of learning/doing this?" (Wiggins and McTighe 15-16).

Going back to Step 1 of understanding by design (Wiggins and McTighe18), allows students to see how the assignment addresses the overall objectives of the course, which in this case are based on three key areas in the opening quotation from the MLA Report:

1. Address the full range of MLA-defined language skills, from a skills-based instrumental use of language to the "translingual and transcultural competence."

In this area, students will be able to:

- Use structures and vocabulary with verbal and non-verbal (intonation, gesture, etc.) fluency in order to understand and be understood by native speakers;
- Express themselves with precision and detail;
- Demonstrate language awareness and cultural literacy.

2. Achieve significant learning along with language acquisition skills, or use skills “wisely” (Wiggins and McTighe 9).

In this area, students will be able to show evidence of understanding in the dimensions of Fink’s taxonomy which are:

- Foundational knowledge;
 - Application, including practical, critical and creative thinking skills as well as project management;
 - Integration or connecting ideas, people and realms of life;
 - Human dimension or learning about oneself and others;
 - Caring;
 - Learning how to learn (Fink 30-33).
3. Apply knowledge gained outside of and beyond the classroom and relate differently to self, “to other individuals, to communities and to national cultures.”

In this area, students will be able to:

- Synthesize their language and cultural competencies with the dimensions of significant learning;
- Demonstrate in their project the interactivity and relevance of these dimensions as they relate to professional endeavors.

Participants in the Project

Participants in the project include three students, two at the advanced-level of proficiency, Devon Niccoli and James Vanie, and the third, Tayler Jackson, with a background of two semesters of French, the first of which was a month-long study abroad experience in France with the instructor. It is important to note that these students were not part of a single class; they volunteered to work with the instructor. James had been in a class where the instructor used a similar assignment. Devon had not studied with the instructor previously; she joined the project because she was looking for an opportunity to practice and improve her French. In fact, all three students wanted to participate in rethinking and in improving language learning. The other two members of this collaborative effort were the Education Technology Specialist and the French Professor.

Initial Discussions and Preparation

Deciding on the structures and vocabulary to practice required some discussion as these were based on students’ interests, needs and their experience in previous classes. With the participation of the instructor, the group settled on the subjunctive and the conditional for the grammatical structures and on descriptive vocabulary about food and art. The choice of vocabulary was important, as it was to incorporate the cultural and the language awareness aspects of the project. The first question for the instructor was if students could create a script. Although the instructor and the more fluent speakers of the group preferred to have the group

work with notes and images, the student whose proficiency was at the advanced beginner level was clearly more comfortable with a written dialogue. Filming the project was therefore not optimal and students resorted to technology-based solutions in order to incorporate movement and gesture in their work. Finding solutions increased solidarity in the student group and opened the way to further creativity.

Movement and gesture were particularly important to the instructor as a way of making language learning and practice more “natural” or true to life. While gesture may have been at the very origin of language as discussed by Armstrong and Wilcox, in *The Gestural Origins of Language*, most second language assignments tend to be somewhat static. The involvement of the Education Technology Specialist was crucial as she was instrumental in identifying the best technologies to meet the requirements of movement and gesture. Although students and instructors may come into a project well-versed in the use of certain 2.0 tools, they often select to use materials they already know and may not always be aware of the best choices for their assignment.

Sample Student Response

Students produced the assignment which can be viewed at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxraz_448P4&feature=youtu.be.

Reflection and Initial Assessment

In order to both analyze and respect the integrity of the reflections of all of the participants, the complete text of student reflections summarized by one student and that of the Education Technology Specialist are provided in the Appendix of this article. Portions of these are used in the reflection, analysis and assessment of the assignment by the instructor/author. It is important, however, that the reader have access to the reflections of all of the participants in their own voices.

Initial Student Reaction and Objective One

The student response is a first draft of the assignment and provides not only evidence of “learning experiences and instruction” (Wiggins and McTighe), but also the foundation and springboard towards a more complete achievement of the assignment objectives. The key goal for the instructor is to use the collaborative learning of all of the participants in order to adjust goals, make changes in instructional approaches and create the environment, the synergy and the energy needed to improve performance towards meeting the assignment objectives as well and as completely as possible.

Of particular interest to the instructor is to experience how students approach a complex group assignment with multiple requirements. In viewing the project, it is clear that students divided the assignment into three segments. Segment One introduces the project in a group study setting. Segment Two takes place at the virtual Deux Magots Cafe in Paris and deals with food-

related vocabulary and Segment Three is a discussion of visits to museums and selected works of art. Dividing the assignment into segments made it more manageable, both with respect to content and to technology.

Devon Niccoli summarized her own and her fellow students' initial reaction as follows:

The project description elicited “the typical anxiety-inducing dread of a student: class projects. For most students, our first reaction is to zero in on the project requirements: focus on the content, determine the logistics of the assignments, and figure out a way to present a fine-finished product at the end. We're so wrapped up in the chaos of ‘what does the professor want from us?’ to take notice of the fundamental learning objectives built into the assignment. When James, Tayler and I were given this project, my goals revolved around just getting it done.”

Tayler Jackson was apprehensive at the start: “Language can be quite intimidating when you are not completely familiar with it.” Tayler was more comfortable with a script. She wanted practice with grammar and especially with pronunciation prior to recording. In the first part of the project, using stop motion photography rather than video and a script rather than improvisation was a successful way in addressing the difference in levels of proficiency and in incorporating gesture into the dialogue. In fact, due to this particular use of technology, Tayler's body language showed her transition from reluctance to speak to full and expressive engagement. The subjunctive and the conditional were used correctly and appropriately in the video. After a quick review with the instructor, James and Devon practiced the use of the subjunctive as well as the conditional while Tayler used predominantly the conditional. In Segment One, students addressed all the requirements of the assignment. They introduced and justified their use of technology and combined it with humor and culture in the Voltaire clip. The group clearly felt satisfied with this part of the video. James Vanie expressed it best:

While developing the project, we spent a few late nights at the drawing board. But late nights entailed laughing at a silly joke in the script. Late nights meant free jelly beans along with the occasional manic episodes from excessive coffee and sleep deprivation. I believe this casual, yet work-focused environment made us more susceptible to taking a risk with a new word or a rusty grammar concept. I was less apprehensive about making mistakes and more focused on understanding how to make my sentence structure and intonation sound natural.

The moments when I didn't have to look at the script are the moments when my sentences sounded the best. For example, one of my lines was a Voltaire quote -- “Tout est possible!” This was meant to be comical. Along with the scripted humor, the photo segment that we created really added to how the audience experienced the video. Since I had rehearsed this line, I understood how it was supposed to sound and I was able to say it with confidence. And it is in those moments that my personality transcended the language barrier.

In Segments Two and Three, culture was incorporated in the discussion of food, locations and the works of art students had selected. In the Deux Magots segment, students continued having fun with puns as in the use of “bon marché” and “le poisson empoisoné” but in the museum and art segments, they reverted to a more traditional approach to group assignments; they divided the

work and each student spoke about a particular work of art. Although stop motion photography was used again, there was little interaction and at times, a monologue or recitation replaced the dialogue. Gesture was minimal.

The instructor was interested in bringing back gesture and fluency by adding movement by using different technology. The Education Technology Specialist introduced students to the combination of Google Maps navigation along with Screencast-O-Matic recording tools. “Using Google Maps street view,” according to Professor Marandino, “allowed students to navigate the streets of Paris and to include cultural information as if they were actually there. As they navigated, they engaged in dialogue, which gave them the opportunity to practice speaking in a culturally-appropriate setting.” Although this added virtual movement to the dialogue as well as the opportunity for students to work on their pronunciation through repeated recordings, the gesture component was not included except as part of the navigation. While gesture was visible and an integral part of the communication in Segment One, it became virtual in Segments Two. Segment Three is an attempt to return to the success of Segment One, but more in the spirit of “let’s get this done,” as Devon stated earlier.

Segments Two and Three demonstrate that students clearly needed more time and practice with new tools; there are video portions with little or no dialogue. Preoccupation with technology may also interfere with the focus on and the integration of content. For example, more extensive and precise use of descriptive vocabulary pertaining to food and art would extend the knowledge dimension of the project. Applying this content with fluidity in the use of technology would be helpful in integrating gesture and movement into the dialogue as well as greater fluency in speaking. Eliminating the use of a script and filming the dialogue part of the project would also be beneficial not only in enhancing the skills mentioned, but also in inspiring a greater number of language and culture-related awareness moments, such as the Voltaire quote.

Objective Two and Three. Dee Fink’s taxonomy in designing and assessing a project like this is useful as the dimensions of the taxonomy are not only very compatible with the five C’s of the ACTFL Standards, but are also easier to apply to different settings such as employment interviews, which may not necessarily be language-proficiency related. Students can highlight a variety of workplace competencies by discussing the elements of a project: the successful integration of each group member’s strengths and weaknesses, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and expertise in technology. Discussion of the taxonomy in this context motivates students to improve their performance as assignments are clearly intended for use in the real world. Furthermore, the viewing of various projects in class fosters peer learning and increases awareness of students’ native language and culture. The ultimate goal is to move beyond engaging students in the classroom; it is involving them in their learning and transforming them into “deep learners” (Bain 25).

Foundational knowledge, as the key dimension in language and culture learning is all-encompassing, yet detail-oriented; it demands a great deal of time and attention to acquire. The students participating in this project had made considerable efforts in this area and this was evident in their use of the structures and the vocabulary, particularly at the advanced level. Yet,

they all needed more practice in applying this knowledge with greater fluency in a culturally-appropriate setting.

One of the reasons for including a student at a lower level of proficiency was to explore the effects of heightening the interactivity between the knowledge and its application. This was evidenced in two ways in this assignment. The first was in shortening the time between the review/acquisition of structures and vocabulary and their application in a situation with more advanced speakers. The second was virtually placing the student in the country where the target language is spoken and the culture is visually present. This was intended to reduce learner anxiety in preparation for conversation with native speakers.

Not surprisingly, the weakest moment of the project was at the “Integration” dimension which requires, “integration or connecting ideas, people and realms of life.” Applying the foundational knowledge into a setting with movement through technology, the scenes at the “Deux Magots” and the museums, proved to be the most difficult and resulted in a return to the use of language with more static images such as a menu and various works of art. In this dimension, students used their practical thinking skills in making sure they included the cultural and vocabulary components of the assignment, whereas critical and creative thinking skills were much more evident in the first scene.

In Segment One, however, Integration was very successful for it was Devon, an advanced-level student who came up with the idea of stop motion photographs: “At the same time that we were brainstorming for our video, I was taking a Film Studies class where we were reading Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida*. Subconsciously, I internalized his meditations on photography, and synthesized this experience alongside my own encounters with images – and our concept of gesture! – to spark the idea for the stop motion photographs [...] that highlight and accentuate our physical movements. I always think in images, so envisioning movement like ‘broken film’ felt natural to me, but I have no background in photography or editing.” Devon continues and comments on the involvement of the technology specialist:” it was truly neat for me to learn from our technology specialist what it’s like to put together speed-shutter shots with sound and stitch everything together in the editing process. I had no idea how much time it takes!”

As evidenced by student comments, the “human dimension or learning about oneself and others” and “caring” were addressed most successfully. The way the two advanced students, Devon and James mentored and integrated the advanced beginner student, Tayler, was evident in the management of the project and extremely rewarding to witness. Even more heartening was Tayler’s response, not just in terms of the actual learning she demonstrated, but also in her determination to stay in the project in spite of the difficulties and the anxiety it produced for her. When they sensed that Tayler was frustrated with her pronunciation, Devon and James stepped in and helped her practice with them. Prior to recording, Tayler had been working individually with the instructor. It is important to note that she showed faster progress with her peers; she did not want to let them down.

The challenge for the instructor is to continue learning how to foster and recreate significant learning of this caliber, especially in the human and caring dimensions. These two dimensions,

as they interact with foundational knowledge, application and integration, are most valuable in motivating successful language learning and lifelong “deep” learning.

This final dimension of Fink’s taxonomy is most important, especially for those of us who teach because it reminds us to be more aware and vigilant about our own learning as we design courses, set learning objectives and create assignments. Technology, for this instructor, is an important aspect in learning how to learn. It is not simply a matter of applying 2.0 tools and using the Web; it is developing a different mindset about knowledge and learning. Integrating ideas from recent books such as David Weinberger’s, *Too Big to Know: Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren’t the Facts, Experts are Everywhere, and the Smartest Person in the Room is the Room*, with approaches to language teaching and learning is a start at the macro level. Learning about how students learn in this environment is paramount. While instructors agonize over which approach and which text to use, students often select their own resources on the Web and may not have sufficient time or knowledge to evaluate their accuracy and validity. Learning how to learn and sharing the experience in a collaborative setting with students and educational technology specialists is instrumental in maintaining the highest level of involvement by all when this type of assignment is used in a larger class setting. Like Devon, the instructor learned how much time it takes to apply new technology successfully. Allowing the students to take charge of the first draft of the project was insightful. However, instructor guidance and leadership in the initial assessment is crucial. The instructor needs to create a setting in which the goals and the assignment design can be carefully reviewed and critiqued by all using the dimensions of “significant learning.” In this case, changes are most likely needed in terms of simplifying the assignment or breaking it down into components, both in terms of content and technology choices. In Segments Two and Three a combination of Google street view and film may be optimal in achieving better application and integration of foundational knowledge. The group needs to agree on the changes and to make a formal plan on how to meet the objectives for the final version. Subsequent to the participants’ assessment, it may be helpful to involve an outside reviewer who would comment more objectively on the aspects of the project most attractive for graduate school applications or to an employer.

Next Steps

Although a great deal of valid research exists and there are breakthroughs on understanding the human brain, there isn’t yet a “comprehensive view on how languages are learnt.” (Mitchell and Myles 2) Furthermore, there are questions as to whether theory has practical applications in the field (Ibid. 28), leading to the current ACTFL initiative in bridging the gap between the two. (<http://www.actfl.org/news/press-releases/actfl-research-priorities-phase-ii-participantsttopics-announced>) Staying actively informed and involved in the research, exploring new technologies, and experimenting and reflecting with students and colleagues is a dynamic way of continuing to learn how to learn.

The next step in the project discussed in this paper will be an exploration/reflection on bridging the gap in certain areas of theory and its application. The Understanding by Design approach will be used to involve at first advanced-level learners only and work backwards to apply the information gleaned from their successful language acquisition to learners at the intermediate and subsequently at the beginner levels of proficiency.

Students will continue using technology to construct settings and to create situations as they practice both pre-determined clusters of language and culture, and are encouraged to interject spontaneous comments and thoughts. The plan is to work inductively and to study issues such as the systematic and variable aspects of learner “interlanguage,” sociolinguistic interaction and its influence on the identity of the learner, language attitudes and learner anxiety. The final choice of theories as well as how to proceed will be determined following the examination of a series of recorded dialogues. The technology specialist and the students also anticipate more film recording and less screen capturing technology in the next steps.

Conclusion

Language, as the MLA quotation states, is not only a skill that can be used to convey thought and information. Language connects to learning in dynamic ways and language learning should reflect this energy, the personal growth of learners, the connectivity to others and the understanding of other communities and cultures. In the age of e-portfolios and constantly evolving technology, language educators can transform assignments into meaningful grassroots messages to various communities, messages that value learners, showcase their significant achievements and demonstrate their 21st -century potential far beyond the language classroom.

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Appendix

Student Reflections have not been edited. The author feels strongly about acknowledging students' voluntary participation in this project and their hard work. Furthermore, it is important to note the unique gestures within the voice of Devon Niccoli's writing.

Student Reflections
include comments by Tayler Jackson and James Vanie;
Summarized by Devon Niccoli

“The typical anxiety-inducing dread of a student: class projects. For most students, our first reaction is to zero in on the project requirements: focus on the content, determine the logistics of the assignments, and figure out a way to present a fine-finished product at the end. We're so wrapped up in the chaos of ‘what does the professor want from us?!’ to take notice of the fundamental learning objectives built into the assignment. When James, Tayler and I were given this project, my goals revolved around just getting it done; it's now, in retrospect, that I notice how much I absorbed from the preparation process alone, how we were not only creating a video, but building upon and adding to our foundational knowledge in ways that most of us did not anticipate.

For some of us, the initial reaction was fear. ‘Language can be quite intimidating when you are not completely familiar with it,’ Tayler says. However, the opportunity to collaborate on such an assignment outside of the classroom, where, at times, active learning is not always achieved, served us well. It offered moments outside of the traditional classroom paradigm – full of students doing whatever *they* need to in order to snag their A – to truly care for one another. ‘While developing the project, I was nervous, but my group was very helpful,’ Tayler says. She explains that, after practicing lines and pronunciation with James and Devon, she began to build a level of comfort, and was able to enjoy the project rather than dread it. James feels that the project really created a sense of critical thought and accountability for our own selves and for one another, while also building fluency in our language skills.

There's no question about it – for me, the *subjonctif* has been my main French enemy for the past nine or so years that I've been studying the language, so it was with a quickened pulse and a bit of trepidation that I agreed to use it as a main component of study for our project. And yes, I now feel as though, through the continued practice and repetition of finding uses for it in the script I wrote, I have a set of *situations pour l'emploi du subjonctif* in my arsenal. Yet the most valuable things I gained from our virtual tour of Paris are most clearly apparent to me through the human dimension of our project.

Tayler, an advanced beginner student with only two semesters of French under her belt, was the most cautious and hesitant of the three of us in terms of correct pronunciation, comfort with grammar, verb structures and vocabulary. It took me awhile to understand that, in certain aspects where my brain might automatically jump ahead and skip over several steps, it was crucial for me to slow down in order to accommodate the group dynamic for the best productivity. Although the professor was very helpful in her availability to practice phrases with Tayler and guide her, James and I felt that it was more of our duty to mentor and coach Tayler, to help her understand

that most of her fears were unnecessary and inconsequential, since she was a much better speaker than she believed herself to be. Our efforts to encourage and ignite Tayler's participation and practice through it all have resonated within me deeply, and I have become more introspective, respectful and thoughtful for my fellow team members on various collaborative projects. All it took was a bit of laughter and a few silly gestures to draw Tayler out of her shell, and I recognize these moments of fun that may "break from productivity" as a huge necessity.

'While developing the project,' James says, 'we spent a few late nights at the drawing board. But late nights entailed laughing at a silly joke in the script. Late nights meant free jelly beans along with the occasional manic episodes from excessive coffee and sleep deprivation. I believe this casual, yet work-focused environment made us more susceptible to taking a risk with a new word or a rusty grammar concept. I was less apprehensive about making mistakes and more focused on understanding how to make my sentence structure and intonation sound natural.'

The moments when I didn't have to look at the script are the moments when my sentences sounded the best. For example, one of my lines was a Voltaire quote – '*Tout est possible!*' – that was meant to be comical. Along with the scripted humor, the photo segment that we created really added to how the audience experienced the video. Since I had rehearsed this line, I understood how it was supposed to sound and I was able to say it with confidence. And it is in those moments that my personality transcended the language barrier.'

I, too, believe our creative juices were best recognized through our own passions. Perhaps the most intriguing element that sparked my interest was the professor's research on gesture as intrinsically linked to language. Oftentimes students rely on what they know and build their project around familiar ideas and ways of working; and then something strikes our fancy and we run with it. At the same time that we were brainstorming for our video, I was taking a Film Studies class where we were reading Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*. Subconsciously, I internalized his meditations on photography, and synthesized this experience alongside my own encounters with images – and our concept of gesture! – to spark the idea for the stop motion photographs (shot by MD) that highlight and accentuate our physical movements. I always think in images, so envisioning movement like 'broken film' felt natural to me, but I have no background in photography or editing. Despite the fact that I wish we could have simulated more cultural experiences live on film, it was truly neat for me to learn from our technology specialist what it's like to put together speed-shutter shots with sound and stitch everything together in the editing process. I had no idea how much time it takes!

At this point in time, removed from the project, each of us is able to reflect and identify what we took away from the experience: what we loved for ourselves, what we would change for the future. 'The idea of putting the project in an e-portfolio would be very beneficial to my future,' Tayler says. 'It would have been great for me to practice writing out my lines for myself, instead of dividing the work up where the other students did most of the writing. Personally, I have several grammatical areas that I could improve upon.' Due to Tayler's necessary reliance on the script, which hindered the original plan to record the Parisian Google maps live with voice, we did not end up using the Screencast-O-Matic as much as we anticipated. Instead, the stop motion shots fill the visual space for our pre-recorded voices. James and I, who have both been studying French for much longer than Tayler, and who intend to seek a future where we can use

our language, have a bit of a different approach to the next steps. ‘Looking back,’ James says, ‘I learned that I am still light-years away from gaining what I would deem as fluency. But writing and rehearsing the script was definitely helpful for me. At the end of the project, we discussed an improvisation approach to creating the video. I think a fusion of the two ideas (improvisation and script) would be perfect. For the next steps, my suggestion would be for the students and instructor to sit in a circle and create a script from start to finish with no pen or paper (hopefully in French). This would engrain in our minds the ideas of what we should say, ways to work with the structure in the future when talking to native speakers, instead of relying on a ‘cheat sheet’ script that we simply read from. Anyway, I think it would flow more naturally when it comes time to record. Yes, there will be more mistakes, but the final product would be a reflection of our true knowledge of the language.

I agree that, with my own resume building in mind, I would like to include more live, off-script recordings that showcase my language skills to potential employers via my e-portfolio. It is at this point that I would turn to our education technology specialist, for technology tools that are geared more toward career development, meaning those which will help me spotlight my language progress in the event that I apply for internships and jobs in French, but it seems equally imperative to me that the valuable teamwork experience that each of us gained could be better demonstrated on film, as well as certain moments of pure creativity. Selfishly, I’d like for us to take a field trip to the Met or the MoMA, start an impromptu conversation in French about a piece of art, and film it. I’m not so interested in how great we are or what it looks like on camera, as much as I am invested in the active experience of engaging conversation with wonderful people that share my passions and motivations.”

Reflection by Gina Marandino, Education Technology Specialist

“Technology was used in various ways to enhance learning. A major goal of this project was to have students apply vocabulary, grammar, and structure to real life experiences through virtual means. Using the Google Maps street view allowed students to navigate the streets of Paris and to include cultural information as if they were actually there. As they navigated, they engaged in a dialogue, which gave them the opportunity to practice speaking in a culturally appropriate setting. The dialogue and the Google Maps navigation were all recorded using Screencast-O-Matic, a screen recording tool. The benefit of recording everything was that it allowed students to listen to their pronunciation and practice any phrases that they needed to improve. Google Drive was used for collaboration. The students took it upon themselves to create a script that they were all able to edit in Google Drive. The Educational Technology Specialist created a folder in Google Drive for everyone to share images and different versions of the video. The program iMovie was used to bring all of the components together and create the final version. The video or selections from it could easily be embedded into the students’ e-Portfolios, a new university initiative which the technology specialists demonstrated to the students.

Throughout the process of learning the technology needed for the project, students engaged with different dimensions of L. Dee Fink’s significant learning. At the start of the project, students built their knowledge in technology by working with the tools suggested by the educational technologist. As they became more fluent in the use of the new tools, they were

better able to visualize how these related to the outcomes of the project. Applying their new technology skills led them to use critical and creative thinking. This was evident when they came up with ideas to enhance the visuals. For example they decided to use stop motion technology at the beginning of the film to show gestures. One student, who was knowledgeable in movie editing, used software to animate the photos. Students continued using technology throughout the project to make connections between language and culture as well as to manage the progress of their work. Fink's Human Dimension was evident throughout this project. Students shared their knowledge of language and technology, as well as their knowledge of language through technology. The Google Doc documented everyone's contribution to the script and appropriate sensitivity to the student who had had less training in French. Finally, the instructors, both of language and technology became less directly involved as the project advanced, while the students became more confident self-directed learners.