Facilitating Second Language Development via Interaction in an Online Classroom

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FACILITATING SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT VIA INTERACTION IN AN
ONLINE CLASSROOM

by

Jen Cummings

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

FACILITATING SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT VIA INTERACTION IN AN ONLINE CLASSROOM

by

Jen Cummings: Master of Second Language Teaching
Utah State University, 2022

Major Professor: Dr. Joshua J. Thoms
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This portfolio is a collection of essays tying together perspectives and major themes in second language teaching of importance to the writer. It begins with an introduction piece, followed by a description of professional environment and a teaching philosophy statement focused on teacher-student relationships, varied assessments, and culture-focused teaching. This section is followed by a classroom observation. The main section of the portfolio is a reflection paper presenting perspectives on the importance of providing interaction opportunities in asynchronous online language learning classrooms. The portfolio concludes with a statement of future goals.

(45 pages)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank those who have supported me during my time in the MSLT program. Dr. Thoms has been instrumental in guiding me since I first began the program. His knowledge and expertise related to technology and online instruction have been invaluable. Dr. deJonge-Kannan’s counsel and wisdom has been refreshing and inspiring. Her support has reminded me how impactful a good teacher can be in the life of her students. She models the principles she teaches and shows by example how to be an excellent teacher. Dr. Albirini taught me that research can be exciting and I’m grateful to have learned from him how to be a discerning consumer of research. I would like to thank Dr. Arshavskaya for her compassionate help as I developed my autoethnography and explored how I can better teach culture in my classroom. I would also like to express my gratitude to Jan Kelley-King, Dr. Freeman King, and Dr. Curt Radford for their instruction and support in the ASL/Deaf Education program. I developed my love for ASL and Deaf culture as I studied with each of them, and they inspired me to want to share that love with other students.

I am grateful for the students I had the privilege to associate with in the MSLT program. They have been a pleasure to work with and I’ve learned a tremendous amount from them through their peer reviews, group projects, and discussions in class. Lastly, I would like to thank my husband, children, extended family, and friends for their unending love, patience, and support. They have encouraged me, sustained me, and kept things running smoothly at home when I was doing all that was required to teach full-time while completing this program. I couldn’t have done this without them.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL: The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ASL: American Sign Language

ASLTA: American Sign Language Teachers Association

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning

COMD/DE: Communicative Disorders/Deaf Education

F2F: Face-to-face

L2: Second Language

LMS: Learning Management System

MALL: Mobile-assisted Language Learning

MSLT: Master of Second Language Teaching

NNS: Non-Native Speaker

NS: Native Speaker

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TA: Teacher’s Assistant

TL: Target Language

UFLA: Utah Foreign Language Association

USU: Utah State University
INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

I began my graduate work in the MSLT program after gaining extensive teaching experience. I obtained my education degree from Utah State University 20 years ago and began teaching the week after I graduated. I was a teacher of the Deaf for three years in an elementary classroom and saw firsthand the difference in students who had early language access and those who didn’t. Some children who are born deaf are given early access to signing and are able to develop language at the same rate as their hearing peers. Others endure language deprivation because they have no auditory or visual language input, so they suffer language delays that impact them throughout their lives.

These first years of teaching showed me how important it was for hearing parents to understand the essential nature of teaching American Sign Language (ASL) to their babies if they are born hard of hearing or deaf. I realized if I taught ASL as a second language to hearing students, I could impact many deaf children by educating their future parents. I left the elementary classroom and started teaching ASL classes at a technical college. I taught high school students taking ASL as a second language and adult students who either had a deaf family member or who wanted to learn ASL for other reasons. Occasionally, I had a deaf or hard of hearing person in my class who had grown up not using ASL and who wanted to learn ASL so they could become part of the Deaf community.

I taught in a college setting for 13 years and, during that time, because of a change in my students’ schedules, transitioned my teaching style from a traditional teaching style to more of a hybrid teaching style with some content being taught online in a language management system (LMS) and some content being taught in the classroom. As I moved more content online, I realized the benefits of having the material readily available for all students so they could review as often as they needed to or learn what they missed if they
were absent. My focus shifted to creating curriculum content that students could learn from independently online.

When the pandemic hit in spring of 2020, I heard of a position teaching ASL at an online school and investigated furthering my expertise in teaching ASL as a second language online. I applied for and was accepted into the Deaf Education master’s program and completed a semester of coursework focused on ASL linguistics and sociocultural aspects of Deaf culture and then learned about the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program and knew it would be a better fit for my career plans. My transition into the MSLT program was seamless and I was able to start applying what I was learning in my MSLT courses into my ASL classroom teaching each semester.

One of the greatest lessons I learned from my classes in the program was that regardless of how much experience I had in the classroom, there was always something new I could learn to make my teaching better. There is always room for improvement and there are always new tools and technologies that are available to make learning more effective for students if I’m willing to stay current on new research. From my coursework, I acquired new skills to improve the assessments I use in my classroom, the technology I use for guided and independent practice, and the theories that guide my classroom instruction.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
Professional Environment

My experiences teaching ASL have been varied in my teaching career. I have taught ASL as a first language to Deaf children and as a second language to hearing and deaf youth and adults.¹

I currently teach ASL as a second language to students in grades 6-12 in an asynchronous online high school. Most of my students are hearing students who are learning ASL to get second-language credit, to communicate with Deaf family members or co-workers, or to eventually work in fields that serve the Deaf community. Several of my students are deaf and have been raised speaking English instead of using ASL. The teaching strategies required for effective online asynchronous instruction are often executed differently than those used in a traditional classroom setting. I have already begun incorporating the teaching strategies and practices I have learned in the MSLT program into my online courses and have seen positive changes in student achievement. After finishing the MSLT program, I will continue teaching ASL at my current school serving deaf and hearing students alike. I will persist in implementing the best practices I’ve learned to enhance the curriculum and improve my students’ learning opportunities.

¹ The use of the capitalized word Deaf denotes a member of the Deaf community (someone who uses ASL and sees deafness as a cultural difference instead of a disability). The use of lowercase deaf denotes someone with the medical condition of deafness who does not use ASL and does not consider themselves a member of the Deaf community.
Teaching Philosophy Statement

The best learning experiences of my life have been in situations where I’ve made connections with people. Whether I’m the student or the teacher, the things I learn stick with me more if there is a strong connection with the experience. My teaching philosophy is therefore centered around making connections with my students. I believe that a good teacher-student relationship is essential for effective learning. The establishment of a connection to each student begins before students enter my classroom. It continues as I make sure assessments are varied so I can catch every student doing their best in different formative and summative assessment opportunities. Another important aspect of my connection with my students is connecting them with the Deaf community through culture-focused language teaching.

Teacher-student relationships

A healthy relationship between teacher and student can have a positive impact on learning and motivation in a second language (L2) classroom (Henry & Thorsen, 2018; Kordi, Hasheminejad, & Biria, 2012). When I teach in a traditional setting, each day before class starts, I stand at the door and greet each student by name and ask how they are doing so I can get a feel for my students’ overall wellbeing. When I teach online, I send frequent emails to check in with students and I leave comments on each assignment so I can establish a relationship with each of them. Students need to know that teachers know them individually. In his assessment of the human hierarchy of needs, Maslow pointed out that if students’ basic needs aren’t met, they can’t achieve higher levels of self-actualization and learning (Farimani & Shahri, 2020). Several years ago, a student wrote a letter to me at the end of the school year thanking me for taking the time to greet her by name each day and ask her questions about her day and her other classes. She admitted that many days, I was the only person who spoke directly to her in the entire school day
and that before taking my class, she had sometimes gone weeks at school without a person speaking to her or saying her name. This experience struck me deeply and confirmed that my efforts were making a difference and that teachers should remember that we teach students, not subjects. As L2 teachers, we have a unique opportunity to discuss daily topics with our students and learn about things that are important to them including details about their families, their interests, their likes, and dislikes. Several years ago, some students did a presentation about an upcoming band competition and how excited they were. As a class, we checked in with the students to see how it went afterward and learned new signs for “scores” and “judges” and other related signs. We built a community within our classroom where students cared about each other, and they knew that I cared about them as well.

In a 2019 study, Drakulić’s findings suggest “that a positive climate along with positive relationships generally reflect the quality of the learning situation which…facilitate language learning motivation and the relative degree of success” (p. 369). I have found that when my students know and trust me more, they are more likely to ask questions and request help when they need it. In my classroom, good relationships include mutual respect, humor, and genuine care. My students know that I see them as individuals who have more going on in their lives than just my class.

Varied assessment tools

When learning a second language, there are various ways to measure proficiency. I have found that students are inherently stressed about 'tests'. Consequently, I choose a variety of assessment tools to assess language skills that don’t carry the same stress as a traditional test. When assessing expressive skills, I decide whether it would be best assessed using a checklist, detailed grading list, or rubric, and make sure to include student and teacher examples to help
students know what is expected. While rubrics are helpful for longer presentational signed projects, they are not appropriate for all assignments and are often overwhelming for students because of the amount of detail included in each area of performance (Vercellotti, 2021; Youn & Chen, 2021). When assessing receptive skills, I try to come up with more fun assessments that students view as 'activities' more than tests. Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) suggest that “a good teacher never ceases to assess students, whether those assessments are incidental or intended” (p. 3). I want to get a true measure of what my students can do with the language, and I often get a better feel for those skills daily with formative assessments than I do with end-of-unit summative assessments.

Another assessment strategy I use is student self-assessment. Some of the benefits of self-assessment include “direct involvement of students in their own destiny, encouragement of autonomy, [and] increased motivation because of their engagement” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019, p. 314). Whenever I use checklists, rubrics, or grading lists, I ask students to watch their recorded projects before they turn them in and submit their self-assessment with their project. As part of their self-assessment, I ask them to identify the things they did well and identify one area they think they could improve for next time. I find this to be a great way for students to recognize areas of improvement without me having to do so. I’m able to focus on areas that they may not recognize, and it’s a way for them to set an improvement goal in each unit.

Because learning a language is a continuous process, I allow students to redo projects if they want to improve their grades and show that they have acquired skills they hadn’t previously shown. I give detailed feedback for every assignment students turn in and if the student is willing to accept that feedback and improve, they can re-submit their project and their new score will replace their original score. Though time-consuming, this allowance for additional attempts
contributes to the teacher-student relationship of trust and care that lets my students know that my main goal is to help them be successful in a new language.

_Culture-focused language teaching_

The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages states that “the inherent connections between the culture that is lived and the language that is expressed can only be realized by those who possess knowledge and understanding of both” (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015, p. 67). It has always been very important to me to include culture information in my daily lessons. I gather perspectives from as many Deaf sources as possible including books by Deaf authors, vlogs and videos by Deaf poets and storytellers, as well as narratives recorded by members of the Deaf community of their experiences throughout their lives. In addition to these media-based cultural resources, I invite Deaf people from the community to come in and visit with my students either in person or via Zoom so my students can see firsthand accounts of Deaf experiences.

I used to feel some discomfort with teaching a culture that wasn’t my own but have since learned about the idea of negotiability that was discussed by Canagarajah in his autoethnography (2012). He was a non-native speaker of English and was teaching with other native English speakers. He spoke several languages and often taught differently based on the demographic and setting in which he was teaching. He decided that “rather than treating [his] multiple identities as a problem, [he had] to treat them as resources. [He] should use these other identities to gain voice in [his] professional community” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 269). Like him, I have a lot that I can offer and contribute through the teaching of ASL to other members of my native hearing culture. In doing so, I can increase my students’ awareness and appreciation of a culture that they will most likely encounter in their future associations and careers. Because I believe strongly in
letting the Deaf community speak for themselves, I update my course material constantly with new Deaf perspectives that I find.

A unique aspect of the membership in the Deaf community is that it’s often not passed from parent to child. Only about 4-10% of Deaf children are born to Deaf parents, so the other 90-96% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who may have never heard of the Deaf community before (Leigh, Andrews, & Harris, 2018). One of my main motivations for teaching ASL to hearing students is to prepare them with an understanding of the Deaf culture so that if they have a deaf child someday, they will be prepared to sign with their child and offer them an accessible language from birth. If they have a deaf niece, nephew, in-law, neighbor, friend, or co-worker, they will similarly be educated on how to include and support them and be an ally with whom the deaf person can effectively communicate. I have also had the opportunity to help bridge the gap between the hearing and Deaf cultures as I’ve taught ASL to deaf students who were raised without ASL but who have desired to make connections to members of the Deaf community. If my ASL students don’t understand Deaf culture, they will never effectively connect with members of the Deaf community.

Conclusion

Through my years of teaching, many teaching strategies have changed and technological tools have been introduced and then become obsolete, but the need for strong relationships between teachers and students has stayed relevant. In addition, the need for varied assessments and culturally competent students remains an essential part of any L2 classroom. I still remember the teachers who made the extra effort to make connections with me and whose influence inspired me to want to become a teacher and I hope I can be that for my students as well.
CLASS OBSERVATION
I had the unique opportunity to observe an L2 classroom at Utah State University for a course that I had taken as an undergraduate student 24 years ago with the same instructor who taught me. It was a tremendous learning experience for me to see activities that I had experienced as a student but to view them through the lens of a teacher and to understand their pedagogical purpose in the classroom.

**Context**

The course observed was a beginning American Sign Language course (COMD 3010) that met three times each week (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) for 50-minute sessions. In addition to these class times, students are required to attend an ASL lab in the COMD/DE building for 50 minutes each week of the semester to practice signing with other students and with a Deaf teacher’s assistant (TA) who helps answer questions and reviews current vocabulary and helps students improve their conversational fluency. Due to the visual nature of ASL, in-person classes can never be too large, or students can’t see the instructor or each other well; enrollment is typically capped at 30 students. The students sat in a horseshoe shape around the edge of the classroom so they could all see the teacher at the front of the classroom and could also see all other students when they signed. With 10 students along each classroom wall, visibility was somewhat difficult for the students along the same wall, but not impossible. The students in the class were a mixture of students who were in the COMD/Deaf education program and those who were taking ASL because they were interested in learning it for personal reasons.

The class session observed was near the beginning of the term, so students had only been learning ASL for about 3 weeks. This was the 8th class session held, so students’ expressive and receptive skills were at the novice-low level.
Instructional Procedure

The teacher stayed in the target language all throughout the class in that she didn’t use her voice at all. She did use written English a few times to clarify what she was signing, and she used some PowerPoint slides with instructions in written English, but those were minimal.

The teacher began the lesson with a fun warm-up story. She described being at the USU football game and sitting in the stadium with different sections being striped with all blue or all white. She and her husband had worn the wrong color t-shirts and stuck out because they were the only ones wearing the incorrect color in their section. Before beginning her story, she reminded the students of the signs for blue and white and as she told the story, she used acting, pantomime, drawing, and fingerspelling to make sure it was understandable even though her students were beginners. I watched the students’ faces and they laughed at the right times and nodded their understanding throughout the story. Because she had chosen a familiar topic and used tools to help negotiate meaning, the students understood the overall story even if they didn’t know every individual sign that was used.

The next section of the lesson was an opportunity for the students to practice the introduction phrases they had been learning in Unit 1 in preparation for their upcoming test. The teacher put a list of questions on a PowerPoint slide that each pair of students was assigned to take turns asking each other. The questions included simple “get to know you” questions that would be likely to come up when first meeting someone on campus including: 1) What’s your name?; 2) Where are you from?; 3) Where do you live?; 4) What do you like to do in your free time?; and 5) What’s your favorite movie?

The teacher instructed the students to take seven minutes to ask their partners these questions and make sure they knew the answers to each one and then went around the room and
asked them to tell her their partner’s answers for one or two of the questions. As the students worked in pairs, the teacher watched their conversations and wrote down notes on the board based on consistent errors she saw. When the time was up, she gave a quick review lesson about pronouns. In ASL, the pronouns YOU and YOUR are signed with different handshapes. The pronouns YOUR and HIS are signed with different palm orientations. It’s very common for new signers to get pronouns confused. As the teacher was asking the students questions, it was essential that they understood that she was asking “What’s HIS favorite movie” and not “what’s YOUR favorite movie” so the students knew to give information about their partners instead of about themselves.

The teacher then went around to each pair asking and having each person answer a question about their partner. This served multiple purposes. It allowed each student an opportunity to have interpretive practice watching the teacher sign with limited options of what sentences could be signed. It allowed the teacher the opportunity to see each student produce a response about their partner that was somewhat novel, and it allowed the class to get to know new things about their classmates. During the discussion, it also allowed students to practice their interpersonal skills with commonly used topics that will come up when they meet Deaf people and other ASL users. The nature of the questions led to very natural responses from other students in the classroom as well like “me too!” or “same!” or “I love that place.” so the conversation had an authentic feel.

**Evaluation**

The teacher was involved in the class the entire class period. She wasn’t lecturing, but she was always engaged and available to the students. I think she struck a good balance of showing examples of ASL in its everyday form with her warm-up story and then examples of
breaking it down with using sentence-level ASL with English support with the PowerPoint slides. She made sure to use comprehensible input, so her students were with her, but she wasn’t using her voice or watering down her instruction and maintained high expectations throughout her instruction.

It was clear that the students knew that all information was going to be delivered visually and that they always needed to pay attention. They were engaged and following along with the teacher and her lesson was structured well and naturally flowed from one activity to the next without downtime between where students would get distracted or off-task. Overall, I found the teacher’s classroom planning and management to be excellent. The amount of time planned for each activity was sufficient for the students to finish what they needed to without being excessive or for them to get bored. I thought the activities were effective for the goals and objectives for the unit and could see them being easily used again in subsequent units.

**Reflection**

Because this teacher was someone who I learned from in my L2 classes, it’s unsurprising that she demonstrates several of the traits that I value in my teaching philosophy. She is an example of someone who establishes strong teacher-student relationships. When she was my teacher over two decades ago, she learned my name and cared about my progress in learning ASL and supported me through my educational career and beyond. Then and now, she learns students’ names and she teaches students more than she teaches lessons. It was evident from the one class I attended that she continues to make connections with students and continues to know them individually and talk with them before and after class.

Another aspect of my teaching philosophy that she demonstrated was the use of formative assessments. When she gave students the opportunity to answer questions individually
with her before the test, it gave her a chance to gauge where students still need work before they
do their expressive projects in the upcoming weeks. It also gave students the opportunity to
watch a question directly signed by their teacher and interpret what was signed before they do
their summative assessment where they have to watch videos signed by their teacher and then
write down what she signed. I think it’s a good practice to always give students opportunities to
be successful with the skills we want to assess before we assess them.

This observation was a great learning opportunity for me. Being able to observe in
language classrooms helps spark new ideas for me of how I can incorporate activities more
effectively into my classroom and reminds me that there are others around me who I can network
with in my professional community.
REFLECTION PAPER:

Interaction in an Asynchronous Online Language Learning Classroom
Introduction

When deciding on which topic to choose for the focus of my research, my current teaching position had the most influence on why I was drawn to read everything I could find relating to interaction in an asynchronous online language learning environment. For the first 13 years that I taught ASL as an L2, I taught in a traditional classroom setting. I provided ample opportunities every day for my students to practice new vocabulary words and phrases with their classmates. Each day I had a “question of the day” that would require students to think about something new and discuss it with their neighbor, and a few students would discuss their answers with me while the class watched and followed the conversation. Each day when my students left my classroom, I knew they had practiced their expressive and receptive skills to some extent.

In spring of 2020, I applied for a position as a teacher at a fully-online high school and before starting, I took a 3-credit college class about how to be an effective online teacher. I felt somewhat prepared for my new position when school started that fall but was surprised to discover that my online curriculum had no interactional element in the target language (TL). There was an option for a couple of discussion boards for students in written English, but in four semesters of language instruction, there was no required interactional element.

I met with my new world language team and asked if their curriculum contained interactional elements. Two of the other teachers were new and said their curriculum, like mine, had no options for interaction with other users of the target language. The other teacher who had been teaching online for several years said that his had optional activities, but students never did them because their reasons for taking online courses were typically ones that made them avoid synchronous activities. In talking with our administrators about whether we could require a synchronous element, they said we could attempt to, but the nature of an asynchronous course is
that students are drawn to the flexibility of timing and like to do their work on their own schedules. Some students do their work only in the evenings, on weekends, or over holidays. Some students work full-time, some are professional athletes, and some are traveling the world with their families and are in varied time zones. Essentially, if we tried to set a time when students had to join a synchronous call, there would never be a time that would work for everyone.

Over the past two years, as I have gained experience teaching online and as I have been in the MSLT program researching this topic, I have learned several things about interaction in an asynchronous online environment that led me to want to change how I teach in my classroom. As I have gained more knowledge in each course I’ve taken, I’ve reflected on how I could adjust my instruction to better incorporate best practices in these areas into my online environment. This paper will be a collection of the research that has impacted how I view effective online language teaching and the changes I’ve made in my online classroom to offer better interaction opportunities for my students. My hope is that I can bring my findings and methods of teaching to my world language team and that we can make some changes to our course requirements as a department so we can see better language outcomes for our students across the board and help them become more competent language users in the real world.

**Interaction in an asynchronous online language learning classroom**

Language acquisition and language learning occur in many different settings and circumstances. Some people acquire an L2 while living in a country where they are immersed in the language. Others learn an L2 in a traditional classroom setting where they attend for a short
time each school day. Dual-language immersion classrooms provide a combination of these environments where students are immersed in the language for half of their school day, but rarely hear the target language outside of the classroom. Each of these language learning environments offers the important element of interaction in the target language.

In recent years, online language learning has gained popularity for a multitude of reasons (Thoms, 2020). Some online language courses are asynchronous and require no synchronous components, while some courses are hybrid and have some online components and some face-to-face or synchronous activities. Recommendations from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) include the need for students to gain proficiency in three areas of communication: presentational, interpretive, and interpersonal (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). In an asynchronous online classroom setting, students are easily provided with opportunities to produce output in a presentational format that they can record and upload for the teacher to view and grade. Students are also given frequent opportunities to understand language input in the target language through videos or recordings to improve their interpretive skills. Some interpersonal communication skills such as how to ask and answer questions, how to exchange information, and how to appropriately listen and respond in a conversation can be taught asynchronously, while some other essential aspects of interpersonal communication are taught much more easily in a synchronous setting.

Inherent in the development of the interpersonal mode of communication is the need for interaction with others in the target language. These novel interactions that students engage in require “active negotiation of meaning among individuals, adjustments or clarifications for understanding, [and are] most obvious in conversations where one person does not know what the responses of the other person will be” (Cutshall, 2012). According to Long’s interaction
hypothesis (1996), these interactions in a language classroom provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning where a learner can use the target language to communicate and change how or what they are saying to be understood by others. Long proposes that the learning of language happens in these moments when learners must grapple with the language during an interaction. His research on foreigner talk found that native speakers frequently used interactional modifications when communicating with non-native speakers. These modifications included “repetitions, confirmations, reformulations, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, [and] clarification requests” (p. 418). These strategies helped the participants in a conversation navigate the exchange with added confidence that they were being understood. These negotiation of meaning skills are necessary for language learners to acquire so they can utilize them when they engage in conversation with native speakers or with other language learners.

Interaction in an L2 classroom easily provides for these opportunities, but asynchronous online courses can be difficult to structure in a way that students are given these interactional exchanges. Beginning students are bound to make errors in production as they try to produce output with the limited knowledge of language they have acquired. Long (1996) points out that often an ungrammatical utterance can still be comprehensible so there won’t be a breakdown in communication. Consequently, the non-native speaker might be unaware that they made an error because the respondent will know what was intended. Long says that “input must be comprehensible for acquisition to occur, and there is some evidence that global linguistic and conversational adjustments to [non-native speakers] improve comprehensibility” (p. 423). Teachers who are native or near-native speakers in a traditional setting may think their instruction is comprehensible, but often rely on immediate student responses such as looks of
confusion, head shakes, or facial expressions to alert them that their communication was not understood and that they need to make some interactional modifications. In an online setting, these signals are missed if the teacher has pre-recorded the material, so only limited occasions for negotiation of meaning can occur. These strategies should be taught and practiced in an L2 classroom regardless of the classroom type. Foster (1998) suggests that students will not consistently engage in these behaviors without being instructed in how to navigate them consistently but will “‘pretend and hope’ rather than…’check and clarify’” when they misunderstand something (p. 19). In addition to helping focus students’ attention on language form and correcting errors, negotiation of meaning strategies can have other benefits such as accelerating language production, improving students’ comprehension of given instructions, and improving retention of learned vocabulary (De la Fuente, 2002; Lu, 2021).

Non-interactional Online Tools

While many in the SLA field would agree that interaction is a necessary ingredient for language learning, some research supports the belief that language can be learned without an interactive component. With the growing popularity of smartphones and tablets, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has increased in popularity as well. Language learning apps and programs such as Duolingo, Babbel, HelloTalk, Busuu, Memrise, Rosetta Stone, and others have hundreds of millions of users. Many of these programs promise to be effective ways to learn a language, but most of them lack some key components necessary to become fluent in a language. In his 2022 study, Karasimos compared the designs of five of the most popular language learning apps available today. He found that while they had some features that were beneficial for learning words independently and they had some great gamification features, most of them lacked authentic interactional components and failed to yield results that were truly comparable
to a traditional language learning classroom. The popularity of these apps speaks to the widespread belief that one can download an app, learn vocabulary for a few minutes a day, and become fluent in a short amount of time without ever interacting with another person in that language. One Duolingo user I spoke with had used the app for 1100 days straight to learn Italian. One of the features of the app reminds users to get on each day and rewards them for remembering to practice for certain ‘streaks’. She said she considered herself to be an intermediate-mid language user at this point, but she has never spoken to anyone in Italian. She said there are occasional options to do interactive activities within the app, but she has never taken advantage of them, and they were never required for her to move on to the next level (M. Sticht, personal communication, July 14, 2022). Similarly, Karasimos (2022) says that Memrise has many features that provide authentic language samples and “rich real-life language content” (p. 157) but lacks interactive elements for language learners and therefore doesn’t provide a full language learning experience.

Another study from 2018 compared the outcomes of students learning Spanish through Duolingo with those learning in a traditional classroom setting and found that posttest scores showed no significant difference between the two groups of students (Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018). Even though students in the traditional setting had daily classroom interaction in the target language and students learning from Duolingo had no structured interaction in the target language, their scores in translating and vocabulary identification were statistically the same. I would expect similar outcomes with my students because these apps are great at teaching translation and vocabulary identification. Where I would expect to see a difference would be if the study compared a student from each of these language learning situations when presented with a novel language situation. What would they do if someone asked them a question about
something with which they were unfamiliar? Would they be equally skilled at asking for clarification or expressing a lack of understanding and a need for the person to repeat themselves or rephrase what was said? More research would be needed to assess these students’ skills with something other than a multiple-choice vocabulary test that resembles the way they were taught in an app. If these students were given an authentic language interaction, it would be interesting to see how well they would perform.

*Interactional Online Tools*

In contrast to these apps that largely focus on independent language learning, there are many tools and programs designed to enhance interaction in language courses in online, hybrid, or face-to-face settings. Chakowa (2019) explored a variety of ways to add asynchronous interaction for her online students. She conducted a study at an Australian university with a group of 60 beginning-level learners of French who were given the opportunity to participate in the course so they could advance their French skills more quickly over two semesters. The platform she utilized was called French Plus and was hosted on Wikispaces. She utilized four tools including Padlet, VoiceThread, Voki, and Quizlet. Padlet is an online discussion board where students can post notes or brainstorm with other learners. VoiceThread is a tool that allows for asynchronous discussions based around pictures, videos, or presentations. Students can comment in written form or leave spoken comments and others can respond about the same topic. Using Voki, students create a customized avatar that they can use for carrying out role plays. Quizlet allows for written collaboration through shared flashcards. Students were given access to these tools in order to communicate in the TL in a variety of ways. Through all of the interactional opportunities provided, Chakowa found that students were most likely to engage in
topics that were authentic and connected to their interests. Some activities encouraged multiple turns back and forth while others involved only one comment and one response.

Another aspect of her study was that students were able to interact with peers, with more advanced users of the target language (i.e., mentors), and with native speakers of the target language. Students could select which programs they used and with whom they communicated. Chakowa found that these opportunities to negotiate meaning with language users of varying levels of proficiency were selected by students largely based on the students’ hoped-for outcome; that is, they chose topics with their peers that were most relatable, had ‘ideal’ conversations with native speakers, and got the quickest response from the mentors. In an end-of-study survey, students expressed positive views of these opportunities for interactions. In VoiceThread, students were able to write or speak their comments and were found to speak more often than write. Chakowa suggests that “students used the spoken comments significantly more with NSs than with the mentors, perhaps because it was a unique opportunity and they wanted to make the most of it, even if they ran more risks of not being understood” (paragraph 47). Even in a completely online setting, these four online resources (Padlet, VoiceThread, Voki, and Quizlet) provided ways for students to have authentic interactions that strengthened their interpersonal skills.

In the spring of 2020, most schools across the U.S. were shut down for weeks or months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, many schools were unprepared to move their instruction online. Effective teaching strategies are often different in a traditional setting than in an online setting. Several online interactional resources were explored by Lomicka (2020). She detailed ways that L2 teachers can improve student interaction online and create online communities that foster interaction. She addressed the importance of instructor presence and
authenticity but stressed that the instructor needs to frequently interact with students when in an online setting. Some of her suggestions include external apps and sites such as Padlet, Slack, Flip (formerly known as Flipgrid), and Kahoot, and interactional activities such as polls, emails, announcements, office hours, videos, and break-out rooms during synchronous calls. Some of her suggestions require a synchronous element, but many work well in an asynchronous setting as well. Flip provides practice in presentational, interpretive, and interpersonal communication for listening and speaking and is all combined in one cost-free tool. Teachers can present a video prompt inviting students to answer a question on video in the target language (targeting interpretive skills). Students then plan out and record their responses (targeting presentational skills) and upload them as responses to the teacher. The whole class can see their classmates’ responses and respond in a comment on the individual videos to carry on a conversation (targeting interpersonal skills). While these asynchronous exchanges lack the opportunity for immediate feedback, they do provide a means for students to have conversations in the target language that include clarifications and other interactional modifications if their messages are misunderstood. Teachers can participate in the exchanges as well if they need to help facilitate understanding or provide clarity or correction. Tools such as Padlet and Slack can provide opportunities for threaded discussions in the target language to allow for reading and writing practice with negotiation of meaning strategies.

Another interactional idea that was explored in a recent study is that of video “pen-pals” with students in other countries. Thome-Williams (2016) explored the benefits of interaction not only for language development, but for cultural enrichment as well. Though the course she conducted research in was not an online course, she added an online interaction element to her traditional course. She taught Portuguese as an L2 at a northern Illinois university and was able
to create a partnership with another professor teaching English as an L2 at a university in Brazil. As a required part of her course, students were paired with a video pal and were required to meet with their partner over Skype for 50 minutes each week to speak Portuguese and an additional 50 minutes to speak English. They were given cultural themes to discuss together including their pets, student life, the cities they lived in, food and shopping, and the weather.

This type of interaction in an online course is especially valuable because students can interact with native speakers around their same age about common conversational topics. It also provides an immersive speaking opportunity for students who might not have the chance to study abroad and have natural interactions with native users from whom they can learn cultural ideas, information, and behavior. Opportunities to negotiate meaning in settings like these are plentiful because there will inevitably be terms and expressions that arise in a conversation that will be novel and will require clarification. The face-to-face setting also allows for easily recognized visual cues to communicate confusion or understanding. In addition to the face-to-face Skype calls, the students also communicated in the written mode through a private Facebook group where they could add posts and comment back and forth in whichever language they preferred. This provided asynchronous communication opportunities for reading and writing skills. Since students were in different time zones, they could interact whenever it was most convenient and then check back for responses later. Both Skype and Facebook are easily accessible in many countries around the world and could be utilized by L2 students.

*Student outcomes online vs. face-to-face*

With the advent of the internet, online language courses began to increase in popularity leading many researchers to question whether online language outcomes are as good as traditional face-to-face (F2F) classroom outcomes. Flesvig Bruland (2013) looked at the
relationship between linguistic outcomes and interaction in a beginning language classroom. She focused her research on reading and speaking outcomes of students in beginning French courses at several state and community colleges in Florida. At the conclusion of a 14-week semester, the students who participated in the F2F and online settings were assessed by the researcher for reading comprehension with a standardized test and for speaking and listening skills with an interview based on the Oral Proficiency Interview commonly administered by ACTFL. The F2F instructors indicated that they regularly provided interactional activities in the form of group work and speaking activities. The online instructors were varied in their provided interactional opportunities. Some provided pre-recorded videos or audio activities for students as part of the curriculum, but no online students were provided synchronous interactive activities in the target language. Online instructors reportedly did not use Skype, online discussion boards, or any other interactive tools. After all interactions between online students and teachers were reviewed, all interactions were one-way communications and were all in the students’ first language. The language results for speaking and listening showed that the online students scored Novice Low or Novice Mid while the students in the F2F class scored Novice High or Intermediate Low. On the reading assessment, students were statistically the same in both settings. This study supports Long’s interaction hypothesis showing that students who lack opportunities for interaction and acquisition of negotiation of meaning strategies score lower on speaking and listening tasks than those who are able to practice using the target language in interactions with peers and their instructor. Flesvig Bruland concluded that “face-to-face interaction is a critical component of Second Language Acquisition, [and] it can and should inform course design and subsequent pedagogical practices as it makes a case for the inclusion of real-time, face-to-face interaction in all instructional environments, especially those conducted online” (p. 158).
Some researchers have sought to implement interactional opportunities into their online classes to see if students can perform as well as F2F students. In his 2012 study, Brandl compared the language use of students learning German in an online setting when the students were given synchronous and asynchronous tasks. He suggested that “exchanging information under synchronous or asynchronous conditions involves different processes, and arguments that favor or disfavor language production can be made respectively for each condition” (p. 86). He presented students with a required task and an optional task, and the students were assigned to complete the task with a partner either synchronously via a chat feature in Moodle or asynchronously by posting to a forum with their partner. When working on the synchronous task, students were able to negotiate meaning more immediately and the real-time interaction helped the students feel more connected to one another as they worked together in the target language. However, the need to respond quickly had the potential to increase the stress and pressure of the conversation and had a negative effect on students’ accuracy in their communication. Conversely, when students interacted in an asynchronous task, they were able to think through various ways to communicate an idea and could monitor their own language production and adjust as needed. Brandl found that spelling errors were decreased in the asynchronous discussion, but that most other measured factors including grammar errors and individual language phrases were similar between the two settings. These findings suggest that for the skill of writing in the target language, students can complete tasks with similar competency in either of the two settings, but that there can be advantages to giving them opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous interaction.

In the field of ASL instruction, Radford (2012) supports the need for interaction in an online learning environment. He conducted a study comparing ASL students’ expressive and
receptive skills in online, hybrid, and F2F settings. Expressive and receptive skills in ASL are the same as speaking and listening skills in spoken languages. A group of 179 ASL I students were enrolled in one of the three settings, and all had the same instructor. All students, regardless of course delivery method, were required to attend weekly lab sessions in which they would practice ASL with a Deaf lab instructor. Students who were in the online or hybrid settings attended these labs virtually with 1-2 other students and the lab instructor. Students in the F2F classes attended the lab in person. Throughout the term, student grades were collected for two expressive projects and a final exam which consisted of receptive skills. Data collected included project scores, test scores, and the final course grade. Radford found that there was no significant difference between the student outcomes in the three settings. He concluded that when the material is the same and the instruction is the same, the setting doesn’t impact student receptive or expressive skills. Though the students in the online and hybrid setting had fewer hours of face-to-face exposure to the target language and fewer in-person opportunities for interaction, the required synchronous component provided opportunities to develop important interactional skills needed to be successful in the areas of speaking and listening.

In a similar study, Pudans-Smith (2019) compared the expressive skills of students in F2F ASL courses and online ASL courses. She hypothesized that students who were removed from the interaction of a typical F2F classroom would perform poorly compared to those given daily interactional opportunities. Online students were required to meet with an ‘ASL Pal’ online at least 23 times per semester for up to a half hour in each session. These ASL Pals were assistants who had at least a bachelor’s degree in teaching ASL and were fluent in ASL. Most of the course material in the online course was delivered in a visual medium instead of relying on written English. The students’ expressive projects were submitted using GoReact which is an online
video recording tool that allows instructors to give “real-time” feedback alongside the student’s video to simulate how a teacher would give corrective feedback or negotiate meaning in a classroom setting. The participants included five online students and six onsite students, and their progress was tracked over a fifteen-week semester. The teacher collected the video samples, assigned students a number, and then forwarded them to the researcher. Students were not identified by mode, so the researcher evaluated them without knowledge of the modality of the course they were taking. When students’ pretest and posttest scores were compared, Pudans-Smith found no significant difference between students’ expressive skills in onsite and online courses. Her conclusions support those of Radford (2012) that with the inclusion of the interactive component of the ASL Pals, students in an online setting are able to acquire the same expressive competencies in sign production, grammar, facial expressions, and syntax. This study lends support to the idea that speaking ability can be acquired as effectively online as in a F2F setting if some level of interaction is required.

A recent study by Peterson (2021) also supports this finding. He sought to show the efficacy of online instruction for speaking ability in L2 learners of Japanese when a synchronous element was included in the course. He compared the speaking outcomes of students in an online setting with those in a F2F classroom. The online students were required to have synchronous meetings with the teacher once each week. Additionally, students in the online course were required to engage in about 1400 oral practice tasks throughout the term using a program called Speak Everywhere. The instructor graded these tasks and sent feedback to the students with their progress. After the posttest scores were collected from online and F2F students, all students in the course, regardless of delivery method, made significant gains. The students in the fully online course made gains comparable to the face-to-face class that met every weekday for 50 minutes.
Though they had fewer daily face-to-face interactions with their teacher, their required synchronous meetings did present opportunities for interaction with each other and with the instructor. In these interactions, they were able to have experiences like those in a traditional classroom where they could negotiate meaning and modify their utterances to facilitate communication. Another important aspect of this study was the learners’ attitudes toward online instruction. When asked if the design of the online course was as effective as a traditional format, 78% of students who participated in the online course agreed that it was effective. They also said that they enjoyed the autonomy and flexibility of the online setting. These studies collectively show that if an online course is set up effectively with a synchronous aspect, online courses can be as effective as traditional classes.

**Attitudes toward online interactional experiences**

Creating an asynchronous course with a required synchronous element is not without challenges. In their research with different delivery modes of Spanish classes, Moneypenny and Aldrich (2018) identified several challenges of online language courses. In their study, students signed up for their preference of course mode. Their choices were fully online courses, face-to-face (F2F) courses, or a mixed format with some online courses and some F2F classes over their year in the program. They were tested at the beginning and end of the year and were given an ACTFL rating in several areas: overall proficiency, pronunciation, fluency, sentence formation, and vocabulary. Despite the courses in the study being called 'fully online courses', students were required to attend at least five synchronous conversation sessions online per semester where they were able to meet with their instructor or the course assistant and other students in person. At the completion of the study, Moneypenny and Aldrich found that regardless of the delivery mode,
L2 learners of Spanish can achieve the Intermediate-low ACFTL benchmarks after two semesters and can achieve Intermediate-mid after four semesters.

Several factors contributed to varied scores among students. The researchers reported that some students in the fully online setting were resistant to the synchronous interactive sessions and chose to lose 10% of their grade instead of attending. Some students signed up for asynchronous courses to avoid interaction with peers and teachers and to complete courses at their own pace and at the times they found convenient. Because of this and myriad other factors, students may resist a required synchronous element. The researchers also found that the combination of synchronous and asynchronous work increased the workload on the instructor to have to give individual feedback to all online students separately and to conduct the synchronous sessions. They suggest having a course assistant or qualified TA be employed to help lead synchronous discussions during weekly meetings and help give feedback. They also warn that fully online courses need to be created with sound pedagogical principles and require administrative support, resources to fund the creation of the courses, and access to reliable third-party assessments to ensure that proficiency levels are reached. They add that to achieve high levels of proficiency in the courses, students must receive adequate input, opportunities to produce meaningful utterances in the L2, and receive corrective feedback. Interaction and collaboration are important for students to be able to effectively negotiate meaning with peers and more advanced speakers. The challenges identified in their study should be considered before new online courses are added to a program to make sure all necessary components are included.

While some teachers may feel that an online interactional requirement increases their workload and some students are resistant, not all attitudes toward this requirement are negative.
Al-Sofi (2016) explored student attitudes about the efficacy of online interaction in an EFL course in Saudi Arabia. This qualitative study was conducted with a group of 117 college students learning English as a foreign language. Al-Sofi surveyed these students with 10 questions about the role of online communication in their language learning process. Instead of focusing on a specific language learning classroom, Al-Sofi asked students about all the online communication in which they engaged, encompassing more informal interactions with friends and acquaintances online including social media, email, and other online forums. Student responses showed that online communication could be very effective and play a “fundamental role for effective and successful learning of English language especially in the sense of developing the four language skills and other aspects of language learning as well” (p. 98).

While not face-to-face interactions, these online interactions still provide opportunities to negotiate for meaning in reading and writing. The generation of students that we are seeing in K-12 and undergraduate settings is one that has been raised with exposure to online communication from a very young age. Most of these students are more technologically savvy than the students we educated 20 years ago. O'Dowd (2007) suggests that "the younger generation of language learners will be particularly prepared and suited for online language learning due to their regular use of new technologies for recreational and social purposes" (p. 19). Opportunities for online written interactions should not be discounted as they provide real-world practice in the target language and can connect students to highly proficient users of the TL around the world. Although ASL doesn’t have a written form, languages that do have a written form should certainly not discount the benefits of written interactions.

Reflection
While online language courses may have limitations, studies have shown that it is possible and necessary to provide various, effective interactional opportunities for students in these settings and that attitudes toward them are largely positive. These studies have also shown that students can achieve similar communicative outcomes in online settings as their peers in F2F settings achieve if there is a synchronous interactional component. The frequency and duration of those synchronous interactional offerings warrants more research. Regardless of modality, L2 classes should include opportunities for negotiation of meaning and interactional modifications in each of the four communicative skill areas. Traditional F2F classrooms have valued these learning experiences for decades and they should continue to be implemented with the shift to online learning.

When I began teaching my asynchronous online courses two years ago, I felt that my students needed opportunities for interaction, but I wasn’t sure how it could be done. I decided to attempt two ideas that I learned about in my MSLT courses and see if either of them worked. The first idea that I tried was to offer synchronous practice sessions similar to the online lab hours offered by Radford (2012). At the beginning of the semester, I sent out surveys to all students asking what times and days worked best and then scheduled weekly practice sessions at the times that worked best for the most students even if they were in the evenings. We met in my online classroom in a format similar to a Zoom call. Some weeks I had as many as 10-14 students attend a single practice session (accounting for about 5% of my enrolled students) and some weeks I had only one student attend (.4%). Some students consistently attended and made significant progress in their expressive, receptive, and interpersonal skills throughout the semester. Regardless of the incentives I offered (extra credit, entries in drawings for gifts cards or prizes, getting assignments done in real time), most students (about 90%) never attended the
optional sessions. Some said the times didn’t work, but most just didn’t make the effort to respond to the invitations.

When new students joined for the first time, they usually expressed something along the lines of “I don’t know any of these signs” or “everyone is signing so fast” because they hadn’t seen the signs strung together before and felt totally lost. After they had made it through one practice session, subsequent sessions got easier and it was more likely that students would attend again once they came to one session. The students who came reported at the end of the semester that they were the most helpful aspect of the course to help them learn ASL. Ironically, when asked on the end-of-semester survey what could be added to the course to make it better, many students said they thought the class would be better if there were opportunities to sign with other students in the class. Clearly, those students didn’t read their course messages about the weekly practice sessions, but in hindsight thought they would have been helpful.

The students’ self-reported inability to recognize any of the signs being used in these practice sessions was evidence to me that the interaction in these settings was precisely the practice they needed. They lacked the ability to negotiate meaning. The signs were the same words they had learned in isolation in the lessons and the same sentences they had seen signed by the models in the practice videos. The difference was that they had only ever seen them signed in optimal conditions: the video was filmed straight on with excellent camera lighting by Deaf models wearing solid colors who were signing at a consistent pace and who made no production errors. When they came to a practice session, they instead encountered non-native signers who were sitting at all different angles at their computers or holding their phones, wearing all different patterns of shirts, in all different lighting conditions, making frequent production errors, and combining signs in novel ways. In short, they were seeing the language in
natural ways like they are likely to see it in the real world. Given these less-than-optimal conditions, they were unable to recognize the signs they thought they had learned. After only a few minutes of seeing the signs connected in phrases and signed by multiple classmates, students began to recognize the nuances and were able to understand them more clearly. They were able to communicate with furrowed eyebrows or a tilt of the head that they were not understanding what was being signed and the person signing would slow down, repeat the phrase, or fingerspell if necessary. Negotiation of meaning strategies were acquired very quickly in these sessions without even needing to be taught explicitly. Students naturally picked up on what their classmates were doing if they were confused and copied them.

Since seeing the success of the students who participated in these practice sessions, I have offered these sessions every semester. I have not been able to require them, but I have strongly encouraged and explained the benefits of the sessions and the need for interacting with other classmates. Attendance has not improved, so I have had to try other asynchronous tools and methods to increase interaction since I can’t require these synchronous sessions.

The second idea I implemented to incorporate more asynchronous interaction that could include some negotiation of meaning strategies was Flip. Starting with ASL 1 and continuing through each semester to my ASL 2 intermediate classes, I gave assignments asking students to record themselves signing about a given topic and post it to Flip. Before trying Flip, all student videos were submitted directly to me, so students never saw any of their classmates’ work. With the implementation of this program, students had the potential to see at least 50-100 student-produced videos per semester from their classmates. For some of their assignments, after they had posted their videos, they were assigned to watch another student’s video and leave a video comment in response to that student. Students could easily respond to one part of the video and
ask for clarification if they didn’t understand something that was signed. Examples of comments include “I missed what you said around 33 seconds. Can you repeat that?” or “what was the sign you used at 14 seconds?”. The student could either respond with another video or they could respond with a brief written comment. While not as immediate or as in-depth as a real-time conversation, students could still learn negotiation of meaning strategies from tools like these. Because students could choose which student they responded to, they tended to gravitate toward the most intelligible or most advanced signers in the class. I noticed that some students had many views on their videos, but no comments or questions left for them. In some instances, I wondered if the students didn’t understand what was being signed and instead of sounding rude and saying, “I didn’t understand anything you said”, they just searched for a student who was easier to understand and asked them a question instead.

Like the practice sessions, Flip provides exposure to a variety of signers in non-ideal circumstances so students can get exposure to signing from non-native signers. They see articulation errors, atypical grammar, and non-manual markers that are different from what they will see from the Deaf models in the courseware where they are learning signs. These are definite benefits since they can’t be signing with classmates face-to-face. It provides fewer benefits than the practice sessions, but this tool can be required for all students, so I know each student is getting some exposure to an interactional element. It’s made a noticeable positive difference in my students’ signing skills since I started using it and I think it can make an even larger impact as I continue to find more ways to incorporate it in other aspects of my courses. Students have positive attitudes about it, and it has features that many students find enjoyable such as varied backgrounds, screen effects, and the ability to upload pictures to use in recorded videos.
My studies in the MSLT program, viewed in the light of my classroom experience as an ASL instructor, have solidified my understanding that my students cannot be wholly successful in my online classroom without being provided multiple opportunities for interaction throughout their language learning experience. My research into the importance of interaction in an online environment and then the subsequent implementation of changes to my teaching methods to incorporate interaction for my students has invited a positive change in my classroom. It is not enough to offer extra interactional opportunities and then allow students to decide if it’s something they want to do. As the research discussed in this paper has shown, interaction needs to be a required component of any online course so students will have the necessary skills to navigate a conversation when they converse in the target language. As technology continues to advance, I look forward to finding new tools to add to my classroom to ensure my students are well-rounded in all necessary areas of their communicative skills. I’m also excited to work with my administration and world language team to find the best solutions to work with our unique student situations to ensure opportunities for synchronous interaction for all students.
STATEMENT OF FUTURE GOALS
During my time in the MSLT program, I have learned I always have more to learn. New information is available every day that sheds light on innovative ways to teach and engage students more effectively in the classroom. While my formal education in this program will end with the obtaining of my master’s degree, I know that studying and learning about new technologies and research in the field of SLA is part of my professional responsibility and will be a lifelong journey. To maintain my teaching license, I have the opportunity and obligation to attend professional development trainings each year that can guide my learning. It is important to maintain membership in my foreign language organizations (UFLA, ACTFL, ASLTA) to stay current with best practices in the field of SLA, ASL teaching, and general teaching practices and to maintain professional relationships with colleagues in my field.

I will apply the knowledge I have gained in this program related to technology and online L2 learning to enhance the curriculum I currently use and develop new curriculum for K-12 students in the future. In addition to adding interaction into each of my courses, I want to add more pragmatics-oriented lessons to my current curriculum to help my students become more competent language users and I want to improve my assessments to reflect more accurately what my students can do with the language.

In the district where I currently teach, I set personal professional goals and goals with my world language team each year. I look forward to collaborating with my team and utilizing their knowledge and expertise to help foster my professional growth. I will continue to take opportunities to observe my colleagues in their classrooms and find out what is working well for them and find ways to incorporate the effective strategies I learn from them into my own classroom.
By continuing to set yearly growth goals and committing myself to lifelong learning, I know that I can continue to improve as an educator and always become better than I’ve been.
References


