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TSSA (Teaching Study Skills Award) Report - SPRING 2017

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Teaching Skill(s) Studied:

This grant enabled me to attend the Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) Annual Conference in Flagstaff, AZ on May 16-20, 2017 (https://calico.org/). During the conference, I attended 15 sessions, experiencing everything from reflective blog posts and collaborative writing using Google Docs, to students (represented by avatars) communicating in a three-dimensional virtual learning environment (3DVLE). Not having attended a CALICO conference since early in my career, I was astonished by how the field of Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) had blossomed and the plethora of technology tools we now have available.

I explored Digital Social Reading for the first time by attending a talk on eComma, an open source collaborative online annotation tool developed at the University of Texas at Austin (https://ecomma.coerll.utexas.edu/about-ecomma/). This technology allows multiple readers to read the same text together online, annotate the text in a pop-up box in the margin after highlighting a portion of the text, and share their annotations. A student's posting often leads to threaded discussions. An added bonus is that the teacher can easily track the users and their annotations for feedback and assessment purposes. Several other digital social annotation tools with similar features were demonstrated during the conference, including Hypothesis (https://web.hypothes.is/#features) and SocialBook (http://www.livemargin.com/socialbook/client/help.html).

There were also a number of presentations on Digital Storytelling. Digital stories are basically multimedia movies, making use of images, video, audio, and text. CALICO presenters spoke to the effectiveness of digital storytelling as a narrative writing tool for language learners, reporting that this method engages students in the writing process, helps them improve their research skills, and develops students' digital competence, which is necessary to function productively in a technology-oriented society. Students can also work together on projects remotely or get feedback from their peers.

Several of the other presentations I attended focused on flipped approaches to foreign language teaching. Via this method, for instance, language students can learn grammatical concepts at home by watching recorded tutorials, completing

online tasks (grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading) and quizzes. This frees up class time for discussion and in-class activities that enhance students' communicative competence and cultural knowledge. A flipped classroom also enables teachers to focus on the individual needs of students.

I also attended a session conducted by professors from Carnegie Mellon and the University of Texas at Austin who are collaborating on an online course development project. The open source intermediate-level French course they are creating will serve as a bridge course to advanced French studies.

Impact on Current Teaching:

For starters, I would like to experiment with digital social reading in my advanced translation class, FREN 322 (French for Translation II) as it would be an effective platform for comparing students' translations of difficult passages (e.g., idioms, culture-specific concepts, rhymed verse) and working out the best possible solution(s).

Digital storytelling lends itself perfectly to getting the creative juices flowing in a writing course, such as FREN 350 (Advanced French Composition) where students could describe their favorite person or write a short story using multimedia elements. This technology could also be used elsewhere, such as our special topics course in French Gourmet Culture (FREN 470) where students could share a French recipe or present a famous French chef.

The flipped-classroom model is already widely used in our French program. However, seeing additional examples at CALICO has inspired me to 'think outside the box' in terms of the material I post online for my students. For instance, in my business French class (FREN 409) this Winter, I am planning online tutorials and web activities that will help students learn the fundamentals as they complete certain tasks outside of class (such as preparing their CV, rehearsing business-related phone conversations, and responding to job interview questions from potential employers). I could certainly envisage using a flipped classroom approach for FREN 450 (Advanced Grammar Review) as well.

Blogging would also benefit students in FREN 409 (Business French) and FREN 410 (Business French Case Studies) as they could share their ideas on topics relevant to business and publish their oral presentations online, inviting blog readers to leave comments.

Given our success with using their open access beginning-level textbook *Français Interactif* (http://www.laits.utexas.edu/fi/) in our FREN 101/102/103 classes, the intermediate-level French course proposed by Carnegie Mellon and the UT-Austin is very promising. We will no doubt adopt it for our 200-level course sequence once it becomes available.

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