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TSSA (Teaching Study Skills Award) Report - SPRING 2019

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Teaching Skill(s) Studied:

The generous funding from this TSSA grant enabled me to attend the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) Annual Conference in Montreal, QC held on May 21-25, 2019 (<https://calico.org/>). This year's conference featured presentations on a wide range of technologies including mobile apps for language learning, Augmented Reality for Interactive Storytelling (ARIS), a visual novel based game about village culture in Eastern Congo, Google Earth and Tour Builder, among others. Also included on the program was a technology showcase, where I had a chance to experiment with iSpraak (which provides online automated feedback for foreign language pronunciation), the Tandem Canada ESL-FSL Virtual Platform (an international exchange via videoconferencing that pairs native speakers of French and English learning their respective languages), various Web-based virtual reality games, computer-assisted annotation and feedback tools, and other digital technologies currently being used by language teachers. The plenary delivered in both French and English by Marie-Josée Hamel (Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Ottawa) on the challenges of achieving functional bilingualism was both apropos (given Canada's official bilingualism) and very inspiring. Particularly beneficial, however, were the four pre-conference workshops that I attended on Infographics, Flipgrid, Digital Storytelling and PlayPosit, all of which I can envision incorporating into my lower and upper-division French classes.

Impact on Current Teaching:

Although I have always been a big fan of infographics, having used examples readily found online in my teaching, it was empowering to learn how to make them myself so that I can tailor the information to my course content. Creating infographics on different aspects of French and francophone cultures (e.g., varieties of French cheese for my French Gourmet Culture class, FREN 470) and/or statistical data from the EU or Canada (e.g., when discussing immigration in my film class, FREN 370, for instance) would be particularly useful. Flipgrid (a video-based discussion platform) may help our students overcome their fear of speaking French. It would also be ideal for our online classes (e.g., FREN 101, 290, 301, 302) to create a sense of community while further developing students' oral production skills. The nuts and bolts of Digital Storytelling shared at this conference will be particularly helpful in designing story prompts and guiding students in our writing course (FREN 350). As for PlayPosit, being able to convert any existing video (e.g., YouTube, short documentaries, news broadcasts, film trailers, etc.) into an interactive video is going to be very helpful for our upper-division courses. Although interactive videos for beginning-level French are readily available online, this type of interactive video content is very difficult to find for more advanced French learners.

Assessment/Evaluation:

Students have often commented on the advantages of having interactive, multimodal materials posted on Blackboard, and as such, I am confident that they will engage with these new technologies. Informal classroom polls and students' comments on SOTES will help me gauge their effectiveness in online and traditional classes and how best to incorporate these technologies into various types of course content and assignments.

Date Submitted: September 14, 2019