SHARING LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Edited by
Emily Heidrich Uebel, Angelika Kraemer,
and Luca Giupponi

Sharing Less Commonly Taught Languages in Higher Education

This edited volume highlights how institutions, programs, and less commonly taught language (LCTL) instructors can collaborate and think across institutional boundaries, bringing together voices representing different approaches to LCTL sharing to highlight affordances and challenges across institutions in this collection of essays. *Sharing Less Commonly Taught Languages in Higher Education* showcases how innovation and reform can make LCTL programs and courses more attractive to students whose interests and needs might be overlooked in traditional language programs. The volume focuses on how institutions, programs, and LCTL instructors can work together, collaborating and thinking across institutional boundaries to explore innovative solutions for offering a wider range of languages and levels.

With challenges, including instructor isolation, difficulty in offering advanced courses or sustaining course sequences, and minimal availability of pedagogical materials compared to commonly taught languages, to overcome, this collection is a vital resource for language educators and language program administrators.

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To my family, friends, and colleagues for your constant support and to my daughter, Aurora, for simply being you. —Emily

To those making a difference by creating multilingual and cross-cultural connections through language courses and international education: This is important work. —Angelika

To all the language instructors making the world a more beautiful place every day. —Luca

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Acknowledgments

Sharing Less Commonly Taught Languages in the 21st Century

Emily Heidrich Uebel, Angelika Kraemer, and Luca Giupponi

Abstract

This chapter sets the stage for the volume *Sharing Less Commonly Taught Languages in Higher Education: Collaboration and Innovation.* First, the authors showcase the various commonly accepted definitions of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) and some shared features and challenges of these languages. Next, the timing of the volume is discussed, especially in light of the current conversations in the academy and funding sources to spur innovative sharing initiatives. Three broad models of sharing LCTL courses across institutions (bilateral language exchange, language consortium, and asymmetrical language exchange) are then introduced to help readers better understand typical course sharing arrangements. Finally, the overall structure of the volume is explained; the volume is structured to highlight the affordances and challenges of sharing LCTLs through the lens of established consortial and sharing structures, adjustments to curricula, program capacity building, individual case studies, and recommended strategies for sharing.

Keywords: course sharing structures, inter-institutional collaboration, sharing strategies

What Are Less Commonly Taught Languages?

What are less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), and why does this volume focus specifically on these languages? The Modern Language Association defines LCTLs as "all languages not included in the top fifteen" most commonly taught languages (CTLs) (Looney & Lusin, 2019, p. 5). The National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) defines LCTLs as any language "other than English and the commonly taught European languages of German, French, and Spanish" (n.d.). Even when using the broader definition, LCTLs make up less than 25% of enrollments in world language courses in higher education in the United States (as calculated from the statistics in Looney & Lusin, 2019).

There are several factors that make LCTLs distinctly different from CTLs, namely, low enrollment rates, a lack of faculty expertise in the use of technology, and a shortage of high-quality pedagogical resources (Blyth, 2013). Compared to CTLs, LCTL instructors and programs need substantially more support (Brown, 2009). Despite this recognition of the need for support, resources for LCTLs and related research remain relatively restricted, and common experiences in the LCTL classroom may go unreported. Indeed, who wants to publish a report on the courses that are *not* happening at their institution due to issues such as low enrollment?

Low enrollment remains the biggest challenge for LCTL programs in higher education. In smaller language programs, there often exists only one instructor for any given language, and class sizes or teaching loads do not allow for consistent articulation/sequencing of courses over years, which disadvantages both the students and the instructor. Enrollment size can also affect whether instructors can offer upper-level courses at all, given the natural attrition experienced in all languages at more advanced levels. Having an unstable enrollment base is ultimately detrimental to LCTL instructors' professional standing. When instructors do not hit the threshold for enrollment, they will either be forced to cancel the course or may choose to take students on as independent studies so that they do not lose them. Either way, this will impact the stability of the program, students are unable to count on the courses being regularly offered in sequence (or at all), and the instructors may feel compelled to work more than contracted for no additional compensation in order to keep their programs alive, which engenders labor inequity.

This volume specifically focuses on LCTLs to not only give a platform for languages that are underrepresented but also to highlight the ways that sharing LCTLs can help alleviate some of the issues these languages face.

Why Now?

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a groundswell of projects being implemented across the United States to support and explore the collaborative possibilities of inter-institutional sharing, especially focusing on LCTLs. This volume (and its status as an open-access publication) was developed through the work of the Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership (https://lctlpartnership.celta.msu.edu/), which is housed in the Center for Language Teaching Advancement at Michigan State University (MSU). The partnership was first funded through a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2016. This broad-ranging project focused on creating inter-institutional working groups (see Chapters 6 and 13), leveraging existing networks and structures such as the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare Program (see Chapter 1 for more detail on this consortium) and promoting professional development opportunities to support LCTL education. The LCTL and Indigenous Languages Partnership, however, was not the only innovative and collaborative project to receive generous funding

from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Foundation supported many of the sharing collaborations highlighted in this volume, including the Shared Course Initiative (Chapter 3), the Shared Languages Program at the Great Lakes Colleges Association (Chapter 12), and the Mellon Transforming Language Instruction project at the University of Chicago (Chapter 15). In addition, personnel at MSU and the University of Chicago collaborated to create the Shared LCTL Symposium (https://slctls.org/) in 2016, an annual event where all individuals interested in sharing LCTLs can share with one another and be inspired by new ideas. In addition to the influx in private funding, the International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) office in the Department of Education administers Title VI grants to support programs including National Resource Centers and Language Resource Centers that "develop and maintain capacity and performance in area/international studies and world languages" (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). In the most recent call for applications in 2022, the IFLE had a focus on LCTLs as an absolute priority for any proposals (Federal Register, 2022). The National LCTL Resource Center (https://nlrc.msu.edu/), a new Title VI Language Resource Center, was established in 2022 and will continue to advance the work of strategic collaboration and sharing.

Given the growing support for sharing languages and the technological advances that allow for physically distant students to engage in remote education, the time for these conversations was imminent. Experiences with online remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the question about a "return to normal" brought discussions about the future of online instruction at institutions of higher education to the forefront. Institutions that may have been resistant to the idea of online education based on reputation or negative pre-pandemic studies may be reconsidering this bias (Shankar et al., 2021) and adjusting their curricula to meet the demand for online and hybrid courses (Garrett et al., 2022).

What Is Sharing?

"Sharing of LCTLs" is not a phrase that can be used without contextualization. In our own work and at the Shared LCTL Symposium, the phrase covers activities that range from instructors intentionally sharing pedagogical resources with one another to strategic, coordinated offerings of suites of LCTL courses. However, it seems as if when most people discuss sharing LCTLs, they speak about sharing courses between institutions. Such sharing can exist as one-off informal arrangements to accommodate a one-time need or more coordinated efforts through formal arrangements, including memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and consortia. There are several broad categories of sharing language courses across institutions, which vary in administrative and logistical complexity.

The first kind of sharing agreement is a bilateral language exchange, which is the simplest type of sharing structure administratively and logistically.

Although there may be several variations that could be considered bilateral, the simplest example of a bilateral language exchange is shown in Figure I.1, where one institution has a language it can offer (Language A) and wants another language (Language B). The institution matches this offering and desire with another institution that can offer Language B and wants to receive Language A in exchange. This can be done without the exchange of funds between institutions.

The second kind of common language sharing structure is a consortium, where multiple institutions come together to create an MOU. There are many ways that this can be done, but a consortial structure does not (often) require direct reciprocity, but rather gives institutions the flexibility to share with one or multiple institutions at a time (see Figure I.2). The Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare is such a consortial structure, where institutions may offer one language to multiple institutions and then receive different languages as needed for their students. This could be consistent across semesters or on an as-needed basis. In most consortia, no money is exchanged for the students that are shared. The member institutions agree not to ask for any tuition sharing in the assumption that the costs will work out from the robust sharing opportunities available. While the exchange between any two individual institutions may not be even, the tuition dollars over the whole consortium even out with only minor fluctuations over the years, so it makes sense not to be invoicing each other.

The third kind of sharing structure is an asymmetrical language exchange. Similar to other course sharing categories, there is variability in asymmetrical exchanges. A typical example (see Figure I.3) would consist of an institution (Institution 1) sharing some of its languages with another institution (Institution 2). Since Institution 1 does not need a language in exchange, Institution 2 would typically pay the first institution for the courses it is receiving. When money begins to change hands between institutions, things seem to become infinitely more complicated, administratively speaking, as the institutions need to agree on rates and payment schedules and involve more
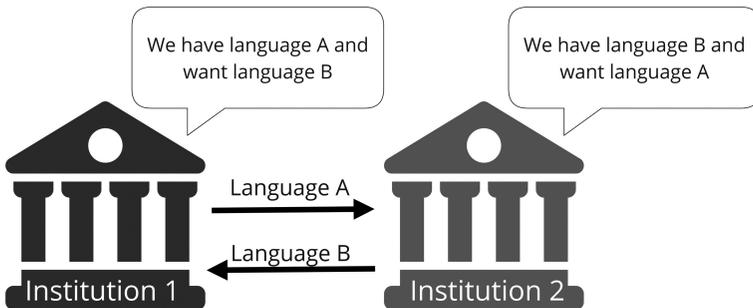
Figure I.1 Bilateral language exchange diagram by Emily Heidrich Uebel. Licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.
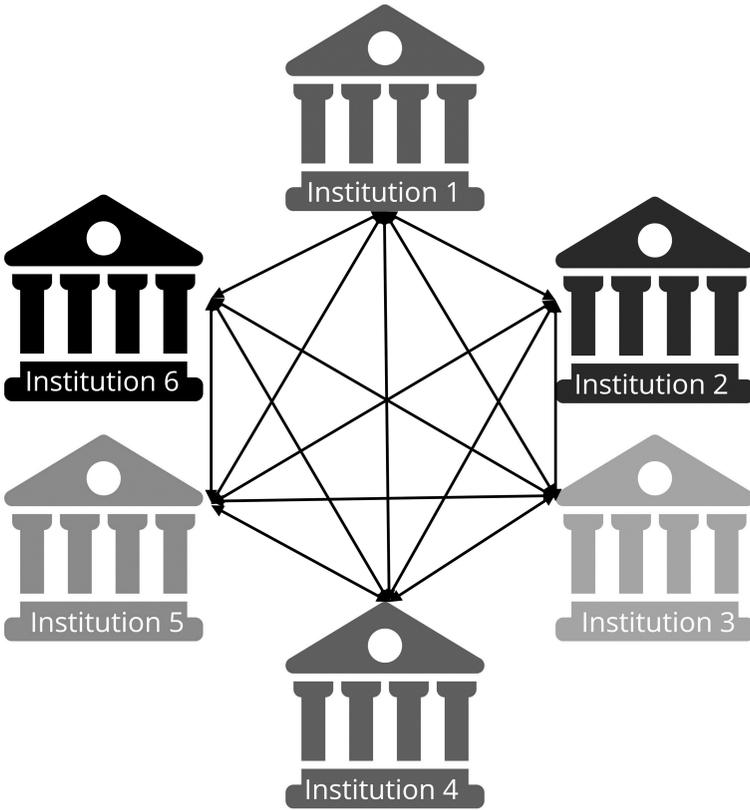
Figure I.2 Language consortium diagram by Emily Heidrich Uebel. Licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.
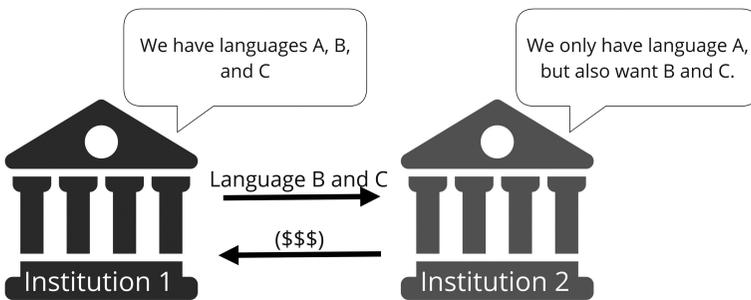
Figure I.3 Asymmetrical language exchange diagram by Emily Heidrich Uebel. Licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license.

institution offices (e.g., bursar, accounts payable, controller) that may not be involved in other types of sharing structures.

The parentheses around the dollar signs in Figure I.3 indicate that an exchange of money is not always necessary. While direct tuition exchange could be one arrangement, Institution 1 could also provide the course for students in exchange for a series of workshops or similar. Any tuition cost, reimbursement, or alternative arrangements would need to be spelled out in the MOU and provide equal-value services to benefit the needs of each partner.

One slight variation in this asymmetrical model is to jointly appoint an instructor between the universities so that salary can be shared. This could come in the form of cost savings to Institution 1 or an expanded position (e.g., from part to full time) for the instructor(s). The workload for this model is frontloaded at the beginning of the semester through appointing instructor(s) and may place a slight burden on the instructor(s) who will have some extra paperwork, but it is relatively straightforward and may be less difficult than tuition reimbursement on a per-student basis.

There are plentiful variations of these three broad models and ways to expand or deepen collaboration between institutions. Sharing LCTLs, however, does not stop with sharing individual courses or languages across institutions. Sharing LCTLs also includes sharing resources; individual instructors may not be able to establish course sharing structures on their campuses, but they can reach out to colleagues to collaboratively prepare lessons, share in professional development, and otherwise reduce the workload and isolation of any one individual LCTL instructor.

At first, the number of considerations necessary for establishing a successful course sharing structure may seem like a laundry list of barriers to participation. It is important to note that most challenges can often be worked through at the beginning of a partnership and possible issues avoided through careful consideration (for a list of questions to consider as you set up language sharing, see Chapter 17). Establishing successful sharing structures takes time, especially when it comes to navigating the bureaucracy of each institution. While instructors may have pedagogical strategies, technological concerns, and student enrollment at the forefront of their minds, these issues are the easiest to address. The decision to share must be a mutual one. Whether the impetus for sharing comes from administration or instructors, all stakeholders must be involved to ensure success.

Structure of the Book

The 17 chapters in this volume highlight the affordances and challenges of sharing LCTLs through the lens of established consortial and sharing structures, adjustments to curricula, program capacity building, individual case studies, and recommended strategies for sharing.

The volume is divided into four parts. The first part, "Sharing Structures and Established Consortia," contains four chapters. We set the stage in this volume with the chapter by Katherine Galvin, Keith Marshall, and Laurel Rosch (Chapter 1). Their chapter offers a general introduction to the history and administrative structures of consortial course sharing, using the Big Ten Academic Alliance as an example. Lauren Rosen, Nicholas Swinehart, Stephanie Treat, and Mia Li dive deeper into the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare Program and the University of Wisconsin System Collaborative Language Program. They describe the affordances and challenges of shared language courses, offering recommendations for scaling up course sharing in a sustainable way (Chapter 2). Another longstanding, successful LCTL partnership, the Shared Course Initiative (SCI) between Columbia, Cornell, and Yale Universities, is the focus of Christopher Kaiser's chapter (Chapter 3). He reflects on the results of this collaborative effort after one decade and articulates new directions that the SCI can productively explore in the future. The last chapter in this section (Chapter 4) highlights another decades-old initiative, the Duke–UVA–Vanderbilt Consortium. Deborah Reisinger, Nathalie Dieu-Porter, and Miao-Fen Tseng detail challenges throughout the development of this partnership and share best practices they have developed, emphasizing both flexibility and open communication.

Part two of the volume, "Curriculum Development and Building Program Capacity," contains four chapters. An exemplary collaboration across languages is presented by Ragy Mikhaeel, Oya Topçuoğlu Judd, Hanna Tzuker-Seltzer, and Franziska Lys, who used the theme of a city as the starting point for their shared approach to curriculum development for intermediate-level learners of Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish (Chapter 5). While their chapter exemplifies productive collaboration among colleagues within one department, the next chapter illustrates a consensus-driven approach to developing shared resources across institutions and programs. Mithilesh Mishra, Shaheen Parveen, Syed Ekhteyar Ali, and Sarah Beckham outline the work of the Hindi Working Group of the LCTL and Indigenous Languages Partnership at MSU. The chapter (Chapter 6) describes the ways in which increased sharing and collaboration led to an effective reconceptualization of instruction and enhanced professional growth and efficacy. Ani Kokobobo's chapter reports on outreach efforts to strengthen connections between K–12 schools and higher education (Chapter 7). Her Russian program built a K–12 pipeline and opened language and culture instruction for nontraditional students through a grant funded by the U.S. Russia Foundation. The fourth chapter in this section (Chapter 8), by Eduardo Lage-Otero, offers insights into a partnership between Yale University and the National University of Singapore (NUS), and the shared language programs Yale–NUS College has offered since 2013. It chronicles the development of language study in a new college and its concomitant challenges and successes.

The third part of the volume, "Case Studies," includes five chapters, each highlighting a specific language and process of sharing. The focus of Vance

Schaefer and Tamara Warhol's chapter is on East Asian languages (Chapter 9). They review shared linguistic features unique to these LCTLs, suggestions for collaboration, and sample activities. Emily Tummons reflects on the shared teaching of Kaqchikel Maya and how inter-institutional partnerships expanded opportunities for learners of Mayan languages, resulting in growing enrollments (Chapter 10). In the next chapter (Chapter 11), Kazeem Sanuth raises important concerns associated with course sharing, specifically related to African languages. Drawing on critical applied linguistics, he urges practitioners to weigh affordances and challenges with caution. Hanada Al-Masri and Cheryl Johnson examine the successes and challenges of inter-institutional collaboration in Arabic within the context of small single-person programs, focusing on the sharing of upper-level courses in the Great Lakes Colleges Association's Shared Languages Program (Chapter 12). The last chapter in this section (Chapter 13) focuses on conceptual and practical matters of materials development across institutions. Ana Maria Fiuza Lima and Raquel Castro Goebel describe the innovative work of the Portuguese Working Group of MSU's LCTL and Indigenous Languages Partnership to increase course offerings and engender the possibility of boosting enrollments from intermediate to advanced Portuguese courses.

The volume is rounded out with the section "Sharing Strategies." The last four chapters address a variety of approaches to LCTL sharing such as technology-mediated instruction, professional development, and credentialing. Adela Lechintan-Siefer shares teaching strategies that help enhance intercultural learning communities, using intermediate Romanian as an example (Chapter 14). She describes and analyzes course materials and techniques that promote intercultural communication and learning communities. The chapter by Catherine C. Baumann, Ahmet Dursun, and Phuong Nguyen describes their Transforming Language Instruction project, which trains LCTL instructors in assessment-driven, proficiency-oriented, reverse-design curriculum development (Chapter 15). This groundbreaking project has resulted in a thriving community of practice among LCTL instructors across institutions. Approaches to expanding equitable access to LCTL learning in K–16 are the focus of the chapter by Michele Anciaux Aoki, Russell Hugo, Veronica Trapani-Huebner, and Bridget Yaden (Chapter 16). They provide specific examples of recognition and credentialing processes for LCTLs along with ideas for draft legislation and policy changes based on their work in Washington state. The final chapter in this volume (Chapter 17) offers a roadmap for cohesive and successful course sharing. Angelika Kraemer and Danielle Steider describe four practical aspects that course share programs should consider and revisit regularly: Collaboration, Communication, Curriculum, and Community of Practice.

Course sharing is certainly not a panacea for all difficulties facing LCTLs—the sum of the whole is decidedly greater than its individual parts. The innovative and collaborative examples of sharing LCTLs in this volume provide inspiration for institutions of higher education to reach more students, support linguistic diversity, and provide more stability to LCTLs.

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Part I

Sharing Structures and Established Consortia

1 Consortial Course Sharing

A Look at the History and Foundations of the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare Program

Katherine Galvin, Keith Marshall, and Laurel Rosch

Abstract

The Big Ten Academic Alliance is the academic consortium of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago. Formerly known as the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, the Big Ten presidents created the consortium in 1958 with the vision of collaboratively advancing their universities' shared missions of education, research, and public engagement. For over 65 years, the Big Ten Academic Alliance members have partnered to generate unique opportunities for students and faculty, broadening and deepening their individual institutional and collective consortial impact, saving money, and serving the common good.

Course sharing was an early academic collaboration explored by the liberal arts and sciences deans of the Big Ten Academic Alliance. Early efforts eventually led to the establishment of the CourseShare Program in 2005, which affords students from any member university the opportunity to take low-enrollment or less commonly taught language courses offered by other Big Ten Academic Alliance universities. The CourseShare Program has grown in the number of courses offered, students enrolled, and as a collaborative community and infrastructure used to support related externally funded course sharing initiatives.

This chapter explores the history, foundational principles and practices, and educational missions served by the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare Program.

Keywords: CourseShare, Big Ten Academic Alliance, Committee on Institutional Cooperation

History of Course Sharing by Big Ten Universities

The history of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, previously known as the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), and its collaborative efforts to advance language acquisition mirror the history and societal transformations

of post-World War II America. From the rapid enrollment growth spurred by the availability of the G.I. Bill to the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, and from Vietnam war protests to the advent of the digital age, the Big Ten Academic Alliance and its language collaborations have evolved to both respond to the changing landscape and leverage the new opportunities they presented.

The CIC's formation in the late 1950s took place in an environment of rapid growth and change in higher education. As the end of WWII loomed, the American government began planning how to reintegrate the 12 million active-duty soldiers and return to a peacetime force one-tenth that size. The resulting Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill, reshaped both higher education and the American middle class by making postsecondary education and training essentially free to millions of returning service members. By 1956, 7.8 million veterans had availed themselves of the G.I. Bill, with 2.2 million attending colleges and universities and the remainder pursuing technical training (G.I. Bill, 2023, para. 4). As a result, higher education enrollments tripled in little more than a decade, from 1.15 million in 1944 to 3.64 million by 1958 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1993).

This tremendous growth presented both opportunities and challenges for America's colleges and universities. One innovative response was the creation of interstate compacts, where state legislators from numerous geographically clustered states agreed to work together to "solve problems related to higher education, to facilitate data and information exchanges, and to increase cost savings through collective purchasing power" (Center for the Study of Federalism, 2019). In 1948, 16 states ranging from Maryland to Texas formed the nation's first higher education compact, the Southern Regional Education Board, to address educational issues from prekindergarten through postsecondary education (Center for the Study of Federalism, 2019). Similar regional higher education compacts were created throughout the 1950s, with the most well-known being the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, which was created in 1953 and is still active and well-known today.

Within this backdrop of rapidly expanding enrollments and the emergence of higher education compacts, the presidents of Big Ten universities began exploring the idea of a voluntary alliance to strengthen their individual universities through a unique collaborative partnership. In 1956, the then 10 universities of the Big Ten Conference—University of Illinois, Indiana University, University of Iowa, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Purdue University, and University of Wisconsin—were world-class universities with long, proud histories, growing enrollments, and sterling reputations in academic circles. However, they were little known outside of their home states and academic circles.

In early 1956, Herman B Wells, the illustrious President of Indiana University, was meeting with James Perkins of the Carnegie Foundation when

Perkins asked why Big Ten presidents, known then as the Council of Ten, only discussed football when they met. A frustrated Wells retorted that they primarily talked about other, more relevant things, such as academics and research, but the press only reported their discussions about football. Determined to change that, the two men hatched the initial idea that would eventually become the Big Ten Academic Alliance.

Wells introduced the idea of a voluntary consortium focused on academics, research, and service at the next Council of Ten meeting in December 1956 and reported an enthusiastic reception. David Henry, President of the University of Illinois, was so struck by the idea that he offered the services of his Provost, Gordon Rey, to lead an exploratory committee, beginning a special connection that continues through today.

As the exploratory committee considered the nature, scope, and structure of a potential collaboration, the USA and higher education were shaken by the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik on October 4, 1957. Instantly, the federal government began encouraging students to enroll in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors, asking colleges and universities to produce more STEM and language graduates, and greatly increasing federal funding for STEM research to counter what was perceived as a Soviet advantage in the space race. The federal government formalized and funded these initiatives in the landmark National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which provided, among other things, funding for language instruction and area studies. Any doubts about the need for and advantages of a collaborative model were laid to rest, and the first meeting of the CIC took place on January 18, 1958. The first order of business was to invite the University of Chicago, which had been a founding member of the Big Ten Conference before deprioritizing athletics in 1949, to join the CIC, bringing it to 11 members.

The CIC was not the first academic consortium or collaboration, but it was the first of its kind. The Claremont University Consortium, established in 1925, is considered the first academic consortium in the USA. The Claremont model was then replicated by the Atlanta University Center Consortium in 1929 and then, after the disruptions of the Depression and WWII, by The Five Colleges Consortium in upstate New York in 1951. These three consortia, all still thriving today, are composed of small liberal arts colleges that are either contiguous to one another or in close geographic proximity, and their primary foci are shared services and shared resources. As previously noted, the CIC was also predated by interstate compacts, but they were imposed on universities by state legislatures seeking to reduce costs and enhance efficiencies.

What made the founding of the CIC so unique was that it was the first voluntary academic collaboration of large comprehensive research universities spread across a significant geographic distance—730 miles from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Columbus, Ohio. Rather than being bound together by a shared footprint or legislative mandate, the universities of the Big Ten came together because of a shared vision and a shared goal that they could do more together than any of them could do separately. The voluntary nature of the

consortium and the vast geographic distribution called for new and unique forms of collaboration that shaped the CIC's programs throughout its history.

In the CIC's first brochure in 1959, its mission was clearly stated:

> to improve educational and public services while minimizing costs by: (1) encouraging cooperative efforts among the eleven institutions, (2) identifying specialized areas of teaching and research in which cooperative arrangements may be desirable, and (3) initiating cooperative activities in instruction and research, particularly in graduate areas, among the institutions.
>
> (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1959)

Further, in outlining the future agenda of the CIC (1959), it authorized "exploratory studies in foreign language programs."

The CIC's early focus on language instruction, particularly less commonly taught language (LCTL) courses, was a natural fit between the CIC's mission to focus on "specialized areas of teaching … particularly in graduate areas" (1959) and the growing need for language experts after two decades of war in Europe and Asia. The American military realized the importance of language skills after WWII, and the Korean War forced the military to operate in China, Europe, Japan, Korea, North Africa, the Philippines, and countless South Pacific cultures. With the passage of the NDEA in 1958, large federal grant programs became available to support expanded language instruction, particularly in critical languages. The CIC took full advantage of those programs.

By 1960, several CIC faculty committees were exploring collaborative opportunities in language instruction, and the 1961 Annual Report noted the deans of arts and sciences were "developing an orderly plan for expansion within the CIC framework on a voluntary basis" (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1961, p. 2). These early efforts continued and by the 1962 Annual Report, the deans of liberal arts proposed that "offerings in the less common languages might be developed more systematically through a cooperative arrangement" with "each university … developing strength in a particular area" (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1962, p. 7).

These early efforts led to the creation of a summer language institute program, with the first Far Eastern Language Institute being offered at the University of Michigan in 1963 and a second at Indiana University in 1964. Supported by a $256,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, the 1963 Annual Report described these language institutes as

> designed to provide what no single institution could hope to offer: broad-scale intensive instruction in Chinese and Japanese on both elementary and advanced levels. An equally important objective of the programs is to aid in the expansion of language offerings among participating universities.
>
> (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1963, p. 7)

Both institutes were a huge success with 125 students from 41 institutions participating in 1963, growing to 150 participants in 1964 (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1964).

The summer language institutes became the defining program of the CIC during its first decade of existence. With renewed funding from the Ford Foundation and additional NDEA funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the CIC continued to offer the Far Eastern Language Institute throughout the 1960s and added additional summer institutes in South Asian Languages and Area Studies, Slavic Languages and Area Studies, and African Languages. These programs were so successful that several were also offered in various cities in India between 1970 and 1973 (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1971, 1972).

Unfortunately, federal and grant funding for the summer institutes began to diminish in the early 1970s. Public attitudes toward higher education soured after years of anti-war protests that centered mostly on college campuses, while the Nixon administration shifted funding priorities away from higher education. By 1974, all of the CIC's summer institutes had been discontinued due to a lack of external funding. In response, the CIC shifted to a dispersed language instruction model that leveraged the existing Traveling Scholars Program.

Traveling Scholars was another of the CIC's first and most successful programs. This program allowed doctoral students to spend a semester or more at another CIC member institution at no additional cost to take classes, conduct research, use specialized equipment, and access mentors not available at their home campus. Borrowing the Traveling Scholars Program model, the CIC created the Traveling Language Scholars Program in 1972.

Institutions participating in the Traveling Language Scholars Program committed to teaching a LCTL in a compressed format, so students could learn a year or more of language in a single semester. In 1973, five CIC institutions taught compressed one-semester courses in African and South Asian languages: the University of Chicago offered Bengali and Tamil, the University of Illinois offered Kashmiri, the University of Michigan offered Sanskrit, the University of Minnesota offered intermediate and advanced Urdu, and the University of Wisconsin offered Telegu and elementary Hindi-Urdu. The Traveling Language Scholars Program was available to both undergraduate and graduate students and continued the Traveling Scholars Program's commitment of no additional fees for participation. In both programs, participating students paid either the tuition and fees at their home institution or at the participating institution, whichever was lowest.

The Traveling Language Scholars Program continued through the 1970s with courses offered at up to six CIC institutions per year, mostly in South Asian languages. In 1979, the model was expanded to offer intensive coursework in the Amazon River Basin Interdisciplinary Program at the University of Illinois. Given that it had expanded beyond language instruction, the

Traveling Language Scholars Program's name was changed to Special CIC Instructional Programs. Unfortunately, this program was no longer offered by the mid-1980s, and the reasons for its demise are lost to history.

In the early 1980s, the deans of liberal arts and sciences were once again exploring how best to support and share the breadth of language courses across CIC member institutions. In 1984, the deans appointed the Committee on Infrequently Taught Languages to "explore ways in which CIC universities could work together to preserve the diversity and quality of instruction in low-enrollment languages while reducing its cost" (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1985, p. 20). By 1986, the Committee on Infrequently Taught Languages recommended the creation of the Foreign Languages Enhancement Program (FLEP).

FLEP was an evolution of the Traveling Language Scholars Program. Instead of campuses creating special compressed language courses to entice enrollments, the CIC provided scholarships designed to cover living expenses for students enrolled in the standard LCTL courses offered at other CIC institutions. The FLEP scholarships required an application and were awarded competitively. The FLEP program was highly successful and awarded up to 33 scholarships per year from 1986 through the early 2000s, with students enrolling in more than 40 different LCTLs.

Through its first three decades, the CIC focused on programs to bring students together—through summer institutes, traveling scholars' programs, and scholarships—to take advantage of the LCTL courses taught across the CIC. Concurrently, the CIC had been exploring new teaching modalities and technologies—correspondence courses, closed circuit TV, audio recordings, and even satellites—but never applied those approaches to language instruction. Presumably, the new technologies and teaching modalities were not integrated into the consortial language programs because of the belief that they could not support the synchronous learning felt at that time to be critical to language instruction.

That changed in 1993 when the University of Illinois released Mosaic, the first graphical web browser, and opened the fledgling internet to the world. Almost immediately, the CIC launched the CIC Initiative on Learning Technologies, which, according to the 1995 Annual Report, was designed to take "bold steps toward realizing the potential of learning technologies and achieving the widespread integration of technology in teaching and learning" (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1995, p. 4). After almost 40 years of programs designed to bring students to language instructors across the CIC, the internet provided the opportunity to bring the instructors to the students, no matter where the students were.

In 1995, the CIC conducted a Symposium on Technology and Foreign Language Learning and began pilot projects to distribute compressed video to member institutions via the internet. Despite some outcomes being less than fully successful because of unsatisfactory technology solutions and a lack of

coordination across the consortium, interest had been sparked and collaborative conversations continued.

By 1997, the CIC created a Learning Technology Seed Grant Program to stimulate the development of innovative technology-based teaching modalities. The CIC awarded nine seed grants that year, including one for the creation of The CIC Foreign Language Media Consortium, with its stated goal being the "[e]stablishment of a common development environment to foster the collaborative creation of multimedia foreign-language instructional material" (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 1997, p. 4).

In 2001, the liberal arts and sciences deans embarked on a strategic planning process to explore what was perceived as a key opportunity to work together on access to LCTLs. Ultimately, the deans charged a smaller group to identify the most promising areas for LCTL collaboration. This group extensively reviewed existing consortial programs and approaches to LCTL sharing and met in May 2003 to discuss and identify strategies for expanding LCTL access. The *Strategies for Sharing Less Commonly Taught Languages Across the CIC* report (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 2003) was delivered to the liberal arts and sciences deans in September 2003.

At the time of the 2003 Annual Report, member universities collectively taught 106 LCTLs. The number of such languages taught at individual universities, however, ranged between 13 and 39 LCTLs "resulting in widely differing student access to languages" (p. 1). Detailing aspects of the existing consortial initiatives related to LCTLs, the 2003 Annual Report made recommendations for program enhancements to FLEP, the Traveling Scholars Program, Alliances for Expanded Study in Overseas Programs, and the newly piloted CourseShare Program.

Birth of the CourseShare Program

The CourseShare Program pilot began in 2003 as an administrative framework and mechanism for increasing course sharing of low-enrollment courses. It allowed for cross-registration, grading, and credit transfer of inter-institutional courses based on agreed-upon conditions for course development, implementation, tuition sharing, and annual reporting to the deans. The first CourseShare Program offered was a nursing informatics seminar delivered by four member universities to at least 11 locations. In fall 2003, two LCTLs (Portuguese and Uzbek) were offered via the CourseShare Program.

Recognizing the opportunity to build upon these existing collaborative initiatives and to better leverage advances in technology, the 2003 Annual Report identified both campus and consortial-based strategies for increasing student access to LCTLs. With review and input from language departments, international studies, graduate schools, and central technology units, the 2003 Annual Report's recommendation to the liberal arts and sciences deans was to focus their CIC efforts on the following two strategies:

1. Pool and expand existing LCTL courses and resources, as appropriate, throughout the CIC, making them available to all CIC students—undergraduate as well as graduate students.
2. Create a mechanism through which CIC universities may plan for coordinated and expanded collaborative language offerings. This will provide the necessary long-term course development, access and articulation, and incentive structures.

Twelve actions were identified in support of these recommendations, with corresponding outcomes that could be used to measure success. The deans charged a LCTL working group to agree on three to five LCTL courses that could be shared across the consortium. The working group proposed five languages for course sharing, to begin in 2005. Those languages were Arabic, Hindi, Korean, Portuguese, and Swahili.

In October 2006, the deans agreed on their first Guiding Principles for Sharing Courses (Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 2006). With the sole exception of cost-sharing guidelines, which were finalized after the initial three-year pilot, the 2006 guidelines remain unchanged and are in effect today.

These principles articulate the colleges' agreements regarding the academic and administrative processes that govern LCTL course sharing. Specifically, participating universities agree that they accept the host universities' processes for course creation and instruction selection. This "full faith and credit" commitment to the host university's academic processes and decisions extends to the assessment of the course level, curriculum, grading, and schedule, as well as the technology that is used to share the course. Additionally, there is no cost sharing by partnering universities, and participating students are not charged any additional fees to participate in CourseShare. The member universities were able to agree to these foundational principles and guidelines due to the strong network of trust among their universities borne out of their decades-long collaborative engagement with each other.

CourseShare Program Administration

The Big Ten Academic Alliance headquarters office provides the administrative and collaborative expertise and technological infrastructure necessary to administer the CourseShare Program. A CourseShare software platform provides the partnering universities with a secure portal to offer and explore LCTL courses for their students. An Inquiry Board feature advertises specific language courses and levels that are being sought as well as LCTL courses a university is interested in hosting and receiving students from across the consortium.

Once partnerships are agreed on, consortium staff establish secure online portals for each CourseShare partnership. Partnering registrars and appropriate

designated staff use this space to enter and transfer student information consistent with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines. Additionally, a master list of all current and upcoming CourseShare courses is available on the CourseShare site, which in turn aids in the creation of further course sharing. Universities receiving a CourseShare course create a parallel course within their home system, resulting in CourseShare courses appearing on students' home institution transcripts as a course of that university.

This is a highly manual program that requires, and has, a lot of dedicated individuals administering it. Beyond Big Ten Academic Alliance staff members supporting the program, central are the CourseShare Coordinators who are the principal administrators at each university with whom departments, faculty, and students engage to request, establish, and support a course sharing partnership. CourseShare Coordinators are the main liaisons between participating universities and the Big Ten Academic Alliance headquarters. The coordinators engage one other in identifying courses that their universities are interested in hosting and receiving, and then oversee the CourseShare partnerships that are created.

CourseShare Registrars play another central role in managing student enrollment and FERPA-compliant transfer of student information, including grades. Technologists set up the systems and tools needed to facilitate the sharing of the course. And of course, the instructors, departments, and schools are a critical piece of the course instruction and support of the students—both local and remote.

Finally, a healthy collaborative community is vital to the success of the program. That community is created and fostered through regular meetings and communication that result in cross-institutional learning and the smooth administration of the program. Each entity involved with CourseShare operates as a pivotal piece within the collaborative CourseShare community and is vital to the success of the program.

Current State of the Program

Since its inception in 2003, the CourseShare Program has grown in both enrollment and LCTL courses affiliated with the program. Over its lifetime, CourseShare has served almost 4,000 students taught via 935 shared courses. Figure 1.1 shows the growth in the number of courses and students since AY 2006–07 (the first year outside of the pilot program and for which such data are available) to AY 2021–22. The last reported academic year, AY 2021–22, was a record year for the CourseShare Program with 215 CourseShare courses established, 625 enrolled students, and 278 established partnerships among member universities.

The number of different languages available through the CourseShare Program has also grown, from the five languages taught as part of the pilot program in 2005 to 51 distinct languages taught in AY 2021–22. To assist with the identification of course sharing opportunities, the Big Ten Academic

CourseShare Courses & Enrollment 2006-2022
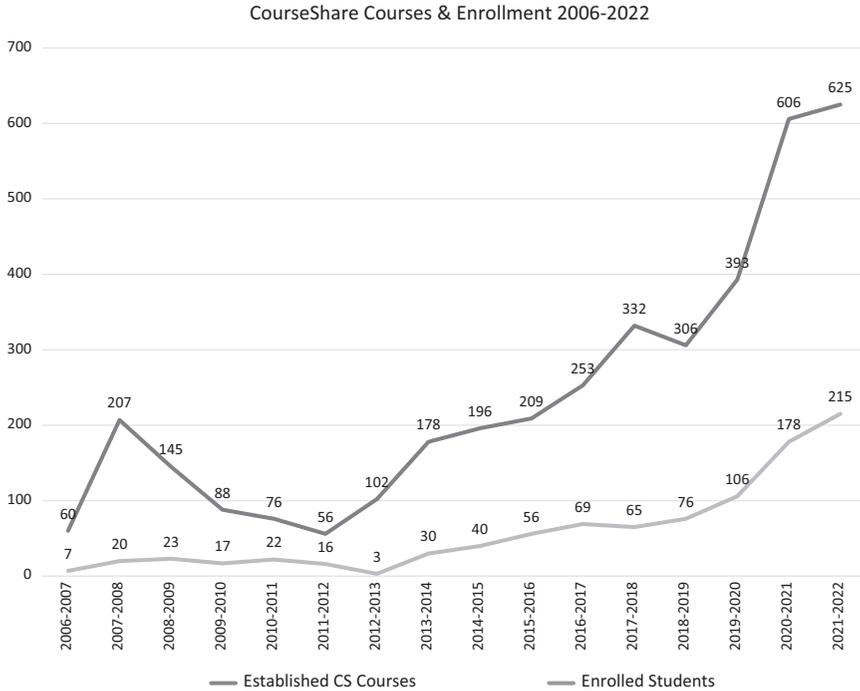
Figure 1.1 CourseShare courses and enrollments 2006–2022.

Alliance surveys its members with the goal of creating an inventory of language offerings. In the last two academic years for which data are available (AY 2020–21 and AY 2021–22), Big Ten Academic Alliance universities collectively offered at least 126 different languages. Fifty-one LCTLs were taught via CourseShare during that same time period. These data show that students who attend Big Ten Academic Alliance universities not only have access to their own universities' extensive language offerings but also to a large network of LCTL courses available to them through the CourseShare Program. Notably, students took both fall and spring semester courses in 33 of those 51 LCTLs, suggesting high student satisfaction with CourseShare courses.

All Big Ten Academic Alliance universities have consistently been involved with the program over its 20-year history. All member universities both host CourseShare courses and have students receive instruction via CourseShare courses. Because the program is responsive to students' educational needs, hosting and receiving participation varies from year to year. For example, in 2021–2022, one of the participating universities hosted one course, and 23 of its students enrolled in 14 courses taught elsewhere. By contrast, in the same

year, another university hosted 45 courses, and 85 of its students received 62 different courses hosted by other members.

During spring 2020, the emergence of COVID-19 forced a closure of in-person instruction at most higher education facilities, including all Big Ten Academic Alliance universities. In a matter of days, instructors who had only taught in-person were asked to teach their students remotely. While many faculty may have struggled with that transition, all CourseShare courses continued with little to no interruption. To support the continuation of the CourseShare courses, the liberal arts and sciences deans agreed to expand the program to allow courses to be taught online asynchronously or in a blended format. As university operations began to return to in-person instruction, most universities enforced social distance requirements, making classroom space a premium. The smaller classrooms that may have been used previously for CourseShare courses could not maintain a 6- or 3-foot distance between students. Larger classrooms were unavailable due to overall campus space demands. Having found that some students appreciated the online language instruction option, some CourseShare courses have continued to be offered in this manner.

Accordingly, the number of CourseShare courses taught and student enrollment have grown significantly since COVID's emergence in spring 2020. As shown in Figures 1.2 and 1.3, increases were most significant in spring and fall 2021. Course and enrollment numbers, however, have remained strong as in-person instruction returned more fully in 2022.
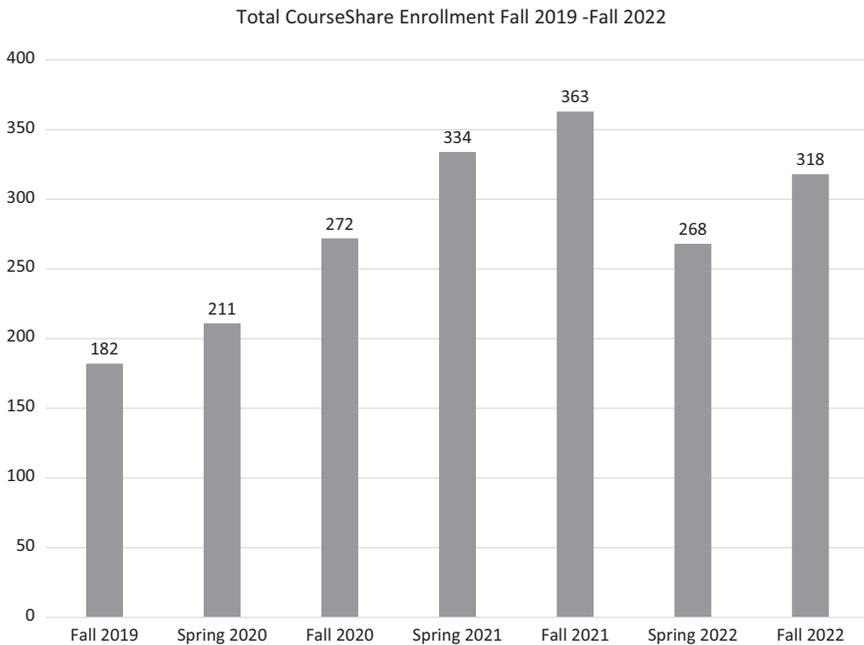
Figure 1.2 Total CourseShare enrollment fall 2019–fall 2022.

Total CourseShare Courses Established

Figure 1.3 Total CourseShare courses established fall 2019–fall 2022.

CourseShare and Area Studies Programs

In addition to sharing LCTL courses, member universities have leveraged the CourseShare Program's infrastructure and community to innovate and create secondary educational gains. Specifically, the CourseShare Program has been used to support three externally funded initiatives related to Area Studies courses. In 2012, the University of Michigan's Nam Center for Korean Studies leveraged the CourseShare infrastructure to secure funding from the Korea Foundation to support the sharing of Korean Studies courses across the consortium. This Korean Studies initiative is known as the Big Ten Academic Alliance e-School (https://ii.umich.edu/ncks/students/btaa-e-school.html).

In 2013, a similar initiative emerged in Islamic Studies, also at the University of Michigan. Supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Digital Islamic Studies Curriculum (https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/digitalislam) is a collaborative program of instruction in Islamic Studies across the Big Ten Academic Alliance universities.

In 2016, Michigan State University (MSU) received Mellon Foundation funding for the Big Ten Academic Alliance Less Commonly Taught Languages Partnership (https://lctlpartnership.celta.msu.edu/), which focused on intermediate language proficiency via online instruction. MSU similarly used the CourseShare Program and its collaborative community as a foundation for its

LCTL partnership. In 2019, MSU was awarded a second Mellon grant for its Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership (https://lctlpartnership.celta.msu.edu/).

Summary

Over the past six decades, the universities of the Big Ten Academic Alliance have responded to both students' and society's needs for greater access to instruction and proficiency opportunities in world languages. From the very beginning, language initiatives have been a collaborative focus of the consortium.

In its first four decades, Big Ten Academic Alliance universities shared language courses through a variety of programs that enabled students to receive language instruction on each other's campuses, often supported by external funding. With advances in technology and language pedagogy as well as the decline in external funding sources, the Big Ten Academic Alliance universities began to evolve their language course sharing approach in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

In 2003, the liberal arts and sciences deans convened a working group to study and make recommendations on what that approach should be. In its 2003 Annual Report *Strategies for Sharing Less Commonly Taught Languages Across the CIC*, the working group made distance learning enabled by technology the center of its recommendations for consortial course sharing of LCTLs. Since that time, the CourseShare Program has been the central consortial approach to increase student access to LCTLs.

Students seek out CourseShare courses for a variety of reasons, including language requirements, study abroad plans, scheduling conflicts at their home universities, a desire to learn heritage languages, international current events, and simply personal interest. The CourseShare Program supports students' language acquisition through the breadth of available languages, expanded scheduling options, access to higher levels of proficiency, and the confidence to pursue LCTL acquisition in the first place because the greater flexibility and access provided by CourseShare offer more assurance that a pathway to proficiency is possible.

By collaboratively offering LCTLs to students, the Big Ten Academic Alliance universities come together to create educational offerings to which students might not otherwise have access or which they would not be able to take in a timely manner. In so doing, students are able to achieve higher language proficiency. Similarly, the CourseShare Program is important to the preservation of LCTLs, including indigenous languages. Through this collaborative initiative, the Big Ten Academic Alliance universities work together to serve the educational needs of a smaller student population and, in so doing, meet an important educational mission that, if acting alone, they may not otherwise be able to meet.

The Big Ten Academic Alliance's CourseShare Program is a dynamic, evolving program that is founded on its member universities' shared commitment to meeting students' educational needs, supporting societal interests served by language acquisition, and contributing to the preservation of endangered languages. Language course sharing has always been a part of the consortium's broader collaborative mission to support its member universities to advance liberal arts and sciences. How to approach language course sharing will be sure to continue to evolve, and the Big Ten Academic Alliance universities will continue to be important contributors to that evolution.

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2 Scaling Up Sustainably

Affordances and Challenges of Shared Language Courses

Lauren Rosen, Nicholas Swinehart, Stephanie Treat, and Mia Li

Abstract

Despite differences in institution size, mission, and location, consortia have common needs when it comes to course sharing. As with all pedagogical approaches, less commonly taught language (LCTL) course sharing has evolved due to a variety of affordances such as improved technology and an increase in authentic materials available through digital means. In all cases, there has been significant growth in the number and variety of courses shared, the number of campuses participating, and the number of students involved in these courses, yet minimal change in the number of staff that provide support. This growth was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid spread of remote and blended teaching. This chapter addresses the challenges and growing pains of sharing LCTL courses from numerous perspectives including administrative, pedagogical, and technological support, as well as student learning, all of which lead to recommendations for scaling up in a sustainable way. The chapter begins with a long-term vision and commitment to course sharing, then addresses the allocation of resources, the pedagogical priorities for successful courses, and the importance of flexibility in developing course sharing programs that are sustainable.

Keywords: BTAA CourseShare, Collaborative Language Program, language pedagogy, sustainability

Sharing less commonly taught language (LCTL) courses has been a common practice in institutions of higher education for decades. Campuses began sharing courses to diversify languages offered to students, to share instructional resources so as to offer more courses in a given language, and to meet the needs of students preparing for careers in an ever more global workforce. While some consortia such as the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA)[1] focus on larger institutions sharing courses across state borders, there are also well-established programs such as the University of Wisconsin System Collaborative Language Program (CLP)[2] that focus efforts on smaller universities in often remote areas of a state. Despite obvious differences in the size and location

of a campus, such as the urban setting of the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, with approximately 36,000 undergraduates, and the rural setting of the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point with 7,500 undergraduates, when it comes to sharing courses, the needs and issues faced are quite similar. The BTAA's CourseShare program focuses on LCTLs such as Swahili, Thai, and Vietnamese, whereas the CLP shares languages such as Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, and Russian, courses that on larger BTAA campuses may have sufficient enrollments locally with less need to share. As with all pedagogical approaches, course sharing has evolved over the decades, resulting from affordances brought by technical innovation and significantly improved access to authentic digital resources in the languages of the world. CourseShare offers a broader range of languages, approximately 50 LCTLs in any given semester, whereas the CLP currently offers six. The number of participating campuses and students involved in both consortia have grown exponentially, yet minimal change in the number of staff providing support has been realized. This growth was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid spread of blended and online instructional environments. This chapter addresses the challenges and growing pains of LCTL course sharing from numerous perspectives including administrative, pedagogical, and technological support, as well as student learning, resulting in recommendations for scaling up in a sustainable way.

Long-Term Vision and Commitment

When building successful LCTL course sharing partnerships and increasing sustainability, a necessary prerequisite is stability. For students, this means knowing they will be able to complete a course or multiyear sequence. For instructors, it means being able to build the technological and pedagogical proficiency necessary to teach in challenging environments through training and, more importantly, experience. And at the program or institutional level, one of the most labor-intensive aspects of most partnerships is the initial setup: identifying the need, finding a partner campus, setting up the enrollment process, training the instructor, and promoting the exchange, among other tasks (see also Chapter 17). Having a collection of long-term LCTL partnerships has proven more reliable for all stakeholders than cycling through new languages ad hoc each year.

To build this stability, if institutions value the affordances of course sharing, it is essential to take a long view of its costs and benefits. This includes a commitment to building strong, stable LCTL programs on their home campuses, thus ensuring stability in sharing those courses with others. It also includes a commitment to the value of cross-institutional collaboration and the belief that short-term differences in costs at individual campuses ultimately balance out to long-term benefits shared by all campuses. For example, one institution may be sending more languages to others than they receive in a given year, thus bringing in a net positive number of students

who are paying no tuition locally. Commitment to cross-institutional collaboration means this institution either (1) expects the opposite to be true other years and enrollment in languages sent and received will ultimately balance out, (2) believes the prestige of being seen as a regional leader in the teaching of languages is worth the cost of bringing in outside students, and/or (3) simply believes in the value of sharing resources where possible. However, enrollment in shared courses is murkier than traditional "butts-in-seats" calculations of enrollment and tuition, and administrators at the departmental and institutional levels need to consider alternate ways of measuring the value of these courses.

Another way institutions can commit to stability is by devoting the resources necessary to support shared courses. The COVID-19 lockdown had a significant impact on perceptions of the viability of course sharing: suddenly the hardware, software, and pedagogical practices necessary for connecting with remote students became ubiquitous, and some form of online teaching became the rule rather than the exception. This coincided with an increase in shared courses; for example, the BTAA's CourseShare program saw its number of shared courses increase from 76 in AY 2018–19 to 178 in AY 2020–21 (Big Ten Academic Alliance, 2021). However, this rise in sharing was typically not reflected in the number of staff supporting shared courses at partner institutions, particularly in the many administrative processes involved in creating and sustaining partnerships.

While the process of sharing courses differs at each institution and within each collaborative program, there is typically one coordinator on each campus responsible for the wide range of administrative tasks that keep shared courses afloat. This includes identifying supply and demand issues to determine which languages a campus can offer and which languages are needed; establishing procedures for students at their home campus to learn about and enroll in courses at other institutions; and coordinating with administrative, technological, and registrar staff, both at their home campus and at other campuses. This can quickly become a choke point for the scalability of course sharing: The number of partnerships an institution can take part in can become limited by the large amount of administrative work that goes into each partnership, especially considering that the coordinator's responsibilities are rarely limited to this course sharing coordination. This also adds challenges to the advertisement of shared courses and the recruitment of potential students. Course sharing programs can become victims of their own success, where expanding to too many languages and students decreases their ability to support partnerships effectively. This gives institutions two options if concerned with the stability, scalability, and sustainability of shared courses: Either set a hard limit on the number of courses and students that the institution can accommodate or be willing and able to allocate more resources to support increases in course sharing as needed.

Many of these recommendations for stability among course sharing programs are somewhat fuzzy. To see the full value of course sharing, it is

important to look beyond the tangible number of courses or students served and also consider the value of collaboration to offer greater diversity to students and language programs. It is also important for sending institutions to count the total number of students in the course (both local and remote) when calculating enrollment. While there may not be tuition revenue gained from students at the receiving site, how the courses are valued by the administration should account for the total number of students served. It may be difficult or even untenable for administrations to stomach imbalances in partnerships in exchange for less tangible, long-term benefits. Nevertheless, continually expanding the use of course sharing without committing resources—financial, personnel, and otherwise—to support its infrastructure is also untenable. Ultimately, two important questions are: How much do institutions value these types of partnerships? To what extent do institutions want to see continued growth in course sharing? The COVID-19 pandemic showed the importance of flexibility and forward-thinking, and taking a long-term approach to LCTL course sharing is one way institutions can apply these lessons to the benefit of their language programs and students.

Strategic Allocation of Resources

To achieve sustainability, the long-term vision should be combined with a strategic allocation of resources at both the local and the consortium levels. At the local level, programs are typically managed by a small core team of coordinators and registrars, and, in many cases, administration of shared courses is not their full job, but rather it represents only a percentage of their overall portfolio of responsibilities. Time is limited, so a strategic allocation of resources is essential to the sustainability of a course sharing program. At the consortium level, administrative staff can help university staff use their time effectively through strategic investments in shared information and systems, as well as being responsive to challenges local staff may encounter.

To manage a sustainable course sharing program at the local level, staff should thoughtfully define the scope of the resources and services available. The needs of instructors and students can be boundless, however, not all needs must be filled directly by the course sharing program. To help determine how to best allocate resources, staff can begin with reflection and research, and then reach out to partners.

First, consider reflecting on what aspects of the program should be handled internally. A good starting question is: how are shared courses different from other language classes? Shared courses require extensive collaboration with other institutions; special registration and grading processes; and the adoption of tools, calendars, and possibly policies that go beyond those routinely employed at the home institution. All those needs are complex, and the work of meeting them can be labor-intensive. Considering the work required for effective collaboration, it is important to be thoughtful about the scope of other work managed by the course sharing program. There are likely university

resources and services available that meet important but standard needs of instructors and students.

Shared classes used to be distinguished from regular language classes by a much higher integration of technology. It was once rare for a class to be offered fully or partially remotely or using a HyFlex model (i.e., the simultaneous use of face-to-face and remote learning). Today, many language instructors regularly use a range of technology and pedagogical approaches to provide accommodation and an equitable learning environment for students. There may be little difference between the needs of an instructor who teaches exclusively local students with flexibility and accommodation and an instructor who teaches a shared course. This means that staff who manage course sharing can think strategically about meeting instructor needs and what falls within and beyond the course sharing program.

To meet the needs of students, the greatest demand on course sharing staff time happens before the term begins and as it ends. Course sharing program staff need to work intensively at the front end to create and promote the collaboration, ensure students are properly enrolled, and provide access to needed materials and accommodations. At the end of the term, staff may need to ensure that credits and grades are properly reported. However, while the course is in progress, services available to all students on their local campus may be the best source of support for technology, tutoring, disability accommodation, and even local language community connections.

Along with reflecting on the scope of services the course sharing program can provide, it is important to research options of one's home institution to find the most appropriate internal partners. Universities rarely supply a single list of all resources and services available to instructors and students. This may require some legwork including creating spreadsheets or databases for one's program. For instructors, pedagogical, curricular, and technical support as well as technology-enhanced spaces may be spread across multiple units, and these resources may not be well promoted. For students, research into the services likely to be needed, including disability resources, advising, mental health support, and co-curricular programs, may help them build community beyond the language classroom. Specific programs will vary by institution. In addition, researching grant opportunities for students to finance their language study, particularly grants that support LCTLs, can both help inform scheduling decisions and aid in course promotion.

A sustainable course sharing program will utilize existing university resources as much as possible. However, there may be particular courses, instructors, or students with unique needs, such as a particular physical room layout or very specialized technology. If a special space, program, training, or other opportunities must be developed by the course sharing program for the collaboration to be successful, staff should consider keeping both sustainability and universal design for learning (UDL) principles in mind (CAST, 2023). This may allow newly developed resources to be reutilized in the future, meeting the needs of more instructors or students.

Once shared course coordinators have identified what services they can provide internally, they can consider reaching out to the many colleagues on their campus who help sustain and grow shared courses. It is important to maintain regular communication between all stakeholders. Course sharing can be complicated to explain, and relationships take time to build. Some useful communication strategies include regular meetings, a website, a listserv, social media channels, and routine emails to different groups scheduled at different points in the academic calendar (see Chapter 17). Establishing these regular communications not only builds awareness of the program but also builds connections. As a result, when the program is faced with a challenge that may be beyond its scope, the course sharing staff will have connections with appropriate experts to develop and implement a solution. Note that a problem involving a sensitive issue such as instructor performance, disability access, or mental health may be best handled by someone locally rather than the course sharing staff.

Through internal collaboration and communication, an individual course sharing program at a university can strive to use available resources wisely. The consortium that connects multiple institutions also plays a role by investing in systems that connect universities. They can gather and disseminate data about the academic calendars for the partner institutions including term start and end dates, drop/add periods, deadlines for grade submission, holidays, and other breaks. In addition, registration and grading processes can be very time-intensive, and the more manual the process is, the higher the risk for errors that are labor intensive to correct. Using software that can both automate some processes and alert staff to potential problems can save hours of work, while allowing university programs to focus their energy on supporting instructors and students.

Finally, the funding allocated for support services staff at the university level has not always kept pace with the growth in course sharing. Furthermore, with different universities in a network having different academic calendars, registration dates, and grading deadlines, local course sharing staff are often in a cycle of year-round administrative work with little or no backup. The situation can be even more complex when supporting a mix of quarters, semesters, and summer or other off-term sessions. This type of challenge can be difficult for local programs to address independently. Consortium-level leadership may be able to help ensure the long-term viability of shared courses, be it through additional funding, helping raise awareness of the challenges that can result from program growth, or problem-solving at the consortium level. A strategic investment at the local and consortium level can help preserve the institutional knowledge of course sharing, while also ensuring adequate resources for developing and implementing a long-term vision for the program.

Importance of Pedagogy Over Format

As with all aspects of education, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on how shared LCTL courses are taught. Pre-pandemic, most shared

language courses were taught in a physical classroom with remote students attending through a videoconferencing platform. During the pandemic, shared courses became fully remote. As they embark on post-pandemic course sharing, educators have begun to integrate several affordances of remote instruction while continuing to prioritize pedagogical needs over techno-logical constraints (Rapanta et al., 2021). For example, at the Shared LCTL Symposium, Maeda stressed that building community among students in shared courses through the integration of technology is instrumental to course success and should continue (Gerhardi et al., 2022). Furthermore, research by Jin et al. (2021) found that post-pandemic language instructors are dedicated to taking advantage of flexibility in instructional formats and designing effec-tive activities. This is reflected in LCTL instructors being more open to the concept of course sharing and the increase in the number of shared courses.

Stakeholders need to recognize that successful instructors have a strong pedagogical foundation, consider the types of tasks students need, and iden-tify which tasks and tools are best for which environment. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to the technology used for course sharing. For example, some instructors prefer fully synchronous online instruction when students are working on a group project, while others prefer asynchronous options for discussion and work sessions. Similarly, some instructors choose to have class-room-based synchronous videoconferencing meetings because they feel in-person interaction may ease students' anxiety and build a sense of community. On the other hand, many instructors have found asynchronous technologies useful in building community by connecting students beyond synchronous sessions. Some instructors choose to flip their lessons, teaching grammar and pronunciation with technology tools outside of synchronous sessions, while others prefer to focus on these structures and skills during synchronous time.

Agency when making pedagogical and technological decisions is associated with a more integrated use of technology (Albion & Tondeur, 2018) and can affect a teacher's self-efficacy (Polatcan et al., 2021). This, therefore, implies that letting the instructor select the format of the course helps gain their buy-in and develop a sense of agency. There are affordances of all formats of syn-chronous and asynchronous environments, so any combination can provide a positive teaching and learning experience if the activities are designed for the environment chosen and the instructor is accepting of the instructional set-ting. One example that allows for the affordances of numerous environments is a language course that has four instructional hours per week, whereby two synchronous teaching days utilize classroom-based videoconferencing, one synchronous meeting implements videoconferencing from personal devices, and one day is dedicated to asynchronous activities. Moreover, what is clear from years of supporting shared courses is that an instructor who is unwillingly forced to share their course or to utilize a specific format is set up for failure, whereas instructors included in the process have greater buy-in.

While discussing the learning environment for sharing a course across insti-tutions, it is important to recognize that each institution has its own culture

around flexibility and decision-making. Administrative support staff may need to lead the way in bridging communication between instructors, language departments, and other stakeholders to address technological and pedagogical choices, a necessary element for successful collaboration. In terms of pedagogy, instructional consultants who are knowledgeable about a variety of blended teaching environments can give instructors an overview of classroom and online teaching affordances, challenges, and strategies. A successful collaboration requires coordination among administrative, instructional, and technology support. Implementing an effective pedagogical approach with the instructional environment in mind leads to the sustainability of a shared course sequence and one in which the students become advocates with their peers, thus helping to grow enrollments and sustain the sharing of courses.

Flexibility Leads to Sustainability

An essential aspect of sustainability in shared course relationships is the willingness of all involved to compromise and be flexible. All institutions have their set of administrative, technological, instructional, and student norms and policies. These vary greatly between institutions and therefore require participants in course sharing relationships to break with some local norms and seek acceptable common ground. While it is relatively easy to be flexible with norms, campus policies can be a bit more challenging. Depending on the policy, such as those related to disability resources, plagiarism, and the like, it may be in the best interest of each campus to maintain its own policies and make sure that everyone is aware of how to access this information. Developing a repository for these resources that is available to all collaborators will enable instructors to point all students, regardless of campus, to the specific resources they need.

Some administrative aspects that may need flexibility include setting synchronous meeting schedules and course credit loads. Synchronous meeting schedules are typically complicated by institutions not having the same start and end of semester/quarter dates, breaks, and length of class time. When scheduling, it is also essential to consider time zones for all participating institutions. While the course-sending site may have a start date that is prior to the receiving site, receiving-site students cannot be expected to be in synchronous on-campus attendance early because of housing and other complications. Utilizing web-based applications, rather than videoconferencing room systems, helps with these scheduling issues and is much more scalable and sustainable. One alternative solution to this complication is to provide asynchronous materials for students to learn independently until such time as instruction has started on both campuses.

Beginning instruction with a Module 0 (start/introductory module) is one such asynchronous option and can be useful in any modality. This module may include course expectations, the syllabus, a chance for students to become familiar with the learning management system (LMS) and other course

technologies, and opportunities for students to begin building community (Maeda & Rosen, 2020). Since this is all asynchronous, students can participate at their convenience. Once all students are in session, learning begins in the target language, building on the content learned in Module 0. There is no need to spend time going over the syllabus or other logistics that can easily be handled in advance (Wengier, 2022).

To identify the best time to meet so that students do not have to use two class periods in order to attend shared course synchronous meetings, a negotiation of start time is highly recommended in cases where timetable schedules do not coincide. Pushing one or both campuses to begin during a time when students are transitioning between classes, whereby transition time is shortened by five minutes, often makes all the difference needed for a student to enroll in a course that would otherwise not be available due to other degree requirements. It may not be possible to have the time changed in the scheduling system; however, letting students know by communicating through the LMS prior to the start of synchronous sessions is typically sufficient for making students aware of the slight change in scheduling. In addition, replacing some synchronous sessions with asynchronous lessons designed and scaffolded to build on previous materials and build on future synchronous work can make it easier for students to take these classes, as asynchronous days potentially open timeslots for another course.

When it comes to course credit load, institutions vary typically from three to five credits per course. A campus may offer all first-year language courses as five credits and third-year courses as three credits, reflecting the number of contact hours. Credit loads across institutions do not always match, however, and an institution might find that the course it is receiving is listed at the sending site as greater or fewer credits than is typical for its campus. It is recommended that the receiving site, the location that is not home to the instructor, adopt the course following the credit load determined by the sending campus, even if it is different from all other languages taught at that level locally. In doing so, the students are all treated the same within the same course, and the instructional contact time matches the credits earned. In rare cases, this may be negotiated differently; however, the instructor should not be obligated to provide an additional credit requirement to the receiving campus, as that would be beyond the credit load of their contract. One option, if the receiving site insists on offering the course for an additional credit, is to provide oversight of its students for that additional time. Options might entail students watching target language television and responding to questions that encourage students to use specific structures studied or an additional synchronous meeting with a target language speaker.

The technology available at a given campus will also play a part in determining the stability of a shared course. When connecting classrooms for synchronous videoconferencing, the one with the oldest equipment or the slowest connection speed will determine the quality of the connection. In cases where the equipment and connecting hardware are not well maintained, stakeholders in a given course may opt for a different way of connecting synchronously. With the improvements in personal computing hardware and available

software, it has become much easier to connect in a HyFlex environment, whereby remote students connect to a classroom from their remote devices, or for all students to switch to a synchronous videoconference on personal devices. Current technology using cloud-based connections has made these options much easier and more stable than in the past, but it is not always perfect. Fortunately, in most cases, students have a specific motivation for learning a language taught in a shared course environment over those who are taught only locally. This results in a willingness on the part of students to be flexible, adjust to the learning environment chosen, and easily adapt should changes need to be made along the way.

Keys to Sustainability

In sum, the success of sharing courses is dependent on the following strategic allocation of resources. At the university level:

- Commit to employing instructors of LCTLs who are sharing courses despite low enrollment.
- Help stakeholders and decision-makers take a holistic look at the benefits of course sharing for students and their institutions.
- Ensure growth in course sharing is matched in the allocation of infrastructure to support it.
- Identify campus-wide resources and services available to support instructors and students, and develop a contact list.
- Keep UDL in mind to ensure that new resources can be utilized by other instructors and students.
- Communicate regularly with the staff who manage resources and services, building awareness and developing relationships.
- Discuss pedagogical needs and the affordances of various teaching formats with instructors to grow their agency and willingness to share courses.
- Coordinate administrative, instructional, and technology support to set up instructors for positive experiences that ensure success.
- Promote instructor agency in course design.

At the consortium level:

- Develop and maintain consistent ongoing partnerships.
- Gather and disseminate information about key academic dates at various institutions.
- Invest in software that can automate registration and grading processes and identify discrepancies in data.
- Invest in staffing to reduce the burden of year-round administrative work and promote succession planning.
- Build consensus between institutions seeking flexibility in norms and policies.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties of sharing courses across campuses, the benefit to students who are better prepared for their careers is worth finding ways to overcome institutional differences. In addition to developing language skills and cultural knowledge, students develop technical skills, learn flexibility, and participate in collaborative environments beyond classroom walls. Instructors, shared course administrators, registrars, and other stakeholders work together to develop creative solutions and cross-institutional relationships, providing opportunities to learn from each other. If course sharing is to continue its growth and technological barriers to sharing continue to diminish through innovation, ongoing attention is needed in finding solutions to the administrative and pedagogical challenges, like those outlined in this chapter.

Notes

1 The BTAA CourseShare program launched in 2005 as an agreement between the Deans of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 14 Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago. The institutions send and receive LCTL and some culture courses through voluntary institution-to-institution partnerships. The umbrella organization provides the structure and policy and maintains the software used to manage the connections. Each institution provides at least one coordinator, who organizes the connections and serves as a communicator for the university, and one registrar, who manages the student records. Any LCTL at any level taught by a Big Ten university could potentially be shared, including dialects and special topics. The number of students enrolled at a receiving university is variable, but is generally fewer than 10. It is not uncommon for connections to be created to meet the needs of a single student.
2 Since its inception in 1998, the CLP has grown and currently averages sharing 15 courses per semester in seven languages between approximately 10 small four-year colleges in the state system each year. The CLP maintains its own subnet in the Canvas LMS where courses are cross-listed for ease of access, and specialized language apps are made available to participants in these shared courses. An executive board devised of representatives from all participating campuses are involved in shared decision-making and policy setting and work closely with the program director. The CLP director is the primary consultant for all questions pedagogical, technological, and administrative. All current participants are in the same time zone, however, their academic calendars and class hours are not aligned. CLP class size ranges from 1 to 32 students. Upper-level courses are the smallest.

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3 The Shared Course Initiative

Less Commonly Taught Language Collaboration at Columbia, Cornell, and Yale

Christopher Kaiser

Abstract

Since 2012, Columbia, Cornell, and Yale Universities have engaged in a distance collaboration for the sharing of less commonly taught languages. This program, known as the Shared Course Initiative (SCI), has developed a successful and sustainable model for supporting the teaching of languages that have traditionally faced challenges such as low and unstable enrollments, institutional isolation, and vulnerability to administrative pressures.

This chapter covers the following four major points regarding this collaboration: the history and background of the SCI, a detailed description of the program's structure, a reflection upon the results of this collaborative effort after one decade, and potential directions that the SCI can productively explore in the future.

Keywords: collaboration, videoconferencing, classrooms, consortium, Shared Course Initiative

Less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) are, as Looney and Lusin (2019) note in the final report of the Modern Language Association's (MLA) 2016 enrollment data in postsecondary education in the United States, "fragile and transitory, since the programs tend to be small and may depend on a single instructor" (p. 5). Despite their precariousness, LCTL offerings are crucial programs that expand the scope of a university's academic mission by allowing researchers and practitioners to produce better-informed scholarship and language learners to gain a foundation of knowledge that could not be otherwise acquired. In addition, LCTL offerings emblematize a university's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by supporting learners of a variety of backgrounds and by opening a wider aperture of perspectives within scholarly life.

Distance collaboration has emerged as one approach to supporting and sustaining LCTLs in recent years (Charitos et al., 2017; Gass et al., 2017; Rosen, 2002). Course sharing via distance-bridging technologies can be a productive strategy for addressing the challenge of sustaining LCTLs, however,

as Sanuth writes in this volume (Chapter 11), an undertaking such as this must be approached with caution. Indeed, the challenges and pitfalls of LCTL collaboration are many: significant initial outlays for equipping distance classrooms, drafting an inter-institutional memorandum of understanding, establishing whether and how funds will travel between sites, determining how course credit will be allocated, gaining support among administrators and instructors, creating a productive collaborative environment, and sustaining a collaboration year after year, to name just a few. It is therefore useful for any group of potential collaborators for LCTLs to review previous and ongoing efforts in this area. However, a one-size-fits-all approach cannot and should not be adopted, because each potential collaboration faces its own unique set of needs, resources, and constraints.

This chapter describes the experience of the Shared Course Initiative (SCI), an inter-institutional collaboration for LCTLs between Columbia, Cornell, and Yale Universities that began in 2012. It will lay out the history and background of the SCI, offer a detailed description of how the program functions, provide a summary assessment of the results of this collaborative effort after one decade, and discuss some potential directions that it could productively explore in the future. Throughout these descriptions, there will be moments of reflection and sharing of lessons learned so that others contemplating a similar collaborative approach to the challenges of LCTLs may benefit from these experiences.

Background of the SCI

The SCI emerged against the backdrop of the financial crisis of 2008, which initiated a multiyear budget reduction process of the federal funds (e.g., Title VI) that had supported many of the LCTLs across the American higher education system generally and at private research universities in particular. Notably, the Department of Education's 2011 budget reduced federal support for critical languages in American universities by 38.4% (Department of Education, 2011). The loss of funding for LCTL programs in this period led to a collective understanding that the remaining languages would require a more proactive and collaborative approach to safeguard their long-term stability. These were languages that had traditionally experienced the fragility and transitory quality noted by Looney and Lusin (2019), which Van Deusen-Scholl and Charitos (2016) characterize more precisely as entailing low enrollments, unstable enrollments, lack of departmental and programmatic support, isolation of students in small-enrollment courses, and difficulty in finding and retaining appropriately trained instructors.

In this context, several parties concerned with the ongoing challenge of LCTL provision—including senior administrators at Columbia, Cornell, and Yale; the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning; and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation—began to see course sharing via distance as a potential avenue for supporting these languages. One particularly compelling argument

for collaborating emerged from a task force on foreign languages and internationalization assembled by the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning. Their surveying of the Consortium's 10 member universities found that of the 92 modern languages taught at its participating 10 schools, 30 of those languages were taught at only one institution (Baumann et al., 2009). This larger phenomenon was reflected on a smaller scale at Columbia, Cornell, and Yale in their complementary rather than overlapping strengths in different LCTL areas. This meant that each university in the proposed SCI would be able to receive numerous languages that it did not and could not offer on its own, and as a consequence would be able to greatly expand the number of languages on offer at each site. The relative geographic proximity of these schools would facilitate events and training workshops and sidestep the challenge of scheduling classes across time zones. Finally, the congruence of each school's academic profile would enable the curricular argument that a language class at one university was equivalent to that same language class at another.

An additional key component in the formation of the SCI was the interest of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in supporting the initial phases of the collaboration with a five-year grant. Former foundation president Don Randel notes in his President's Report for the year 2012 that it was seeking as best it could to address across-the-board funding cuts in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis (Randel, 2013). Receiving this grant had positive effects that were both direct and indirect. Most immediately, it allowed for the equipping of 14 distance classrooms using standards-based videoconferencing systems, which was the only feasible technological option at that time for creating a classroom-based distance collaboration. It also enabled training workshops, which were especially important in the program's early phases, as well as dissemination efforts aimed at sharing the growing expertise of the SCI faculty and staff. The presence of the grant also contributed in indirect ways to establishing the SCI by creating a sense of urgency and momentum to set up the structures throughout each university that would be required to manage an inter-institutional program. This entailed creative, out-of-the-box thinking on the part of each university's registrar, IT department, course approval committee, and language departments. Many of the specialized administrative processes that were put in place as a result of the momentum generated by the grant have remained even after its conclusion and have allowed the SCI to operate according to a relatively streamlined set of processes.

The initial years of the grant-supported collaboration featured a gradual scaling up of the number of participating languages. This proved to be a useful approach, not only because it allowed for the accrual of pedagogical expertise among the language instructors who volunteered to be part of the initial group, but also because it permitted the newly fashioned administrative processes such as registering students across sites to be carried out with a relatively low volume of participants. Over time, the interlocking domains of pedagogy, technology, and administration became increasingly solidified and capable of scaling up to include a greater number of languages and students. In 2011, the

SCI performed a shared pilot class with Elementary Romanian, whose lessons were applied the subsequent year when seven languages were shared between the schools. A significant increase in the number of shared languages took place in fall 2014, which brought the total to 12 languages and 16 individual language classes. Since that time, the SCI has grown at a steady pace, and as of fall 2022, it includes 21 languages and 46 individual language classes.

The Structure of the SCI

As mentioned earlier, the structure and functioning of the SCI take place at the confluence of administration, technology, and pedagogy, and this section will describe each of these domains in turn.

Administration

The administrative processes that undergird the SCI provide, in essence, the institutional container for its use of technology and the pedagogy that the participating instructors put into practice in the program's distance classrooms. Classes, enrollments, course site access for remote students, grades, and academic calendars each have their own specialized protocols, and each of these will be discussed here in order to convey a sense of how the program functions.

When a language enters the SCI for the first time, the receiving institutions create placeholder classes into which their students will enroll. The use of placeholder courses has two important benefits. First, it allows remote students to receive credit automatically from their home institution for the class, avoiding potential bureaucratic obstacles tied to transfer credits. Second, using placeholder courses at the receiving institutions circumvents the issue of monetary transfer between schools: It is the policy of the SCI that no funds related to student enrollments are exchanged. Rather than keeping precise track of how much is owed each semester, the SCI operates on the premise that the overall value of collaboration outweighs the imperative for to-the-dollar accounting, provided that a general balance of students receiving instruction at each site is maintained. This principle of the non-exchange of funds has the added benefit of avoiding the administrative load that would be required to calculate and execute precise transfers of monies between schools on a semesterly basis.

At the same time that remote students are officially registered on their home campus in a placeholder class, they are also enrolled at the sending institution. Each university's registrar has established a special category for students from the SCI that allows for the creation of placeholder student registrations. This adds the remote students into the enrollment records for that class, growing enrollment numbers at the sending institution in an officialized and enduring way. This also gives remote students access to the class's course site, which is often utilized in the SCI to an even greater extent than is typical of face-to-face-only classes.

Two final points regarding the administrative side of the SCI concern the issues of academic calendars and grades. As a principle, the academic calendar

of the university from which the sending class originates is the academic calendar that will be followed by all students, including the remote students. There are always differences in start dates, mid-semester breaks, and end dates among the three universities; however, this does not present a major problem in most cases. Students and instructors are simply asked to do their best to catch up on any classes missed because of breaks that one university has that another does not.

As far as grades are concerned, instructors from the sending institution report the grades of their remote students to the relevant member of the SCI staff, who is then able to enter the grade at the student's home institution.

Technology

The preceding description largely encompasses the administrative container in which the SCI is situated. The second layer that enables this collaboration is the use of technology to bridge distance, which in the case of the SCI is rooted in its specific history. When the SCI was preparing to launch in 2011, the only feasible option for creating connected distance classrooms was standards-based high-definition videoconferencing systems such as Polycom and Cisco devices, which at the time were a mainstay of corporate boardrooms and government offices. These systems were and are expensive; difficult to maintain; prone to failure; and require specialized knowledge to install, configure, and replace. They also rely on a backend infrastructure that IT departments of universities are increasingly unwilling or unable to support. Nonetheless, the SCI continues to utilize standards-based videoconferencing because the infrastructure to support their use has been firmly established and because the quality of video and audio that these systems provide has yet to be matched by other solutions. However, the past 10 years have seen a prodigious improvement in the quality and availability of cloud-based videoconferencing, and the SCI staff anticipates that by the middle of the 2020s, the quality of this type of videoconferencing will equal or exceed that of the standards-based systems currently in use. Therefore, the long-term plan for the SCI is to undergo a transition to cloud-based classrooms because of its numerous advantages: It has significantly lower upfront costs, it is more reliable and easier to operate, and it does not require complex backend network infrastructure. It seems likely that any emerging collaboration for LCTLs in the 2020s would wish to explore the affordances of cloud-based videoconferencing as an initial step in designing a set of distance classrooms.

Regarding classroom design and configuration, each site has five classrooms of two basic sizes. Sending classrooms are typically larger and are equipped with two large screens, one of which is an interactive digital whiteboard. These rooms are primarily used for classes in which the teacher is on-site and can accommodate 8–12 students in the same space. Students from the remote sites appear on screen in the sending room as close to life-size as possible in order to create the feeling that all students are present in the same space.

The other type of classroom is smaller and typically does not have an interactive whiteboard. These rooms are termed receiving rooms and are used for classes in which the teacher is not on-site. They can comfortably contain two to six students (receiving classes generally do not exceed six students) and also have two large screens. The first screen shows the image of the participants, and the second screen is used to display the computer content of the sending classroom.

Numerous lessons have emerged through 10 years of working to optimize these spaces, and three of these lessons are particularly relevant when it comes to constructing a new set of classrooms. The first is that maximizing screen size in the distance classrooms should be a priority. All SCI classrooms use screens between 72 and 80 inches, and it has been the program's experience that smaller screens result in a feeling of disconnection on the part of the class participants. The second is the importance of having a dedicated screen for the computer content. It is clear that a language course delivered via distance is not the same as its face-to-face counterpart, and the utilization of the in-class computer as a compensatory mechanism can increase the receiving students' understanding of class material as well as help them maintain a sense of continuity and orientation throughout a class meeting. The third lesson stands at the interface of technology and pedagogy, namely, that both instructor and learners should be given a sense of empowerment and permission to use the classroom technology to shape the learning space and to maximize their ability to participate fully in the class. In practice, this often means that learners on the far side should know and feel authorized to zoom in on the image of themselves, operate the camera on the far side when necessary, and ask for assistance when they need it, rather than passively accepting a nonoptimal classroom configuration.

Although these lessons are practical in nature, SCI personnel seek to view these technological decisions through the Community of Inquiry framework as developed and elaborated by Garrison et al. (1999, 2001, 2010) and Fiock (2020). Each adjustment of the equipment in these spaces seeks to optimally foster social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence in order to lead to a better overall educational experience in the shared classroom.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the third and final domain that constitutes the functioning of the Shared Course Initiative. To address this topic fully would require a description of greater length and scope than is suitable for this chapter; however, there are a few general notions that have proved useful in the experience of the SCI. All instructors upon joining the SCI undergo several iterations of orientation and training in the distance classrooms. The first takes place in the summer before their first semester in the program, at which time they receive a one-on-one orientation to the distance classrooms and are given the opportunity to practice and acclimate to the distance environment. Subsequently, they

participate in the yearly SCI workshop, in which all instructors come together on one of the three campuses to receive ongoing professional development, on which occasion new instructors are welcomed and given the support and experience of the full community of practice. This is the initiation of a years-long process in which an instructor takes the material and practices of the face-to-face version of their class as the starting point for a gradual transformation and slowly over time refashions it as a new class that is tailored to the distance format.

Much of this specialized pedagogy emerges from the affordances and constraints of the specific form of embodiment that the SCI classroom produces. As a general matter, each collaboration must discover through practice and reflection what works best within its own distance environment. In the case of the SCI, Meskill and Anthony's *Teaching Languages Online* (2015) has proved helpful as a lesson in the need to develop specific strategies and techniques. The online environments that they describe are different from the classroom-based model used by the SCI. However, their description of innovative and environment-specific instructional moves such as "calling attention to lexis," "corralling," and "using linguistic traps" (pp. 35–55), exemplifies the kind of creativity that is necessary to align pedagogy with technology in the shared distance classroom. Relatedly, Hampel and Stickler's *Transforming Teaching: New Skills for Online Language Learning Spaces* (2015) has provided valuable insight into the gradual process of skill acquisition and adaptation that new instructors in the SCI must undergo.

One additional lesson from the SCI's past decade is the positive contribution that an instructor's visit to the remote site can have on classroom cohesion. SCI instructors routinely visit their remote students near the beginning of the fall semester because it allows all participants in a class to gain a better sense of one another, and this visit is often the moment in which instructors report that a two- or three-site class coalesces into a coherent whole. The SCI considers this practice to be so essential to the smooth functioning of the program that it was at the top of the priority list of budget line items to preserve during the transition from grant support to institutional funding.

Results of the Collaboration

Having described the structure of the SCI, this chapter now turns to some of the results of the collaboration after 10 years of activity, both in terms of students who received instruction and the results of that instruction. From fall 2012 through spring 2022, there were 2,478 total enrollments in language classes that participated in the SCI. Of these, 746 enrollments represented distance students who would not have otherwise been able to study the language. This overall number includes a subset of SCI languages that have relatively robust on-site enrollments and typically add just one or two remote students per semester, and the impact of the SCI is felt more strongly in classes that

might typically have three to five on-site students, and which add three to seven students from other schools. In addition to adding students to LCTL classes, the SCI has served to stabilize enrollments in periods when on-site students temporarily decreased. The enrollment records illustrate this most dramatically by the 35 occasions in the 20 semesters between fall 2012 and spring 2022 when a class participating in the SCI did not have any students on-site and yet was able to go forward with distance students only. In this sense, the SCI has had a significant and positive overall impact on enrollments in LCTLs at Columbia, Cornell, and Yale.

One important lesson that this collaboration has learned, however, and which is reflected in the enrollment data, is that not every language that participates in the SCI has been able to fully capitalize on its opportunities. Indeed, of the 21 languages that regularly participate in the SCI, most have distance students semester after semester, whereas a handful of languages only receive sporadic enrollments through the program. The gap between the majority of languages that succeed in the SCI and the few that struggle in it reflects a point that Kern (2014) makes in relation to using internet technology for language learning: "New forms of mediation have always given rise to new doubts, questions, and paradoxes. … Internet technology, like writing in Plato's era, is a kind of *pharmakon*, simultaneously presenting promise and challenges" (p. 341). A course sharing program for LCTLs is not a panacea but rather an opportunity. If it is structured advantageously, many but not all participants will understand that opportunity and use it beneficially. Those instructors who embrace the promises of this technology-mediated solution are able to fundamentally transform their pedagogy and reconceptualize their classes as a unified classroom experience that takes place in two or three sites. Instead, those instructors who focus more on the challenges of this kind of approach tend to view their distance students as add-ons to their one-site classroom space and are less likely to be able to take advantage of the benefits of collaboration.

A second important lesson emerges from another data set. Throughout the grant cycle, program personnel conducted a research project known as the SCI Research Initiative, which, as Van Deusen-Scholl (2018) describes, sought to "gain insights into the students' and teachers' experiences in the SCI and to assess learning outcomes" (p. 240). While the results of this full set of research data have yet to be formalized, there appears to be a high degree of correspondence between the proficiency outcomes of on-site and remote learners. In the qualitative data set that was gathered for the same project, many learners shared that they believed that their experience in the SCI yielded the same proficiency result as if they had taken the language in person. One summarized this sentiment in a group interview by stating that on-site and remote students, "take different paths but end up in the same place" in terms of proficiency. In other words, there is a strong indication that learning a language in this particular format yields comparable results for the student whether that student is on-site or joining remotely.

Lessons from the Evolution of the SCI

While the preceding sections share several of the lessons from the operation of the SCI as a mature program, there are also several lessons from the early phase of conceptualization and creation of the initiative that may be of particular interest to individuals creating a new LCTL collaboration. The first of these is that any collaboration of this sort needs to have a strong degree of buy-in and commitment from upper-level administrators (see also Chapter 17). The SCI has benefited from this type of support, which has allowed it to address challenges when they arose and successfully navigate moments of decision and negotiation, such as the signing of the memorandum of understanding in 2017 that transitioned the SCI from a grant to an institutionally supported program.

The second key lesson is that the choice of collaboration partners is a crucial one with long-term and wide-ranging consequences. In the case of the SCI, the choice of Columbia, Cornell, and Yale proved to be fruitful for structural reasons above all. As discussed earlier, each participant contributes languages in areas in which it is strong and receives languages in areas where there is a less-developed background of support.

A third lesson that has emerged over the 10 years of LCTL collaboration with the SCI is the importance of maintaining an openness to small compromises and accommodations set against a background of collegiality and shared commitments. Harmonizing different institutional cultures and processes is a challenge and discovering areas of flexibility within long-standing processes is crucial for any LCTL partnership to endure.

The Future of the SCI

At the time of writing, the SCI is undergoing the second five-year renewal of its memorandum of understanding. As it looks toward the future, several aspects of the program will remain in place, whereas others will change and evolve. The overall parameters of the SCI are likely to keep their current form, because of the relatively fixed number of LCTLs at each site, as well as the limited number of distance classrooms available for use.

White (2017) notes the marked increase in practitioners of distance language learning in the first two decades of the 2000s and characterizes it as a mature field. Her characterization comes just a few years before the COVID-19 pandemic radically altered all aspects of university life as well as society at large. Indeed, many language professionals have begun to evaluate and reflect upon the lessons of the COVID-19 era (e.g., Dubreil, 2020; Klimova, 2021; Maican & Cocorodă, 2021), and it is clear that much has changed in terms of technology and attitudes toward its application in language teaching. Since Columbia, Cornell, and Yale have returned to on-site learning, it has become evident that the societal norms and expectations around videoconferencing in an educational context have shifted significantly. The learners of today require less of an introduction to the fundamentals of interacting within digital spaces than

their counterparts of 2019, and consequently, the SCI is attempting to build upon this pandemic-era "muscle memory" in order to expand what is possible within the distance classroom. Instructors should now feel authorized to think even more boldly about how learners might interact with each other and the kinds of tasks and collaborative projects they might accomplish in digital spaces. SCI participants should continue to engage in nuanced and thoughtful efforts to challenge and absolve what might be termed the "original sin" of videoconferencing, which is that in its conception its use was largely construed for the presentational mode of corporate board meetings and governmental briefings. The future of the SCI, therefore, should be one in which instructors place its enabling technologies at the service of radically student-centered learning, with learners as autotelic consumers and creators of language, navigating a patchwork of in-person and distance spaces to achieve their language learning goals.

On a broader level, instructors, administrators, and staff involved in the SCI are tasked with considering how it interfaces with the larger challenges faced not just by LCTLs, but by all language programs in the American higher education system. Indeed, the most recent MLA enrollment data from 2016 as conveyed in the Looney and Lusin report (2019) indicate a continued downward trend in students taking languages in the American university system. A program like the SCI, or any LCTL collaboration for that matter, can serve as a connective tissue for language professionals across institutional boundaries facing common challenges as well as a tool for addressing those challenges. Because of their unique position within a university, LCTL collaborations can forcefully contribute to needed efforts such as the promotion of language study, heritage language outreach, and forging productive links to funding agencies, nonprofits, governmental organizations, and cultural centers, in addition to their core purpose of strengthening and sustaining LCTLs.

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4 Ten Years of Collaboration

The Duke–UVA–Vanderbilt Consortium

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Abstract

This chapter explores the creation and expansion of an online consortium for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) among three universities: Duke University, the University of Virginia (UVA), and Vanderbilt University. Founded in 2013, the consortium aims to improve access to LCTLs, share resources, and increase enrollments in those courses. The consortium currently offers elementary and intermediate courses in four languages—Haitian Creole and Turkish at Duke, Swahili at UVA, and K'iche' Maya at Vanderbilt—and is in the process of expansion. The language courses were conceived to be taught synchronously and in person at the host university via telecommunications classrooms; this platform has now been replaced with Zoom.

   In this chapter, the authors detail the challenges they have experienced as they have developed their partnership, including rotating directors, distinct administrative policies, and uneven enrollment across languages and institutions. They conclude by sharing the best practices that they have developed in response to these challenges, emphasizing both flexibility and open communication.

Keywords: collaboration, university partnership, technology-enhanced language learning

This chapter explores the creation, development, and sustainment of a course sharing initiative for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) among three universities: Duke University, the University of Virginia (UVA), and Vanderbilt University. First piloted in 2013, the consortium was designed to improve access to LCTLs, to share resources, and to increase enrollments in those courses. Although these goals have been largely achieved, there have also been structural shifts in recent years that have led to changes in the consortium, including new online delivery methods and additional languages. At the writing of this publication, the consortium has taught over 500 students in five different languages, overseen by seven directors across the three institutions. Languages now include Haitian Creole, K'iche' Maya, Swahili, and

Turkish. In the pages that follow, the three consortium directors share the history of their partnership, and detail their processes, challenges, and future considerations as they continue to secure and expand access to these less commonly taught, but no less important, languages.

The Importance of Preserving LCTLs

At the time of writing this chapter, roughly 40% of languages are endangered, often with fewer than 1,000 users remaining (Ethnologue, 2023). When a language is lost, the historical and cultural wealth of communities is often lost as well, for language is the primary symbol, register, or index of identity (Almurashi, 2017). The loss of a language affects not only the speakers of the language in question, but the academics, linguists, and historians who study its culture.

One of the easiest ways to preserve languages is to ensure that LCTLs continue to be taught and studied across academic institutions. By working together, institutions can revive, revitalize, and maintain languages, and it was in this spirit that the course sharing initiative began. In a 2013 press release announcing the partnership between Duke University and UVA, Duke's Dean of Arts and Sciences Laurie Patton proclaimed, "We're protecting languages that are very much a part of our global culture but aren't necessarily the first you would take in a Western academic curriculum" (Ferreri, 2013). UVA's Dean of Arts and Sciences Meredith Woo further explained, "Less commonly taught languages are no less important for being infrequently taught … Esoteric as some of these cultures may appear, in studying them we also learn new truths about our culture and ourselves" (Ferreri, 2013). UVA's Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities Christine Della Coletta focused her remarks on the breadth of offerings, stating that "[a]n institution that is really global needs to offer a kaleidoscope of linguistic options—options that do not flatten the world into a few major linguistic clusters, but reflect linguistic and cultural diversity" (Kelly, 2013).

History of the Shared Partnership

The languages selected to be a part of the initial exchange were Haitian Creole and Tibetan. At Duke, Haitian Creole courses stemmed from a 2008 language pilot that was developed alongside Duke's Haiti Lab, a three-year initiative that leveraged the expertise of scholars in history, literature, and language. At UVA, the Tibetan Center was founded in 2008 by researchers involved in the local community and with Tibetan scholars around the world; the center provided a platform to support Tibetan language courses. Despite these two research centers and labs, however, only a handful of students were enrolling in the Haitian Creole and Tibetan language courses. In order to preserve the course offerings, it seemed logical to expand access to them by increasing the pool of students.

In February 2013, Duke and UVA collaborated on a three-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two universities. The MOU defined the roles and responsibilities of the sending and receiving institutions. The institutions agreed to offer four semesters of each language, based on university language requirements. The structure of this initial exchange involved telepresence classrooms. At Duke, Haitian Creole was taught in a classroom with Cisco's proprietary TelePresence technology, a high-quality videoconferencing system. At UVA, Tibetan was taught in a similarly equipped telepresence conference room, in which UVA students were physically present and students at Duke joined the real-time immersive class remotely from their own classrooms.

In May 2015, Vanderbilt was invited to join the consortium, adding K'iche' Maya—a language spoken by over 1 million people in Guatemala—to the course offerings. Similar to Haitian Creole and Tibetan, K'iche' is supported by an existing Mayan program at Vanderbilt. K'iche' was an immediate draw for partner institutions. At Duke, it primarily attracts graduate students, many of whom also benefit from Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships related to their research in Guatemala. The joint Duke–UNC (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) federally-funded Title VI Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies supports these projects, which also brings in occasional student enrollment from UNC. At UVA, faculty and students across the disciplines work alongside Indigenous communities in Guatemala, often in response to student demand for real-world experience and meaningful community partnerships. Adding a third institution was key to developing and supporting the partnership.

Developing a Memorandum of Understanding

The 2015 MOU laid out not only the objectives of the shared partnership but also a set of guidelines the institutions would follow. Its primary objective, as stated in the document, was to establish "a Course Sharing Initiative for the purpose of offering instruction in less commonly taught languages to students at all three universities" (*Memorandum of Understanding*, 2015). The following guidelines continue to define the agreement among the three institutions:

- Each institution will designate a dean or faculty director responsible for overseeing the Course Sharing Initiative at their home institution. It is also noted that one institution serves as the primary director on a rotational basis; the rotation began with Duke.
- The consortium director communicates with the directors at the other institutions to determine which courses will be offered each semester, oversees the course approval processes at their own institution, and coordinates the scheduling of the courses. The directors also work with their respective departments and offices to hire and train instructors and language assistants,

publicize courses and recruit students, monitor course quality, and make improvements as necessary. One of the directors assumes the primary responsibility for convening meetings. Each institution has also to designate a registrar coordinator and an instructional technology coordinator.

- Offering institutions are responsible for hiring according to the shared accreditation unit (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges). Said institution ensures that all students have access to the necessary systems and services, including learning management systems, books, and email.
- The home institution is charged with determining its students' eligibility for courses at the offering institution. The MOU also details policies determining grade changes, incompletes, and pass/fail options.
- The MOU notes that each participating institution must offer one course per semester. In the directors' notes, however, they agreed to maintain a language requirement of four semesters, and agreed to teach Elementary I and Intermediate I each fall, and Elementary II and Intermediate II every spring. Additional semesters offered are also open to consortial members, as is the case with Haitian Creole.

The MOU was signed by two representatives from each institution, which included the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Arts and Sciences, and/or the Vice President for Finance.

Not all guidelines are written into the MOU, however. Just as the directors did not name specific language offerings or how many semesters would be offered, they left some items open to flexibility. For example, the directors developed a detailed process flow that makes clear all the steps needed to create courses and enroll students at each institution, from listing and advertising courses to registering students to scheduling classes in telepresence and videoconference classrooms. These internal documents are shared and updated through a central Box location online.

At the end of the three-year cycle (2015–2018), the three universities opted to continue their collaboration, and another three-year MOU was signed in May 2018. This decision was based in part on a proposal to renew the consortium that was drafted by the three directors in February 2018. They wrote:

> In short, we believe that while there still may be challenges, the possibilities for expanding opportunities for even relatively low numbers of students to learn languages that are important for ethical engagement in diverse areas of the world make it worth continuing our Course Sharing Initiative.
>
> (Walther et al., 2018)

Clear in this statement is the acknowledgment that despite considerable difficulties, there was a commitment to growing this program for reasons related to both ethics and equity.

Challenges

Technology and the Pandemic

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consortium was often touted for its digitally mediated mechanism of delivery. Presentations and reports to deans focused on the face-to-face synchronous nature of the courses, which were not online courses (Walther, 2016). These telepresence classrooms that were lauded for their ability to bring people together, however, were a primary focus of the challenges related in the February 2018 proposal to renew the partnership (Walther et al., 2018).

According to the proposal, feedback about the telepresence classrooms was uneven, from both faculty and students. There were pedagogical challenges inherent in the method, whether about cameras that did not fully capture students in the room or connectivity issues due to internal systems. Instructors noted that unequal connection with students—and their uneven access to the instructor—created significant inequities in the virtual classroom space. Some preferred using a whiteboard for pedagogical reasons, but students streaming in could not see the whiteboard and only had access to electronically delivered slides and handouts. The echo in the telepresence classroom made it particularly challenging for language learning. In addition to technological difficulties, there were not enough staff members to support these rooms. At UVA, only specifically trained technicians were able to initiate class sessions or reestablish lost or interrupted connections. Nor were there enough rooms to meet demands for the growing number of courses: At Duke, for example, Haitian Creole courses dominated the small number of telepresence classrooms. In sum, the need for these rooms, and their expensive upkeep, necessarily limited the consortium's ability to expand, whereas the online platform Zoom, which was just beginning to develop its presence in online spaces, seemed to offer a greater potential to increase participation in the consortium.

In spring 2018, UVA's Tibetan language instructor decided to pilot his courses over Zoom. This successful experiment, combined with a consortial meeting held over Zoom, led to a shift in thinking. In their proposal to renew the 2015 MOU for 2018, the consortium's directors noted the difficulties encountered in telepresence classrooms and proposed that the consortium consider moving from supported classrooms to synchronous meetings on Zoom. They wrote:

> We believe that using Zoom technology to create virtual synchronous classrooms would make it possible to offer more less commonly taught languages, at no additional cost, to students across our three schools, especially and including African languages that Duke cannot afford to offer, but that are taught at UVA and/or Vanderbilt.
>
> (Walther et al., 2018)

This request was not only prescient, forecasting the ease and ubiquity of Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it also pointed to the platform's

particular ability to lower institutional costs and expand the consortium's reach.

By fall 2019, the Zoom platform was being implemented in more spaces, including international meetings, and the directors experimented with using it as a long-term, viable option for the consortium. In addition to the significant cost savings of this delivery method, a shift to Zoom would almost entirely eliminate the need for physical classrooms. This was not the emergency remote teaching that would soon define pandemic pedagogies, but was intentional and planned (Gacs et al., 2020). According to the Haitian Creole and K'iche' instructor, who began using Zoom in fall 2018, the use of Zoom helped expand access to the class, as some students were able to enroll from outside the consortium, finding separate funding to cover tuition. Still, the K'iche' instructor noted the limits of online synchronous learning. Because of the more informal and flexible nature of the Zoom platform, some students tended to act more informally and others missed class, seemingly taking the course less seriously. Some struggled to find a quiet space from which to attend class or could not find reliable Wi-Fi for a stable video connection. Despite those inconveniences, each LCTL instructor preferred teaching on Zoom to using the telepresence tools. The Zoom breakout rooms and whiteboard tools made courses more interactive, collaborative, and enjoyable. The platform also facilitated office hours and allowed more flexibility for meetings between students and instructors. As a result, beginning in spring 2019, all consortial classes were conducted via Zoom.

In early 2020, when the pandemic forced all university courses to emergency remote delivery, our consortium's instructors were some of the best prepared to make the transition. They were adept in including students via digital platforms and had developed strategies for online teaching. They were also familiar with how uneven the delivery of hybrid synchronous courses can be, because while there is little question that face-to-face classes are the preferred mode of delivery, there is also little question that the students who are placed at other universities are at a disadvantage when placed in a telepresence classroom.

Early post-pandemic research shows that Zoom offers the potential for online teaching to improve learner equity in the classroom, even in the emergency remote teaching mode (Goodman, 2022). This research reflects the Duke–UVA–Vanderbilt consortial experience, which found that the accessibility, affordability, relative anonymity, and ease of this platform calls into question the need for telepresence classrooms. Still, there remain concerns that students at the home institution are not meeting with their faculty on campus. To allay these concerns, we are currently experimenting with having instructors teach in the telepresence classrooms once every two weeks, but holding all other class meetings synchronously online. In this scenario, in which the home institution offers occasional in-person meetings, receiving schools can identify native-speaker conversation partners for their campuses.

Generating and Sustaining Balanced Enrollments

One of the consortium's primary objectives is to increase access to LCTLs. In doing so, not only are more languages offered to more students, but these increased enrollments help secure the teaching of those languages. To garner adequate enrollment, it is important to broadly publicize courses and to reach students across—and even beyond—partnerships. Another key component is scheduling courses at suitable times that will accommodate interested students; for the consortium, this also means coordinating different academic calendars as well as exam schedules.

Enrollments fluctuate in most university courses, and this is the case for our shared courses as well. Sudden growth or large drops can raise alarm in a registrar's office, and departments may find themselves needing to justify offering a certain course. In some ways, the structure of the shared consortium can offset these concerns. Sometimes, however, it is simply hard to explain these enrollment changes. Table 4.1 displays enrollments in elementary courses in the languages that have made up the consortium since its inception. Of all the courses in the four-semester language sequence, the fall elementary course inevitably garners the greatest enrollment, after which enrollments generally stagnate (particularly when there are graduate students) or even drop somewhat precipitously.

The numbers in Table 4.1 show that enrollments in the LCTLs offered through the consortium fluctuate considerably. Factors such as time-limited grant and research projects, essential financial support for students, and course scheduling all play a role, making it difficult to isolate a single factor.

As the Modern Language Association (MLA) enrollment report regularly demonstrates, languages shift in their popularity. According to the latest MLA report (Looney & Lusin, 2019), most LCTL enrollments (which are defined by the MLA as all languages not included in the top 15) remained flat between 2013 and 2016. Enrollments in Tibetan dropped from 180 to 127; 2013 was a year of peak enrollments, and 2009 enrollments were at 109. This drop mirrors our shared partnership's data. Enrollment in K'iche', which figures in the statistics for Quechua/Kichwa languages, grew from 94 to 108 over that same time period. A significant percentage of these students are in graduate programs, a phenomenon we also see in our programs. Haitian Creole enrollments grew slightly during this time period, from 179 to 196, with enrollments almost exclusively at the undergraduate level. A new MLA report will be published soon and it will be interesting to examine how these languages fared over the pandemic and also to assess any larger trends.

Motivation for enrollment varies widely among learners, who include bilingual learners, linguists, people with an interest in public health issues, social workers, and historians. LCTLs are often related to more specific student needs: graduate students completing research and who are on a FLAS fellowship, undergraduates hoping to connect with family ties, and faculty-led research projects that involve undergraduates spending a summer abroad.

Table 4.1 Elementary 101 Fall Semester Enrollments (2013–2022)

Elementary 101	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Haitian Creole	12	8	8	18	17	7	8	10	9	14
Tibetan	5	3	7	4	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
K'iche'	N/A	N/A	17	8	14	11	5	7	11	7
Swahili	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12	12
Turkish	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	11

According to one study, students who pursue LCTLs beyond their institution's language requirement generally do so when family background plays a role in enrollment choice (Murphy et al., 2009). Alternatively, when political upheaval or pandemic conditions hinder the travel that may be related to such courses, enrollment tends to drop. Likewise, when a country is highlighted in the news for reasons that do not impact travel, we sometimes see enrollment growth. For Haitian Creole, such tumult is visible in our student enrollment. The March 2012 earthquake that shattered Haiti led to the development of Duke's first formal course sequence in Haitian Creole. Student enrollment in Haitian Creole that fall totaled 18 in elementary and intermediate courses. When another large earthquake hit Haiti in 2016, we again saw student enrollment almost double, from 14 in 2015 to 23 in 2016. In 2020, with travel restrictions imposed on our cocurricular programs in Haiti, enrollments began to drop.

Enrollments can sometimes decline for other reasons entirely. UVA's robust Tibetan program, for instance, was not able to offer the full suite of language courses from 2019 to 2021. At UVA, Tibetan was mainly offered for graduate students in the Department of Religious Studies to fulfill language requirements in the pursuit of their graduate studies. However, enrollments began to decline when UVA started to implement a new credit-granting policy stating that language courses would offer credits for undergraduate students only. Moreover, graduate students needed advanced Tibetan more than elementary and intermediate Tibetan. A final explanation lay in the fact that the Tibetan language instructor left UVA in May 2018. Although UVA conducted a national search, it proved difficult to find a qualified person to teach elementary and intermediate Tibetan, and the search was abandoned. To address what was deemed to be a potentially ongoing challenge, the three directors identified another language to replace Tibetan: Swahili. Neither Vanderbilt nor Duke offered Swahili, and Duke in particular was interested in adding this language to its language portfolio, as it has a number of research and cocurricular programs in Kenya and Tanzania. The rationale was that adding Swahili to the consortium would effectively complement existing programs and perhaps draw larger enrollments that reflect institutional priorities. In part due to the great interest in Swahili, discussions of the 2021–2024 MOU led to the addition of the following wording to the MOU, which allows institutions to set course enrollment caps at partner schools in order to balance and secure enrollments for students at their own schools:

> This agreement is predicated on a general assumption of enrollment balance across the consortium. Balance need not be defined by precisely equal numbers of students or courses, but enrollment totals will be evaluated by the directors once per year and if an imbalance is observed, the institution that has enrolled an excess of consortium students may opt to limit seats in the following year.
>
> (*Memorandum of Understanding*, 2021)

In 2022, then, partner schools initially capped Swahili enrollments at six, with additional students permitted to enroll based on space.

While it is impossible to anticipate or adjust for these dips and surges in enrollments, we would underscore the importance of offering a language with strong ties to university assets, such as study away and study abroad programs, faculty labs or research projects, or a link to the community that can help stitch together enrollments in times of crisis.

Budget Neutrality: Program Costs

One of this consortium's features, and one that has arguably led to its long-term sustainment, has been its relatively low overhead cost. This feature has been highlighted in renewal documents; no costs are delineated in the MOU, and each university hires its own faculty, so there are no direct instructional costs. In its early years, when faculty were teaching from telepresence classrooms, there were costs associated with the maintenance of these classrooms. Still, these classrooms are used by other faculty and thus roll into the overall university budget, so cannot be attributed solely to the shared consortium.

Funds are also needed to support travel to meetings and conferences. Conferences such as the Shared Less Commonly Taught Languages Symposium or organizations such as the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages offer key opportunities for developing networks and participating in professional development through conferences and symposia. The consortium encourages its instructors and directors to present at and attend these conferences and actively seeks financial support to participate in the opportunities for professional development.

In the consortium's first seven years, institutions employed undergraduate or graduate student teaching assistants to support students on their own campuses. For Duke students enrolled in Vanderbilt's K'iche' courses, for instance, Duke faculty identified a native speaker who could support the students on campus, attending some live classroom sessions and also offering an hour of tutoring or conversation practice every week. These costs generally amounted to no more than $3,000 per year. With the current online synchronous sessions, these additional sessions are no longer required but simply encouraged. At Vanderbilt, the K'iche' course was designed to be taught with the assistance of a native speaker, a model that has been successful since 2007. Historically, the assistants would come to Nashville for the duration of the semester. The Center for Latin American Studies on Campus, through its Title VI federally-funded grant, sponsored the visa and also paid for the costs incurred for the assistant to be on campus. The Zoom platform has negated the need for the assistant to come to Nashville, reducing overall program costs.

Indeed, most of the costs related to the consortium can be attributed to labor. As the consortium directors noted in the 2018 report that

[i]n terms of labor, the consortium has not been cost neutral. The directors and coordinators, and especially technology staff have put in countless hours each semester coordinating schedules, organizing training, holding meetings and connecting classrooms across schools, among other things. This has been in addition to their otherwise often more than full-time jobs.

(Walther et al., 2018)

Consortial Leadership

When the partnership was founded, the Deans of Arts and Humanities came from language backgrounds and were scholars of Sanskrit, Italian, and Spanish. When new deans took their places, and their expertise was outside the humanities, it made sense to shift the hands-on nature of the program to faculty and administrators with disciplinary expertise. At UVA and Vanderbilt, the shared partnerships fall under the purview of the director of the language center. At Duke, which does not have a language center, a faculty member in Romance Studies was designated to direct the program, as she oversees other programs, including Cultures and Languages Across the Curriculum. What was once the province of deans is now in the hands of faculty administrators who report to deans who oversee the programs and are involved in the MOU process.

A related challenge in this area has been continuity. There have been seven different directors at the three universities, necessitating considerable onboarding. Even when the administrative director does not change, there is regular turnover in staffing, especially since the pandemic. The number of registrars, directors of undergraduate studies, chairs, and department administrators is significant, and when one person changes their role, a great deal of institutional memory is lost—and often not recovered until someone somewhere realizes that an error was made. Although a process flow was clearly delineated at the beginning of the consortium, its maintenance and improvement necessitate fine-tuning.

Next Steps: Collaboration, Advocacy, and Sustainability

Ten years later, many of the concerns that characterized the early years of the consortium persist. Issues of legitimacy and visibility, funding, and delivery methods continue to press academic spaces. Enrollment concerns are arguably at the top of the list, given that courses with low enrollments will eventually be canceled. Considering Murphy et al.'s (2009) findings that student recruitment into language courses—especially LCTLs—has become a major task of instructors, how can we take this burden off instructors? In a competitive market of course offerings, consortia such as this one need to consider tactics that will appeal to students. To distinguish themselves from commonly taught language courses in which students list career-related motivations, we would do well to appeal to specific LCTL concerns: language, culture, and family connections. Specific grants that align with these needs might appeal to advanced learners as well, such as FLAS fellowships or study away/abroad opportunities.

As we consider expanding the shared partnership to include additional languages, we will continue to draw on an institution's expertise. One new pilot is through Duke, which is home to the Lemur Center, an internationally known research and care center through which a number of research labs send faculty and students to Madagascar. While it makes sense for Duke to offer Malagasy, it makes just as much sense to offer it to additional institutions. In this same vein, Vanderbilt plans to add Tagalog in 2025, and talks are underway to add Vietnamese the following year.

Finally, as we consider how to ensure that LCTLs remain a relevant and important part of American institutions of higher education, it may also be helpful to consider the placement of the consortium within larger university structures (centers or institutes) to leverage staffing and coordination changes.

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Part II

Curriculum Development and Building Program Capacity

5 Language Learning Through Three Iconic Cities

A Shared Approach to Curriculum Development in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish

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Abstract

This chapter describes the shared planning, design, and implementation of three similar courses in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish about three major cities: Cairo, Jerusalem, and Istanbul. Using the theme of a city enabled us to integrate historical and current cultural materials as well as relevant vocabulary, grammatical concepts, and practical linguistic skills. It also allowed us to focus on questions of social justice while promoting critical thinking and empathy for the target culture. The courses were developed during weekly virtual meetings in summer 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the courses use different languages and cultural content, all three courses have comparable unit structures and designs and a common pedagogy with similar learning goals. Our work offers a blueprint that can pave the way for productive collaborations across different languages at other institutions.

Keywords: content course, curriculum development, faculty development, shared pedagogy, social justice, interactive technology

This chapter discusses the conceptual design, content development, and implementation of three parallel courses: Cairo and the Seven Layers of Civilization (in Arabic), The Four-Dimensional Jerusalem (in Hebrew), and Istanbul: Gateway Between the East and the West (in Turkish). The three courses are language/culture courses for students wishing to solidify the Intermediate Mid/Intermediate High level of language proficiency on the ACTFL scale (ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners, n.d.). The course content and interactive exercises follow the ACTFL Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2017) for the Intermediate Mid/Intermediate High levels of proficiency and incorporate inclusion and social justice standards (Learning for Justice, 2022).

At the heart of the project was the desire to explore fundamental ideas with respect to current language teaching/learning theories as well as to reconceptualize faculty growth in the sense of "untethered faculty development"

described in Leafstedt and Pacansky-Brock (2016). A small development team that consisted of three language instructors and one expert each in the teaching of culture and in learning technologies collaborated virtually during summer 2020 to conceptualize and develop the courses. The aim was to strengthen the project through learning from each other (Bali & Caines, 2018), which included sharing and discussing pedagogical frameworks and specific learning methods and strategies as well as exploring exercise types and learning technologies. Because of COVID restrictions, during which time the three courses were taught remotely, our material had to be designed to accommodate a variety of teaching and learning situations. What follows is a description of our intensive collaborative work and the resulting teaching material. We will describe the innovative, engaging, and authentic teaching materials and the proficiency-oriented real-world tasks we designed as well as instructional technologies and tools we harnessed to enhance learning.

Language Learning Through Content Courses

Instructors of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) such as Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish are all painfully aware of the shortage of up-to-date, well-designed teaching materials that follow a proficiency-based curriculum and incorporate technology-mediated, multimodal language learning practices and methods (Ward, 2016). Most textbooks focus too heavily on teaching grammar, have recordings that are not authentic, omit videos, and/or do not present units that are cohesive in terms of topic choice. These issues were our point of departure when we designed our sister courses in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish. Our goal was to design content-based courses built on a sound pedagogical model and rich in authentic teaching materials (Richards & Rogers, 2010). Pedagogical research has shown that course content that is engaging and relevant to learners' lives is a key influence on student achievement (Briggs, 2014; Harackiewicz et al., 2016; Paolini, 2015; Pino-James, 2014).

One of the contentions in language teaching is how to transition students from traditional language learning to courses that focus on content. Often, instructors have a dichotomy in mind (either language and grammar or content) when none is necessary. We are proposing an approach that focuses on content to further language proficiency because we believe that language is inseparable from its culture and history. In our work, we want to explore a deeper, fuller understanding of how language represents and connects the various diverse groups of speakers and their histories. We set the following goals for our courses:

- to focus on advancing linguistic *and* cultural proficiency;
- to emphasize the use of challenging, engaging authentic texts and media resources that address real-life situations and contemporary social justice issues;

- to develop creative language learning exercises across different registers and genres; and
- to use a shared pedagogical approach applicable to different languages and contexts.

The Concept of City as a Thematic Unit

The idea of teaching a class about a major city like Jerusalem was conceived by Tzuker-Seltzer, who created a class where language and culture are intertwined and where art, history, social studies, and practical skills can be learned cohesively. Based on this example, two additional instructors in the Middle East and North African Languages Program at Northwestern University teamed up with the Hebrew instructor to create two similar courses about Cairo and Istanbul.

Cairo, Jerusalem, and Istanbul are important cities because they have layers of rich and intricate histories from the ancient past to the present. They are also central to the diversity and identity of their communities and allow students to explore broader cultural, political, and social issues in the target language. Analyzing data about the socioeconomic status of the city's population reveals inequalities and social gaps, thereby promoting awareness of social justice issues among our learners. Students can form an unmediated connection with individual residents in direct encounters (through Zoom talks, blogs, and videos), where myths and stereotypes are shattered. This sociological and cultural exploration allows students to examine their surrounding reality through an ethical and critical lens. It expands students' circle of identity and ultimately widens students' perspectives of the world.

Students can also develop practical skills: how to read the weather forecast and plan a day trip accordingly, how to give and receive directions to destinations, how to find a place to stay and eat—these are only a few of the many skills students can practice.

Pedagogical Framework

Our theoretical underpinnings for this project were influenced by various theories of self-determined, transformative learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000), by adherence to language proficiency goals using the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2017), and by incorporating the Learning for Justice framework (2022).

Self-Determined, Transformative Learning

Leafstedt and Pacansky-Brock (2016) point out that current faculty development (i.e., face-to-face one-day workshops with a master instructor) does not take into consideration that faculty teach in markedly different environments that include face-to-face, blended, and online classes. They conclude that

faculty development should reflect the current realities of teaching. Leafstedt and Pacansky-Brock advocate for "untethered" faculty development, which is "learner-centered," "grounded in the use of online networks to share practices," places "value on sharing and the relational ties between faculty," and "does not require faculty to be on campus to learn." Their goal is to provide learning opportunities for faculty that "include multiple points of access and multiple modes of interaction." Similarly, Bali and Caines (2018) present alternative approaches to faculty development, taking advantage of some of the latest tools, for example, virtual connections or collaborative annotation. Such technologies, they write, make faculty "question their assumptions, reflect on their practice, and embrace alternatives after critically evaluating their suitability" and thus help "develop a metacognitive awareness of connections between theory, values and practice" (pp. 5–6).

The bulk of our course development took place during summer 2020, a time when there was little in-person contact because of COVID, making us rethink the way we interact, share, and assess our course material. Each week, the development team met to conceptualize and develop the new courses: New sections of teaching material for each city were presented, discussed, pulled apart, freshly conceived, rewritten, and reassembled. Additionally, one undergraduate and two graduate students assisted during the week in researching new cultural material. On several occasions, we also invited guest speakers, experts in the field who introduced us to theoretical concepts and answered our most burning questions. All meetings were virtual, which allowed us to be more spontaneous and resulted in more frequent meetings. Between meetings, we used Google Docs to share, evaluate, and annotate our work.

A first step in designing our teaching material was to outline and agree on a set of overarching linguistic and cultural proficiency goals that informed the pedagogical outline for each course. The learning goals we set for our students were twofold:

- to help them extend the limits of how they see, talk about, understand, describe, and interact with communities of different ethnicities and cultures; and
- to teach them to respect contrasting perspectives, values, beliefs, traditions, and world views and how they have been shaped by various backgrounds, histories, and experiences.

We used two established frameworks, the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2017) and the Learning for Justice framework (2022), to help us translate these goals into learning steps.

NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements

The NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2017), developed by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) and ACTFL,

are intended for instructors and students to identify and set learning goals to demonstrate progress toward language and intercultural proficiency. The Can-Do Statements for Language describe in detail what a language learner can do with language at each proficiency level in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading. The Can-Do Statements for Intercultural Communication provide cultural scenarios to demonstrate Intercultural Communicative Competence. These Can-Do Statements were instrumental in designing learning sequences and assessment rubrics for our courses.

We set the target proficiency level for all three courses at Intermediate Mid to Intermediate High on the ACTFL proficiency scale. For Arabic and Hebrew, this meant the course would be offered at the third-year level and for Turkish at the end of the second year. As a first step, we collected and shared appropriate Can-Do Statements for these levels, which facilitated the refinement of learning goals for each of our own thematic units. We listed the final linguistic and cultural proficiency goals at the beginning of each thematic unit under the title "What I can do after working through this unit." The following are some examples of various statements from the three courses. Each of the goals identified corresponds to interactive tasks in the corresponding thematic units.

I can …

- read a map and follow (or give) directions to a location in Evanston (the city where Northwestern University is located);
- compare Evanston to my hometown based on basic facts;
- summarize and present key facts about the history of urban growth of modern Cairo;
- discuss the plight of the families inhabiting the tomb area *City of the Dead* and suggest some solutions;
- coherently retell the story of the Temple and the connection between the Temple and the Western Wall;
- find the places that are important for Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Jerusalem and explain why they are important.

Learning for Justice Framework and Social Justice Considerations

The idea of advocating for social justice through our teaching material was very much at the heart of many of our discussions. After all, cities reflect the identities and diversity of their communities, which makes them an ideal topic for introspection through an ethical and critical lens.

Cochran-Smith's (2004) description of a teaching approach grounded in social justice, addressing oppression/privilege, and guiding students in critical self-reflection, along with the Social Justice Standards (Learning for Justice, 2022) provided us with a roadmap and clear goals.

Many of our texts and accompanying learning tasks deal with economic injustice, social mobility, and privileges. In our teaching material, we provide

open-ended and provocative questions (e.g., to what extent does lack of power affect this community) to stimulate critical thinking and develop empathy, respect, understanding, and connections.

Example I: When Your Home Is Your Boat on the Nile

The social justice focus in the Cairo course allowed us to emphasize the use of Egyptian-spoken Arabic (EA) in daily communications, highlighting the sociolinguistic reality of Arabic use in Egypt. The unit "On the Banks of the Nile" provides a brief look at Egypt's unique geographical location, its history, and the importance of the Nile for Egypt's and Cairo's development. It concludes with a section called "On the Nile in Cairo," which presents the lives of poor fishermen's families who live on boats. Students learn that for many, a home is a boat on the river Nile, not out of choice but because they cannot afford to live on dry land. After watching videos presenting interviews (in EA) with three families living on boats and listening to their struggles, students are asked to describe the advantages and the misery experienced by these families. They are then given the following concluding task:

> Imagine you were a reporter for Al-Ahram newspaper tasked to write an article about the plight of a fisherman living with his family on a fishing boat on the Nile in Cairo. Describe their challenges, hopes, and dreams for the future, drawing on the information in the videos. You may try to introduce spoken quotes into your writing.

This section highlights the fact that Cairo is not only a city of history and culture, but it is a city of the marginalized as well. The use of authentic videos with EA further underscores the importance of such examples to illustrate this social gap in the society.

Example II: Jerusalem, Shared Lives of Jews and Arabs

The social justice work in the Jerusalem course starts with a focus on the population of the city. Students learn about the extreme poverty in Jerusalem via graphs. Neighborhood maps clearly show how wealth concentrates in narrow areas, while in large neighborhoods and particularly in east Jerusalem, many children are living below the poverty line. The Jerusalemite grassroots movements students learn about, such as Muslala, provide a model of a just and fair community that strives to educate the Jerusalemites about shared resources and peoplehood. We learn about the bilingual school in Jerusalem, *Yad Be-yad* [Hand in Hand], by reading an interview with the heads of the school, sharing the challenges of leading such a school in high-tensioned Jerusalem. They talk about violent incidents, such as when students wearing the school uniform were spat on in the street or an incident involving a fire set by far-right

extremists and how many people from the community came to help. The ensuing Zoom meeting with two mothers, one Jewish and the other Arab, who send their children to Yad Be-yad was a meaningful culmination of this unit about the coexistence between Arabs and Jews, as it created an unmediated encounter between the students and the two mothers, and demonstrated the strong commitment of those who strive to coexist.

Example III: Istanbul, the Stratified City

Wealth inequality and unequal access to resources and opportunities reflected in the multilayered makeup of Istanbul's population are also at the core of the unit on contemporary issues in the Istanbul course. Students explore the geographical layout and socioeconomic makeup of the city by focusing on five neighborhoods with distinct characteristics (i.e., location, access to public transportation, demographics, types of housing, rent prices, resources, and amenities). This task allows students to see the significant divide between the wealthy districts of the city and the more traditional and crowded neighborhoods that attract blue-collar workers, students, and immigrants. As a follow-up task, students are asked to read brief profiles of four people from different socioeconomic backgrounds and to decide in which neighborhood(s) they think each person might live and why. The next section turns the focus to individual residents of the city and their lived experiences to emphasize how their lives are affected by differing levels of access to resources and opportunities. Through video interviews, students meet three people: a white-collar worker at a technology company, a blue-collar car mechanic, and a university student. They all come from very different socioeconomic backgrounds, are in different stages of their lives, and live in different parts of Istanbul. The video interviews and associated tasks in this unit allow students to build empathy, respect, and understanding for the diverse residents of Istanbul.

Development of Course Material

Cultural Material and Thematic Choices

To expose students to the language they encounter in real life as well as to topics that they find relevant, we used texts, videos, and images from a variety of sources such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Twitter, newspapers, and literature, accompanied by realia including transit maps, infographics, brochures, and historical maps. Authentic materials present richer cultural and situational references (Beresova, 2015; Gilmore, 2007) and provide necessary challenges in our carefully scaffolded classroom environments. To support a flexible course structure, each unit has rich enough content for instructors to assign different activities to students at different proficiency levels. This is especially important since LCTLs often have to accommodate all kinds of students, even heritage speakers, who sometimes have trouble with reading or writing.

The thematic structure for all three courses is similar, as shown in Table 5.1. All three courses start with an introduction to the city of Evanston, where Northwestern is located, with the goal of reviewing and expanding vocabulary and cultural concepts related to city life, history, and culture. This allows students to get to know the city where they spend a significant portion of their young lives and to see it beyond its immediate function for them—a place where they study. More importantly, however, it enables instructors to introduce terms, topics, and concepts that are relevant throughout the course.

Unit 1 in all three courses places Cairo, Jerusalem, and Istanbul in a geographical and historical context. The remaining three units introduce students to sites, landmarks, and monuments; explore how the cities are portrayed in literature and film; present the intricacies and challenges of daily life; and delve into social, economic, political, and environmental issues. Here are a few concrete examples from the Jerusalem course. The second unit in the Jerusalem course includes a poem that shows the tension between new and old in Jerusalem. In "Tourists" by Yehuda Amichai (2015, p. 299), the author highlights the objectifying view of tourists on the city and the tendency to see it through its myths rather than as an everyday-life city with its many contradictions and diverse communities. The third unit, "The Places and People of Jerusalem," then focuses on artistic projects. One is of the Jerusalemite dancer Miriam Engel who, during COVID, choreographed dances she created from love stories people sent to her about how they met and fell in love in Jerusalem. The fourth and last unit deals with the relationship between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem, where students learn about various projects of coexistence such as Runners Without Borders (https://runnerswithoutborders.org/english/?lang=en), an organization that strives to reduce racism and hatred by enabling Jews and Arabs to get to know and befriend each other through the sport of running.

Table 5.1 Overview of the Three Courses in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish

	Arabic	*Hebrew*	*Turkish*
Course Title	Cairo and the Seven Layers of Civilization	The Four-Dimensional Jerusalem	Istanbul: Gateway Between the East and the West
Introduction	How to talk about a city	In town for a visit	Talking about the city
Unit 1	On the banks of the Nile	Jerusalem's chronicles	A tale of three cities
Unit 2	Seven layers of civilization	City of poems	Remnants of times past
Unit 3	Daily life in Cairo	The places and people of Jerusalem	Who is an Istanbulite
Unit 4	Overcrowding: Environmental and social issues	Between East and West, conflicts and hopes: Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem	Daily life in Istanbul

Technological Considerations and Technology Used

Throughout the design and development process, we used technology strategically and pivoted to creating an entirely digital course for remote teaching at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. We followed a clear strategy to adopt online and interactive tools and instructional technologies that would serve our students' needs and enhance their learning.

For our courses, everything is presented digitally on our university's learning management system Canvas, with the help of free external tools like Google products, Quizlet, and Hypothesis. The course material exists as a digital textbook in the form of downloadable PDF files that students can print and mark up.

Example Using Google Docs

Using Google Docs in class allowed students to make notes instantly, relating them to the specifics of the text they were reading (Figure 5.1). According to students' feedback, this technology helped them decode the text and encouraged successful collaboration with other students and the instructor.

Examples Using Jamboard

Each student was assigned a video interview with a resident of Istanbul that they watched at home. In class, each student was paired with a partner who had watched the same video to compare and combine their notes before giving a brief presentation to the entire class. For this activity, students used Jamboard (https://jamboard.google.com), a digital whiteboard for

Copy of Cairo | C2U2S1 | Task 1 (Google Docs)
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Extensions Help

TASK 1

Religion and the history of Egypt are closely connected. Read the following short text and then answer the questions.

يرتبط الدين وتاريخ مصر ارتباطًا وثيقًا. اقرأ النص التالي ثم اجب عن الأسئلة.

الدين في مصر

كان الدين في مصر القديمة نظامًا معقدًا من المعتقدات الطقوس وتعدد الآلهة مثل إله الشمس رع والإله الخالق آمون والإلهة الأم إيزيس. اعتقد المصريون أن الآلهة موجودة في الطبيعة حيثُ تتحكم في العالم. خلال العصر الروماني، أصبحت المسيحية هي الديانة السائدة في مصر وكانت الإسكندرية واحدة من أوائل المراكز المسيحية. كان غالبية المسيحيين ينتمون إلى الكنيسة القبطية الأرثوذكسية. عندما فتح العرب مصر الرومانية، بدأ التحول التدريجي من المسيحية إلى الإسلام. أصبح الإسلام الدين السائد في مصر بين القرنين العاشر والثاني عشر. عاش اليهود في مصر بشكل مستمر من العصر اليوناني الروماني حتى القرن العشرين. شهدت مجتمعاتهم فترات مختلفة من النمو والانحدار تحددها في الغالب فترات التسامح والاضطهاد. في عام 1948 ، بلغ عدد اليهود في مصر إلى 75000. اليوم ، غالبية السكان المصريين مسلمون. يشكل المسيحيون حاليًا حوالي 5%-10% من سكان مصر. يبلغ عدد الجالية اليهودية حوالي ستة عشر فرداً ، عشرة في الإسكندرية وستة في القاهرة.

3:20 PM Today — is connected

3:20 PM Today — complex

3:17 PM Today — Christianity

3:18 PM Today — to belong to

3:18 PM Today — gradual shift/change

Figure 5.1 Students annotating a text in Google Docs.

collaborating in real time. Figure 5.2 shows the combined notes of one of the pairs.

The next Jamboard example (Figure 5.3) shows the result of students working in small groups on a mind map in Arabic. Students were asked to organize their prior knowledge about Egypt into distinct categories.

TASK 5

Sizinle aynı videoyu izleyen arkadaşınızla video hakkındaki notlarınızı karşılaştırın ve daha ayrıntılı notlar yazın. Sonra izlediğiniz video hakkında sınıftakilere kısa bir sunum yapın.

Compare your notes with the classmate who watched the same video as you and compile more detailed notes. Then give a short presentation to the class about the video you watched.

Notlarımız

Ona göre İstanbul'da çok eğlenceli yapacak şeyleri var, ama o şeyler için çok para gerek

Çoğu parklara girişmek için giriş ücreti olduğunda çok insanlar gitmezler.

İstanbul'da uç yıl yaşıyor.

Onun işi bilgisayar iş.

Orta halli yerde yaşıyor

Adı Onur Serttaş, 31 yaşında.

Çocuğu yok ve bekar.

Bir günde İnsanlar toplu taşımada 100 dakika geçiriyor

Boş zaman yok cünkü şle meşgul.

Beyaz yakalı çünkü finans sektöründe bilgisayar başında çalışıyor

İstanbul hakkinda İyi bir şey söylemedi.

Figure 5.2 Combined Jamboard notes of two students working on a video protocol.
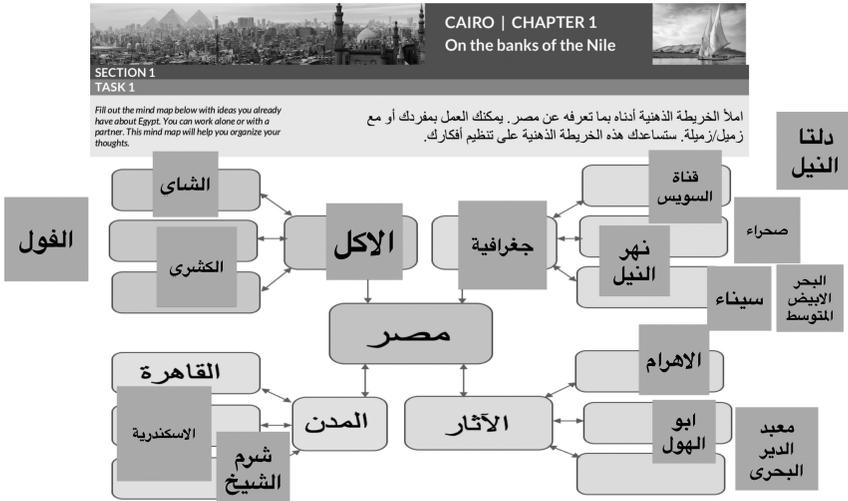

*Figure 5.3* Mind map in Jamboard organizing prior knowledge.
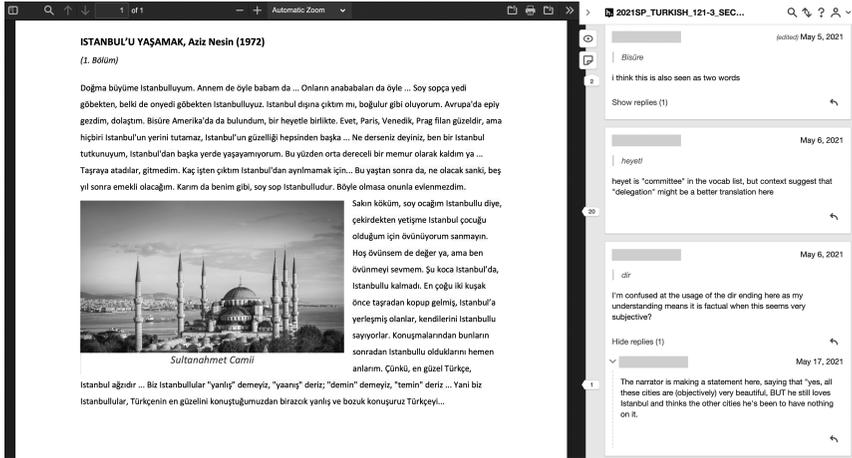
Figure 5.4 Students using the Hypothesis annotation tool to ask/answer questions and highlight sections.

Example Using Hypothesis

In the unit on identity, students read a short story by the Turkish author Aziz Nesin about what it means to be an Istanbulite. Students used the Hypothesis annotation tool (https://web.hypothes.is) in a collaborative fashion to go through the text, ask and answer questions, and highlight particularly interesting or difficult sections (Figure 5.4).

Examples Using Additional Tools

In one class, students suggested using an additional tool, Foxit PDF Reader, to collaborate on readings in class. The text in the margins in Figure 5.5 was added by the students during a live online discussion. The instructor used an iPad to underline text or add handwritten comments.

Assessment

The courses are built around a variety of formative assessments we call tasks that show students what they can and cannot do and inform instructors daily about each student's progress. Reading and listening tasks are supported by vocabulary activities, mind maps, and grammar review activities using graphic organizers; comprehension checks in the form of multiple choice, true/false, and open-ended short-answer questions; and summary activities, as well as speaking and writing tasks that complement the material. We use the completion of pre-face-to-face work, engagement in in-class activities, and completion of tasks as informal assessments. There are no midterm or final exams, but at the end of each unit, students are assessed with a unit quiz that tests content and

Figure 5.5 Students and instructor keep a live discussion protocol using Foxit PDF Reader.

vocabulary use. Students also complete a final project at the end of the quarter, consisting of an oral presentation and a collaborative writing assignment.

Course Evaluations and Results

Feedback from students at the end of the courses was overwhelmingly positive: The course content, the types of tasks assigned in and outside of the course, and the instructional technologies used were well received. Rarely do students find that language classes challenge them intellectually. The responses in Figure 5.6 show that this was clearly not the case for the Istanbul course, as students found the content highly challenging from an intellectual point of view.

In addition to the standard evaluations collected by the university (Figure 5.6), we conducted a more focused anonymous survey in the Turkish course to understand students' individual learning experiences and their reactions to the instructional materials. Open-ended responses to the survey validated our decision to design and develop task-based content that covers a wide range of themes related to cities using authentic material and leveraging the latest technological tools to foster engagement and collaboration among our students. One student wrote: "This course … was more engaging than a typical language class since we learned more cultural, historic, and geographic information." It was also gratifying to see that the course provided a continued learning experience and tied in with material learned in the preceding quarters using a Turkish language textbook. "This course helped me apply what I had been learning in the previous five quarters of Turkish I completed prior to this class," wrote one student.

1. Provide an overall rating of the course.

1-Very Low (0)	0.0%
2 (0)	0.0%
3 (0)	0.0%
4 (0)	0.0%
5 (0)	0.0%
6-Very High (5)	100.0%
[Total (5)]	

1. Rate the instructional materials (texts, audiovisual materials, etc.) used in this course.

1-Very Low (0)	0.0%
2 (0)	0.0%
3 (0)	0.0%
4 (0)	0.0%
5 (1)	20.0%
6-Very High (4)	80.0%
[Total (5)]	

1. Compared to your initial expectations, rate how much you have learned in this course.

1-Very Low (0)	0.0%
2 (0)	0.0%
3 (0)	0.0%
4 (0)	0.0%
5 (1)	20.0%
6-Very High (4)	80.0%
[Total (5)]	

1. Rate the effectiveness of the course in challenging you intellectually.

1-Very Low (0)	0.0%
2 (0)	0.0%
3 (0)	0.0%
4 (0)	0.0%
5 (0)	0.0%
6-Very High (5)	100.0%
[Total (5)]	

Figure 5.6 Student evaluations of the Turkish course (from the standard course evaluation).

Final Thoughts

Starting each course with a similar unit (the introduction) was instrumental in forging cohesion among the instructors and in settling on a comprehensive pedagogical approach. Overall, the project was by far one of the most productive collaborative undertakings: Not only did we learn to share our ideas and understand and value criticism, but we also profited from each other's perspectives and profound knowledge of teaching. We felt empowered by the "untethered," yet fully supportive environment: three different languages and cultures, and three different instructors with varied experiences and ideas about teaching, yet all three courses have comparable structures, a uniform design, similar learning goals, and a common pedagogy.

The most immediate and visible outcome of our pedagogical approach was increased student engagement. Students clearly enjoyed the course content and the freedom brought on by not being bound to a language textbook. Most of them had experience traveling and exploring a new city, and some of them had already been to Cairo, Jerusalem, or Istanbul. As a result, everyone was able to share their personal experiences and anecdotes, which significantly enriched the class discussions. The interactive tasks, albeit challenging, and the level of collaboration they required also kept students constantly engaged. The richness and diversity of the course content and the varying levels of difficulty of the tasks proved to be a big advantage in engaging the heritage speakers in the course, who were ahead of their peers in terms of listening and speaking skills. Tools like Jamboard not only facilitated collaboration and engagement but also made it easier for the instructor to check student work in real time and provide immediate feedback.

Both the task-based approach and the authentic materials allowed the integration of different genres to serve the cause of social justice. For example, students learned about the marginalized communities in Cairo and the history of religious minorities of Jews and Copts in Egypt. Conventional textbooks do not highlight these minorities enough. Using tools like Jamboard and Google Docs allowed for more interaction between heritage speakers and non-native speakers, adding to the diversity and inclusivity in class. It also encouraged students to pick new digital tools. Most importantly, however, it gave us a chance to share our experiences and learn from each other.

Acknowledgments

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6 Articulating Visions of South Asian Less Commonly Taught Language Instruction for Sustainable Growth

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Abstract

This chapter first briefly discusses the role of various institutions and projects in moving toward the common goal of less commonly taught language (LCTL) pedagogy, especially for Hindi. As opposed to the currently existing ad hoc practices for sharing materials and innovative developments, we argue for the need to coordinate a shared Hindi curriculum with input from all stakeholders across institutions and programs. In reflecting on the insights gained from participation in the Hindi Working Group of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation–funded Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership at Michigan State University, the authors discuss current and proposed projects and models of developing shared resources, primarily for Hindi but also for other South Asian LCTLs. Although modest progress has been made in Hindi and South Asian LCTL materials development and distribution, the true potential of South Asian LCTL programs cannot be realized without coalescing a consensus-driven approach that pools resources across stakeholders to support materials development, curricular resource networks, course sharing, and the professionalization of South Asian LCTL instruction.

Keywords: LCTL pedagogy, shared curriculum, LCTL growth, collaboration for sustainability, modular course development, flexible instructional pace

Notwithstanding the large institutional presence of Hindi programs in the United States (40 programs; see Appendix), most have existed, until very recently, as stand-alone programs without systematic sharing of resources or expertise. Although most materials development in South Asian less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) has been institutionally siloed, this chapter highlights a handful of landmark initiatives and the pioneering collaborative projects launched through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation–funded Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership at

Michigan State University (MSU), which the authors worked on collectively. In response to the specific challenges that we identify in the South Asian LCTL landscape and area studies more broadly, we argue for and detail establishing formal networks and mechanisms of coalescing the interests of all stakeholders to transform Hindi's status in higher education from surviving to thriving. This chapter includes a description of the Hindi Working Group of LCTL and Indigenous Languages Partnership at MSU ("MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Project") (2018–2020) as well as collaborative work on an ongoing project *A New LCTL Model: Beginner's Hindi*, illustrating how adaptable materials can be used to address practical obstacles instructors and programs face, including lack of professionalization in language instruction and attendant training materials. Finally, we close with a proposal for providing meaningful professional development opportunities for South Asian LCTL instructors. In doing so, we suggest a few ways of empowering instructors without curtailing their autonomy and professional growth.

History and Landmark Hindi Initiatives in the United States

The shaded states in Figure 6.1 indicate where Hindi language courses are offered at the university level in the United States. As of the writing of this chapter, 28 states offer Hindi in postsecondary programs, which are listed in full in the Appendix.
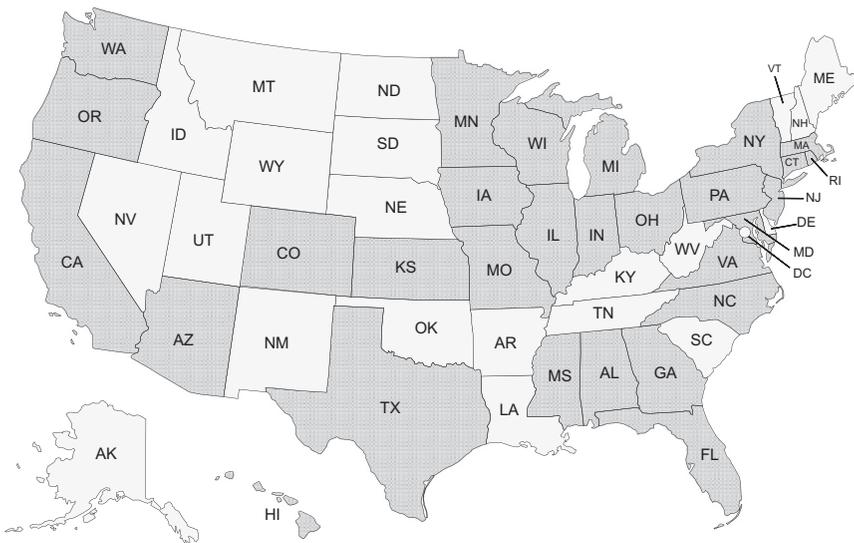
Figure 6.1 Hindi programs in the USA. Created with MapChart, which is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Landmark Initiatives

Major funded initiatives to develop Hindi teaching resources and offer professional development training for Hindi language instructors are listed in Table 6.1, providing context for the evolution of open-access materials developed by Hindi language professionals. These landmark programs, supported by American institutions of higher education, received federal funding or support from private endowments. We have chosen to highlight these projects specifically, as they have had a wide-reaching impact in the field and transformed how resources can be shared across institutions in the digital age.

Challenges to Cohering to Inter-Institutional Standards

Currently, most institutions offer instruction in Hindi by year, namely, by first, second, and third year of instruction, and there is no consensus across institutions and instructors on aligning instructional periods and course titles with specific proficiency targets for learners. For example, several programs target the Novice High level of proficiency after one year of instruction, while other institutions think that the level of proficiency attained should not be less than Intermediate Low. To complicate this picture, the number of contact/credit hours in the target language within a single year of instruction varies significantly across institutions. Data available on the average number of contact hours in Hindi, which roughly correspond to ACTFL-defined proficiency levels, date to the 1980s (Liskin-Gasparro, 1982). Within the year-long instructional model, the obvious focus has been on the introduction of structures (from simple to complex) and short cultural notes, with only occasional exposure to regional and social variations in the language.

   The existing range of courses in Hindi programs in the United States varies significantly. Some offer a full set of courses up to advanced levels and other upper-level courses or sequences such as Business Hindi, Hindi literature courses, or programs that offer an undergraduate Hindi minor.[1] Other institutions only offer elementary-level Hindi courses (e.g., the University of Alabama offers Elementary Hindi, and St. John's University offers courses in beginner-level Hindi on demand). Yet others offer Hindi on demand through self-paced or personal tutorial programs. Given this range, orchestrated and robustly shared Hindi curricular materials and courses would seem like an obvious solution for practitioners in the field who are faced with the lack of coordinated proficiency standards across institutions. However, the reality among institutions is the opposite, and most quality Hindi course materials are concentrated in silos within the programs that devote significant resources to South Asian language instruction. In this context, the MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Working Group began its work in 2017 and was a field-defining event that promoted active collaboration and sharing of individual practitioner expertise for professional and curricular growth. Through this initiative, which has

Table 6.1 Landmark Hindi Initiatives in the USA

Program	Objectives	Sponsor	Program Links
Hindi Urdu Flagship Program	Professional proficiency in Hindi Urdu in higher education	Department of Defense National Security Education Program	https://hindiurduflagship.org
STARTALK (New York University [NYU] and Columbia University)	K–16 language programs for critical languages and instructor training	National Security Agency	https://as.nyu.edu/neareaststudies.html https://hindistartalk.lrc.columbia.edu/
A Door Into Hindi	24 web-based, multimedia lessons for elementary Hindi	Department of Education International Research and Studies Program grant and North Carolina Center for South Asian Studies	https://taj.oasis.unc.edu/
Virtual Hindi NYU	Linguistic and cultural supplements for Hindi students	NYU	https://wp.nyu.edu/virtualhindi/
New Directions New People (NDNP), Business Hindi	Materials for advanced beginner-/intermediate-level learners Specialized language for international business majors working in India	University of Pennsylvania's South Asian Studies Department	NDNP: Link no longer available Business Hindi Volume 1: http://web.sas.upenn.edu/business-hindi/volume-one/ Business Hindi Volume 2: http://web.sas.upenn.edu/business-hindi/volume-two
Basic Hindi	Open-access, web-based elementary Hindi text with a communicative, task-based approach to instruction	Michigan State University	https://openbooks.lib.msu.edu/basichindi/
MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Project	Open-access, proficiency-based materials targeting the intermediate/advanced levels of Hindi	LCTL and Indigenous Languages Partnership (funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation at Michigan State University)	https://lctlpartnership.celta.msu.edu/hindi/

provided structural and financial resources to select LCTL programs among Big Ten universities, a select number of formerly siloed Hindi programs developed into an informal network and thus emerged out of their isolated island-like existence. However, we cannot overlook several daunting challenges writ large, such as the fully autonomous and individualistic model of instruction within and across institutions. What's more, the lack of adequate resources and necessary job security for instructors and program directors reinforces the curricular inertia and programmatic status quo against innovation and sharing of ideas, practices, and expertise.

New Directions and Contexts of Sharing

The first point we want to emphasize is that perhaps the most important thing to share across institutions and programs is the goal of instruction. Hence, the implementation of backward design (for an introduction, see Fink, 2013; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) in creating open-access materials is critical for improving the overall coordination of instructional goals across the field. In addition, these goals can be articulated and continuously refined in ways that are not limited to materials development. Historically, federally funded Title VI National Resource Center (NRC) programs have provided primary support for developments in South Asian language instruction specifically, while Title VI Language Resource Centers (LRCs) provide more general support and resources in LCTL materials development, research, dissemination, and professional development based on advances in applied research. In light of major federal funding cuts to South Asia Title VI NRCs, it is incumbent upon Title VI LRCs to facilitate not only materials development in South Asian LCTLs (a cost historically supported by NRC funding) but also to serve as the central repository for South Asian LCTL syllabi and instructional resources of all kinds (printed and digital realia, inclusive teaching resources, hybrid course materials, etc.). Establishing such a shared resource would significantly democratize access to quality curricular materials and advance learning outcomes with more consistency across institutions.

The sharing of several courses in LCTLs through consortia like the Big Ten Academic Alliance's CourseShare model (see Chapter 1), although fairly well-established, has not gained sufficient ground in most postsecondary programs that offer instruction in South Asian languages. Program-specific policies and institutional restrictions, such as differentials in course credit numbers at various levels, misalignment in instructional periods (semester, quarter, etc.), and the scarcity of coveted classrooms outfitted with two-way communication, have thus far impeded the full potential and advantages of CourseShare. Furthermore, there are very few networks participating in course sharing exchanges for South Asian languages. While not all of these structural obstacles can be resolved, we maintain that existing Title VI South Asia NRCs could bridge this gap by funding the development and expansion of new course sharing networks that capture membership from smaller regional programs,

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Tribal Colleges, and community colleges. This would fulfill both Title VI NRC mandates to support South Asian language instruction at American institutions, serve as viable national resources in this world region, and partner with MSIs. In addition, course sharing programs could opt to offer select languages fully remotely to circumvent issues concerning access to tech classrooms, which thus far has been supported by research that shows comparable, and even sometimes greater, proficiency outcomes (Blake, 2008; University of Wisconsin–Madison Language Institute, n.d.; White, 2006).

As a way of building professional consensus and standardizing learning outcomes for Hindi programs in the higher education context, we also advocate for the development of LCTL curricular materials that are based on instructional modules that target not only structural acquisition but also include formative proficiency-based objectives that are culturally relevant (for an overview of instructional approaches in world language education, see Richards, 2014). Supplementing these modular lessons with optional parameters that allow for differentiated instruction (Ilieva, 2008), blended or hybrid learning, project-based language learning (Beckett & Iida, 2006; University of Hawai'i at Mānoa National Foreign Language Resource Center, n.d.), learner self-assessment and reflection, student interests, and the provision of instructor notes will significantly enhance coordination of instructional goals across institutions while allowing instructors to adapt materials to their context. Moreover, this approach to LCTL materials development provides an opportunity for instructor training at institutions where courses are not taught by full-time staff, and, as a result, materials are highly uncoordinated from year to year and across levels. With respect to incorporating these elements in materials development, the MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Project is truly innovative and continues to support the initial work accomplished to date. Add to this that until 2020, arranging a meeting of language program directors and administrators across institutions used to be difficult due to time constraints and lack of travel funds. In the post-COVID world, remote meetings have now become routine practice in higher education, making possible a new environment of meaningful collaborations to share ideas, data, practices, and outcomes.

The Pioneering Role of the MSU-Mellon Initiative

As part of the MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Project, an inter-institutional collaborative materials development project for Hindi was completed in 2019. The project, which included modules developed for intermediate to advanced Hindi, was piloted at the South Asia Summer Language Institute (SASLI) in 2019 and is currently undergoing final publication revisions, which were disrupted due to the pandemic. The authors made up the core of the project team, serving as Hindi language specialists and content developers from four Big Ten institutions, along with pedagogy and design experts at MSU who trained and supported the Hindi core group and affiliated partners. The MSU

working group organized regular meetings, workshops, and trainings with a large group of LCTL instructors from Big Ten universities participating in the project.

The Hindi modules created for this project can be adapted for blended, hybrid, and fully remote courses. Although developed in a sequential manner, each unit may be used as a stand-alone module. The content of the modules derives language from authentic source material, with a proficiency-based approach that aligns with ACTFL's World-Readiness Standards (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). The principles of backward design and differentiated instructional approaches informed the development of these modules. At the end of each module, there are multiple project prompts that incorporate many of the principles of project-based language learning, addressing different modes of communication. The integration of innovative technological tools is a key component of these modules (see Table 6.1 for online access).

A New LCTL Model: Beginner's Hindi

Building on the first phase of the MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Project, the Hindi team is working to create course materials in response to emerging pedagogical gaps in the online instructional environment. These first-year Hindi modules, under development, incorporate authentic materials that model realistic interactions between native speakers. Built-in formative assessments incorporate task-based learning, small-scale project-based language learning activities, and learning outcomes that are evaluated through Integrated Performance Assessments. This design offers a wide range of advantages to all stakeholders:

(1) The foremost advantage of these modules is that they can be flexibly adapted for in-person instruction, fully asynchronous instruction, and a blended format. They can also easily be customized to accommodate a semester-long course or an intensive, accelerated program (such as at SASLI, study abroad programs, and federally funded intensive language programs like the Critical Language Scholarship Program).

(2) Many programs offer beginner-level Hindi courses through graduate teaching assistantships or short-term hires, often unsupervised. These modules provide important curricular resources for untrained instructors that model principles of backward design lesson planning in the instructor notes.

(3) Modular development with differentiated activities will allow heritage learners, as defined by Gambhir (2008), to learn new content and advance their proficiency levels across skills at a self-guided pace. Alternatively, instructors can also guide heritage learners to move through various modules in any altered sequence. Due to the division of heritage and non-heritage learners often present in the beginner-level Hindi classroom

setting, determining the optimum pace of instruction is always a challenge (although less so when compared to the intermediate or advanced levels). Hence, an open-access course at the beginner level with an optional accelerated track supplies a much-needed resource across virtually any program offering Hindi.

(4) At all levels of instruction, facilitating deep and active learning remains a central instructional challenge. The proposed modules make use of some non-traditional strategies for engaging students; for example, students take responsibility for their learning through instructor-moderated self-reflection exercises. These exercises are designed to incorporate peer learning, creating positive interdependence within the learning community, a strategy that has been robustly supported by applied linguistics research (Dekhinet et al., 2008; Homayouni, 2022; Turpin, 2019).

We wish to note here the advances in learning management systems (LMSs) over the past few years and a gradual convergence of LMS platforms across institutions. For example, several Big Ten institutions have already adopted Canvas or are in the process of doing so. The Microsoft immersive reader function, integrated into Canvas, allows learners to listen to any text on demand, which is a highly beneficial development. Additionally, Canvas also allows the integration of several apps for specific instructional goals. The built-in mastery path feature in Canvas allows learners to set learning targets and trajectories specific to their skills and areas for development. This feature provides learners with the opportunity to manage their learning process autonomously, increasing confidence and motivation.

South Asian LCTL course materials that integrate the features of LMSs and social media tools not only benefit learners enrolled in credit-based courses but also have wide implications for course offerings outside of academia. Courses on Canvas and other LMS platforms can be repurposed for continuing education offerings or for self-learning, and course development costs could be partially offset by charging subscriber fees in exchange for material access and mentor feedback.

Professional Growth, Recognition, and Autonomy of Instructors

Although by now many instructors of Hindi and other LCTLs have received at least rudimentary training in language pedagogy, the quality and range of received training vary considerably. Some instructors are familiar only with communicative teaching as a key concept. Although this training is typically limited to basic familiarization, it is still a welcome shift from the earlier models of grammar-based, rote-and-drill instruction. Some are familiar with proficiency-based teaching and/or ACTFL-defined goals and standards of world language instruction. A smaller subset of Hindi instructors is also familiar with or trained in task- and performance-oriented teaching. A common

thread among various groups of instructors is that either they do not have well-articulated assessment goals and practices, or they have so far not yet integrated assessment practices and methods into their instructional plans to effectively gauge learning outcomes. This is a major challenge in the field, and thus all stakeholders will have to resolve this issue together. We articulate here a few suggestions to enhance the professionalization of South Asian language instruction in the United States:

(1) Senior and/or experienced instructors and program directors could volunteer to serve as mentors to colleagues in their own program, department, or institution. They could also volunteer to serve as mentors to their colleagues at-large across institutions.
(2) In order not to confuse mentees, volunteers and/or selected mentors would periodically receive continuing education training through workshops facilitated by experts in the respective fields of pedagogy and assessment. So far, such training by experts has been provided to Hindi and other South Asian LCTL instructors at SASLI during their pedagogy week and during a pilot two-week intensive training program in 2019, as well as at workshops regularly offered by LRCs and the University of Chicago Language Center (CLC).
(3) Institutions with Title VI NRC funding could coordinate providing high-quality training to a select group of mentors on a rotating basis. The team of experts at the Center for Language Teaching Advancement at MSU, the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition at Minnesota, and the CLC all deserve special mention and gratitude for the service they provide to the field. LCTL instructors significantly benefit from the opportunities afforded by these programs, and they continue to play an effective leadership role in this area. Additionally, NRCs with a South Asia focus are tied to institutions with the expertise necessary to provide training and oversight for a mentoring program that could address the unique challenges of South Asian LCTL instruction.
(4) The point noted in (3) also goes a long way in providing mentorship to junior colleagues traditionally reserved only for tenure-track faculty and not for language teachers and academic staff. We are not necessarily recommending that language instructors attend more workshops and webinars, which although very helpful, fail to provide instructors with focused, hands-on training in small groups in a low-stakes environment. Other existing bodies, such as LRCs, should be actively encouraged to join in this endeavor with small cohorts of South Asian language professionals.

We are aware of individual instructors' (both mentors and mentees) competing time commitments, and thus the recipients of Title VI NRC awards and other major funded initiatives could consider offering financial incentives tied to reportable deliverables that ensure an effective, engaging, and sustainable mentor–mentee program.

Coalescing the Needs and Visions of Stakeholders

We note with satisfaction that most Hindi and other LCTL programs have survived several decades of budgetary cuts and other challenges, such as institutional reductions to language requirements that impact enrollments at the higher levels, as well as major departmental restructurings that harm student recruitment efforts by eliminating language majors and degree options for area studies concentrations. It is in this dire context that in order for Hindi and other LCTL programs to thrive, the overarching goals of learners from various backgrounds and instructors' vision of their courses and curricula (tempered by the directives of language program directors, department heads, and other administrators) must align in a cost-effective way.

At present, the state of inter-institutional collaboration can largely be characterized by overlap, misalignment, duplication, and functioning at cross-purposes. Hence, the rather limited resources for Hindi materials development get funneled into narrow projects instead of being allocated toward advancing the collective goals of curriculum and programs, including our shared survival. To expand on the approach to revitalizing South Asian LCTL instruction as outlined earlier, it is critical that Title VI LRCs work with and support professional organizations, such as ACTFL's LCTL Special Interest Group and the South Asian Language Teachers Association, to develop and curate a searchable database that houses and indexes instructional materials in South Asian LCTLs at each level. This would comprehensively include realia and authentic source materials that have been identified as effective teaching aids and are tagged for proficiency functions and structural targets. Additional resources that model how to create an inclusive learning environment, linguistic reparations in the classroom, and other information and tools on teaching culturally sensitive subjects (e.g., caste- and gender-based violence, inter-communal conflict, etc.) are also a necessary intervention within the South Asian language teaching community. We also call upon South Asia Title VI NRCs to devote resources that strengthen South Asian LCTL instruction not only at their home institutions, which already receive robust institutional support, but also at smaller programs within their geographic region. This includes casting a wide net in the development and expansion of course sharing networks, bringing together both underresourced institutions and programs with a long history of public support or private endowments to generate new pools of learners. Additionally, major materials development projects moving forward need to incorporate the principles of the collaborative process and tools for open-access publishing spearheaded by initiatives like the MSU-Mellon LCTL Hindi Project to ensure the effective use of resources and talent in service of the collective good. Finally, Title VI–funded institutions with a high concentration of pedagogy specialists need to develop national or regional mentorship programs that concretely advance the quality of South Asian LCTL instruction in the United States.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have demonstrated the paucity of inter-institutional sharing in Hindi during its long programmatic history, as well as how the MSU-Mellon Hindi Project (2017–2019) created new processes for Hindi and, by extension, other South Asian LCTL collaborative efforts. Our experience is that increased sharing and collaboration leads practitioners to productively reconceptualize instruction in a way that enhances professional growth and efficacy. We have also argued here that articulating shared goals through major open-access materials development projects, developing new pathways for coordinating the curriculum through course sharing networks, and developing a public database for instructional materials and resources will strengthen the tools available to South Asian LCTL instructors. In addition, a mentorship program will allow instructors to innovate with confidence. So far, we know only of the online Kean University Hindi-Urdu Language Pedagogy MA program, which offers training specific to South Asian practitioners; this is an important start, as smaller South Asian LCTL offerings often depend upon quality Hindi-Urdu programs that can generate high enrollments and revenue. Nevertheless, supported professional development programs open to all instructors of South Asian languages will go a long way in creating community and standardizing expectations that enhance the appeal of our programs. If we address these major areas as a field, our language programs can move beyond survival mode into producing more proficient speakers and global citizens.

Note

1 The option of an undergraduate Hindi minor has been offered at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign since 2009 as well as at other institutions, including Rutgers University, University of Michigan, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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Appendix

Hindi Programs in the United States

The following universities offer Hindi language instruction in the United States:

1. Alabama: University of Alabama
2. Arizona: University of Arizona
3. California: University of California; Stanford University
4. Colorado: University of Colorado, Boulder
5. Connecticut: Yale University
6. Florida: University of Florida
7. Georgia: University of Georgia
8. Hawaii: University of Hawaii
9. Illinois: University of Illinois; University of Chicago; Northwestern University
10. Indiana: Indiana University
11. Iowa: University of Iowa
12. Kansas: University of Kansas
13. Maryland: Johns Hopkins University

14. Massachusetts: Harvard University; Boston University
15. Michigan: University of Michigan; Michigan State University
16. Minnesota: University of Minnesota
17. Missouri: Missouri State University
18. New Jersey: Rutgers University
19. New York: Columbia University; Cornell University; New York University; St. John's University; University of Buffalo
20. North Carolina: University of North Carolina; North Carolina State University
21. Ohio: Ohio State University
22. Oregon: University of Oregon
23. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University; University of Pennsylvania
24. Rhode Island: Brown University; University of Rhode Island
25. Texas: University of Texas at Austin
26. Virginia: University of Virginia
27. Washington: University of Washington
28. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin–Madison

7 Building Less Commonly Taught Language Pipelines

Sharing Russian Language Online with Kansas High School Students

Ani Kokobobo

Abstract

This chapter discusses moving less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) online in the Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas (KU). The Russian pipeline grant project provided a unique curricular opportunity through innovation in online education to Kansas high school students, many of them in rural districts. Fifty students from all over the state of Kansas were originally enrolled in a KU-designed online Russian course. This chapter discusses challenges related to the retention of these students and the creation of a teaching module with primarily asynchronous content and an added synchronous conversational component.

Since core challenges with LCTL enrollments include access and the limited ability of students to begin studying these languages early, this chapter proposes one way to help improve enrollments by sharing LCTLs with high school districts. This type of broader sharing can help create learning pipelines for many languages that students would not otherwise have any exposure to and help foster interest in the language and culture.

Keywords: language pipelines, Russian, high school students

Due to significant enrollment pressures and in the wake of COVID-19, the Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas transitioned to offer all less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) online. While at first the impetus to share LCTLs was driven by concerns about enrollment and employment security for the lecturers responsible for these courses, over time these considerations also facilitated explorations of new opportunities to share these courses, in truncated versions, with other student groups, for example, with nontraditional groups including the military and high school students. As a result of the transition to online teaching, language instructors saw the number of students in these courses increase, sometimes by 50%, including both internal and external students. This chapter focuses on a grant-funded project that allowed sharing Russian online with high school students.

A core challenge with LCTLs is access, along with the limited ability of students to begin studying these languages early. This chapter describes a grant-funded online language program at the University of Kansas (KU) that brought Russian to high school districts throughout the state. What motivated this project was collaborative work with other language departments that had far more robust high school pipelines (e.g., German and Spanish). Russian, however, has very limited availability in the state, and one long-term way to help improve LCTL enrollments is by sharing these languages with high school districts and helping construct early pipelines among students who would not otherwise have exposure to them.

KU High School Russian Program

The successful online pivoting of most of the department's LCTLs, including Czech, Persian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, and Turkish, was driven by enrollments and motivated consideration of the creation of an online section of the Russian language, with the hope that the greater in-person enrollments would result in additional enrollments for the online course. Additionally, in the pandemic climate, having an online section of Russian available provided much-needed flexibility for instructors when students needed to quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure. This work was facilitated by an open-access, online Russian language textbook designed at KU that is broadly used nationally, *Mezhdu nami* [Between Us] (https://mezhdunami.org). KU uses this textbook for in-person language classes, and this experience put us in a position to pivot online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 with greater ease. Both the in-person and online courses cover the same material, use the same exercises, and rely on the textbook's grading tools. We have heard from instructors that teaching the course online is considerably less time-consuming for them. The reasons for this are the automated grading options and automated modules, which proved less demanding than teaching the language in person five days a week—in fact, due to the online course, we were able to accommodate more students in the program. It also gave the department the ability to offer elementary Russian during the spring semester so that students did not need to start learning the language only in the fall. However, because the in-person classes are driven by the communicative approach, the online version integrated synchronous speaking practice once a week, as done in the regular classes, in addition to asynchronous learning. The transition online helped sustain Russian enrollments in the academic year 2020–21 while other languages, like Arabic and Mandarin Chinese, lost enrollments. There was greater attrition in the online class than in the in-person section.

Moving Russian online during the pandemic also gave us the opportunity to share the language course more broadly. The most significant language sharing was with high school districts in the state of Kansas, with the help of a U.S. Russia Foundation (USRF) grant. What motivated this project was that there is only one high school that teaches Russian language in the state

of Kansas, thus significantly limiting the number of students who might have exposure to Russian Studies. Expanding student access to Russian Studies is a major priority for the USRF. Given the range of curricular requirements that students need to fulfill during their college careers, beginning to study a language from scratch can make a language less appealing and feasible to study, irrespective of the difficulty of the language. Additionally, a number of Russian language college-level programs in the area have been closed in the last few years. For instance, Johnson County Community College in Kansas City closed its Russian language program in 2019. Although KU still runs a vibrant Russian program, the Kansas State University program, which is staffed by a single lecturer, has been struggling lately. At the time of writing this chapter, only KU and the Fort Riley military base teach Russian consistently in a state with a significant military presence. In this context, as a major research university in the Plains, we felt as faculty that KU should play an essential role in fostering interest in Russian Studies in the area and be an advocate for the language and culture. The war in Ukraine has only further deepened this need to foster expertise in the region. We teach both Russian and Ukrainian to the military, but we feel that reaching out to high school students is just as important because it allows us to nurture a new generation of students who could potentially develop expertise in the region down the line.

For these reasons, we applied for a USRF grant to teach Russian language to high school students cost-free. The USRF, an American-based and American-funded foundation whose goal is to improve relations between Russia and the United States through better cultural understanding, is considered not only a foreign agent by the Russian government but an outright hostile organization and is not allowed to have an office presence in Russia. As a result, Russian nationals are limited in their contributions to the grant because these individuals can face fines and other forms of legal repercussions in the Russian Federation. The advantage of relying on the USRF was that our existing funding sources, such as Title VI grants (i.e., grants from the U.S. Department of Education to establish, strengthen, and operate language and area or international studies centers), would not have allowed us to cover tuition for students. By contrast, this particular grant is relatively flexible with the kinds of expenses we were able to charge and therefore allowed the possibility to offer the opportunity for high school students to study Russian for free. We felt that the cost-free option was very important, particularly if we wanted to attract underrepresented students and students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Once we received the grant, we worked in partnership with the Kansas Department of Education to get the word out to high school students. We developed an advertisement to share via the high school principals list. This approach was more successful than our attempts at using the local press to announce this opportunity. Through the principals and high school counselors, we could reach the greatest number of students. As we learned from a number of principals, due to the low funding situation in public K–12 districts

in the state, few schools offer their students the kinds of globally-facing curricular opportunities that we were proposing. With cost not being an issue, the program proved to be a highly popular enrichment opportunity for the students that the high schools gladly encouraged. We especially heard from schools in rural districts where specialized global learning curricular opportunities were indeed few and far between for the students.

The grant paid tuition for 50 students in the Beginning Russian course in fall 2021, an additional 50 in spring 2022, 37 in fall 2022, and 27 in spring 2023. Over 100 students initially expressed interest in AY 2021–22, but we could only fund up to 50. Due to the war in Ukraine and turnover at the Department of Education, we struggled with publicizing the grant in fall 2022 and had fewer students express interest in AY 2022–23. High school students from throughout Kansas participate in this program, including both urban and rural districts. We hope that many of these students will eventually seek to apply to KU. We did not have many students (under 10) continuing into the second-year sequence, which we also offered tuition-free. Part of this may have had to do with graduation or with the ability of students to continue fitting these additional courses into their busy high school schedules. Since we were both interested in teaching students concrete language skills and also helping foster a passion for the language, we were less concerned about this particular kind of attrition. Among the students who entered the program, the grade levels varied—many of the students were sophomores and freshmen, and some of them were upperclassmen. Through the grant we were able to facilitate a high school students–only section for collective study online for these students throughout the state. In this context, online learning bridged geographical distance. Several students were adoptees from Russia, Ukraine, and Central Asia.

In implementing the grant, we relied on a financial model developed at our university to facilitate teaching grant-funded language courses to the military. We had two such grants for our Language Teaching Center, with programs in Fort Carson, Colorado, and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. For those programs, students were enrolled into the university as non-degree-seeking students, and KU waived tuition while the grant paid for the instructional costs such as the instructor's salary. Because our university has campus fees for all courses, we used the grant to pay for those. The underlying idea here was that as a nonprofit entity, the university did not need to double-dip on the grant by having it pay for instructional costs and tuition. We took a similar approach for the high school program since this model was already familiar to university financial officers. The students applied to KU as non-degree-seeking students, the university waived tuition, and we paid for student fees per credit and instructional costs through the grant. We also paid the application fees. The high school students received three college credits for each of the language sequence courses they successfully completed. In some cases, the students also received credit from their high schools, but this depended on the school.

The grant was carried out in partnership between the Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies and our Title VI National Resource Center (NRC) for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. The instructional staff were graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in the department, allowing us to make the most of the funding received (around $120,000 annually). From a financial perspective, this made the most sense because the university waives tuition for GTAs, and we contributed GTA stipends through the grant. Due to recent cuts in graduate student funding at the university, the grant had a dual benefit in that it allowed us to fund graduate study for the students who taught in the program, and the graduate students also received additional teaching experience with a nontraditional population. Finally, faculty members with expertise in second-language acquisition joined the grant project, supervised graduate students, and offered mini-lessons about Russian history and culture to the high school students.

As part of the online course, students participated in language modules that contained asynchronous lessons and individual exercises that were graded by the instructors. Sometimes there were also cultural exercises that were part of the course, but we tried to minimize these as best as possible since we recognized that the students had many demands on their time as full-time high school students. Every two weeks, the students gathered synchronously with the instructor to work on speaking practice. This portion of the class is something that we do with college students as well, albeit more frequently (once a week) and it enables conversation practice to help with spoken language proficiency.

In an effort to present the language within a broader cultural context, we also hosted two broader interdisciplinary workshops during the first year of the grant to supplement the language instruction. There was a two-part webinar via Zoom, "Why Russia Matters," in which KU faculty as well as Russian Studies alumni participated. The registered high school students attended brief online lectures about Russian culture, literature, language, history, and politics. We also discussed a range of career paths through Russian Studies with several of our alumni. During "Virtual Russia Week," high school students who signed up for the optional webinar received a multidisciplinary introduction to contemporary Russia. As part of this effort, we incorporated a virtual tour of the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, discussed Russian music and Russian political systems, and also did phonetics training.

In the second year of the grant, which took place after the beginning of the war in Ukraine, we wanted to boost the cultural programming around the Russian language in order to provide important and necessary context about the language in light of the Russian violence in Ukraine. The KU Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies is unique among departments of its nature nationally in that it has been historically focused on furthering Russian Studies in a manner that is broader than a singular focus on Russia, by contextualizing Russian Studies within a broader regional context. The faculty works

on and promotes Ukrainian, Balkan, Polish, and Central Asian Studies, to name a few areas of expertise. The department seeks to embed Russian Studies within these regional foci rather than seeing Russia in isolation from its neighbors. Russia's relations with its neighbors are becoming increasingly more relevant geopolitically, particularly in light of the Russian war in Ukraine. The intent of this broader regional focus has been to counter historical practices in the region and elevate underrepresented identities erased through a monolithic focus on Russia.

We wanted to foreground this expertise in how we were presenting content to high school students. Beyond basic familiarity with the Russian language, culture, history, literature, and politics, we wanted to use our department's expertise to encourage students to also think critically about Russia. In this new iteration of the grant, we delivered 10 online lectures about Russian Studies, which were mostly prepared by experts at KU but supplemented by external experts when needed. These lectures were recorded and shared with all the students through the learning management system Canvas. Topics included:

- The LGBTQAI+ Experience in Russia
- Race/Ethnicity/Nationality in Russia
- Political Systems and the Challenge of Authoritarianism in Russia
- The Russian Empire and Colonial Efforts
- Russia and Ukraine, History of a Conflict
- Russian Literature as a Forum for Free Expression
- Russian Film and Dissidence
- Resistance to the Kremlin in Russian Music

Our overarching goal, which aligned with the USRF goals to promote Russian Studies at large, was to develop a passion for the language and the culture among the students, and we sought to construct a mini curriculum in Russian Studies for them.

Pedagogical Approaches and Barriers

As we implemented this plan for the high school program, two distinct barriers emerged in executing the plan, both related to the fact that we were working with nontraditional students who did not have familiarity with the university environment. First and foremost, we struggled logistically with getting the students into the university system. Additionally, we struggled pedagogically in that we had to consistently pivot because the students were not used to university-level learning and had significant challenges in keeping up with the workload.

We found that applying to our university as non-degree-seeking students was extraordinarily complicated for some of the high school students we worked with. We disseminated very specific instructions to ensure that the students were not charged application fees when applying to the university since

these fees were covered by the grant. However, if a student or a parent made a small mistake, they could be easily routed to a charging page. We received many queries from students and parents while they were applying to the program. The way we worked around some of the application challenges was by meeting with the students as a group via Zoom and walking them through the process and helping them restart their applications. A few times we also ended up refunding application fees if the parents went ahead and paid. For the first year of the grant, much of this work was carried out by graduate student assistants and myself, but in the second year, we installed a dedicated staff member paid for by the grant to provide support to students and parents as they applied to the university. Once the students were in the system, we were able to enroll them into the actual classes ourselves. These challenges were less present for the second semester when the students were already in the system.

The other barrier was more substantial and had to do with the students' schedules, learning backgrounds, and experiences. Many of the high school students were enthusiastic about the program when they signed up for it, however, only a small percentage of them were prepared for a college-level course of this nature. While this is a challenge that we also encounter among traditional college students, the high school students were also not prepared for the level of independent work required in an asynchronous online course. The moment students stopped working independently, they fell behind, and it became harder for them to keep up with the course. The course was not equivalent to our full elementary sequence (five-credit courses that meet five days a week) that counts toward the language requirements at KU. We were always planning to enroll the high school students in a three-credit version of this course, which contains fewer materials than the full sequence. However, even participation in this modified course proved to be a significant commitment for our high school students on top of their regular school curricula and extracurricular commitments. In keeping with our approach to our standard online Russian class for university students, we scheduled synchronous group meetings for the students—although we did this less frequently, every other week for the high school students (rather than once a week).

The program saw some attrition, as high school students were not prepared for the university academic experience. Several students struggled to attend synchronous meetings due to conflicts with other high school commitments, or they fell behind in the course content during the semester. These challenges required a nimble pedagogical approach from the instructional staff. We continue to adapt the online module to adjust the level of content in order to make it more accessible to younger students and continue to look for ways to help students move through the curriculum successfully. Eventually, we only covered 50% of the content we would cover with more traditional college-level students in a semester. For those high school students who struggled significantly, we also offered the ability to repeat the first course in the language sequence or portions of it, in addition to advancing into the next semester. The students who had the best outcomes were those who worked

with their high school counselors to ensure that the Russian language college courses also counted for their high school requirements and were, therefore, able to take our course as part of their high school curriculum rather than as an extra course.

Because we saw a wide range of students with different backgrounds and independent learning abilities, from an assessment perspective there was broad variation among the students. In the second year of the grant, we were more intentional with oral proficiency testing; results are still being evaluated. In the first year of the grant, we did not have funding to administer proficiency tests due to the larger number of additional students that we chose to accommodate. We integrated the testing into the budget for the second year and hope to move forward with testing the students.

One of the success stories of the first academic year was a final assignment where the students wrote a comic strip in Russian about a day in their lives. This could be any day from the waking hours to bedtime, and the students could be anywhere doing any number of things. This kind of open-ended assignment allowed the younger students to exercise their creativity in Russian. The students were incredibly creative for this project and covered things as prosaic as going to school, to more serious topics like being an intern journalist in wartime Ukraine, to outlandish scenarios like living on another planet. The exercise gave the students an opportunity to practice the Russian vocabulary they had learned throughout class. As a follow-up assignment, the students were supposed to perform their comic strips. Some did recordings of their comic strips and gave animated voices to the lines they had written, others did dramatic presentations over Zoom, and some turned their comics into flip-books. We thought this final activity in which we saw extraordinary creativity in Russian was a great opportunity for the students to showcase everything they had learned over the course of the academic year.

Sustainability

The USRF grant enabled us to teach Russian to high school districts in Kansas free of charge. We recognize that we may not always receive funding and therefore are consistently thinking about ways we can continue to sustain our program. We believe it is critically important to familiarize students with the region and help foster an interest in LCTLs for students at an early stage of their careers. Although we do not have the same grant funding opportunity for all our LCTLs, we hope that by using Russian as a gateway we can inspire broader interest in multiple languages.

The culture-based content and webinars are the most shareable elements of the work we have done with the grant. Since the webinars and lecture series about Russian language, literature, culture, and history were recorded on Zoom, some of this content can be shared with local schools on a regular basis. A one-credit course, "Understanding Russia," could be shared with the school districts, with or without university-level credit. Many of the students

who take this course have an interest or fascination with Russian, so we believe there would be interest regardless of credit status. If we gave students credit, we could raise funds from donors who are interested in supporting Russian study to cover student fees and pay partial overload for an instructor, thus replicating the financial model we have now. As we continue establishing ties with the school districts, principals, and high school teachers throughout the state, we hope that these individuals can help us get the word out about the initiative, along with advertising efforts through the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. Should we find ourselves in a situation where we cannot offer the language for free, just offering an extended culture course can inspire students to think more about the language and other languages in the region, perhaps enough to enroll in a college-level course either at our university or elsewhere.

Another path would consist of ensuring that we continue to teach the language to high school students. Given some of the challenges discussed in this chapter with individual learning, one legitimate question worth raising is whether online teaching is the best approach to teaching a LCTL to a younger, nontraditional group of students. The students that were motivated were truly motivated, some of them even learning Russian independently before enrolling in the program. However, as many others struggled, it is worth considering whether the best approach for these students would not have been through in-person teaching. The online modality is ostensibly the only way to teach a language to high school students during the academic year since the students are physically situated all over the state. However, in an effort to provide in-person content, we could apply for other, additional funding, such as a STARTALK grant (a federal grant program managed and funded by the National Security Agency), which would enable us to bring students to campus over the summer to receive in-person instruction.

Alternatively, if we are committed to continuing the online teaching during the academic year, one can envision a scenario where we would have a somewhat more selective approach to the students we allow in the program to ensure they are committed to independent learning. We could then work to obtain private donations to fund the program, but for a more limited number of students that we would advise more narrowly and give more individualized attention to. In this context, we have already talked about the program with a donor who had committed a bequest to our department. The donor in question has a background in international diplomacy and finance and has written letters to the USRF in support of the program. We anticipate that he may be interested in contributing to the program if we are unable to receive the grant in the future. Since donors often identify closely with the student experience and since our university is working to minimize costs for students who participate in this program, we believe that we are in a strong position to persuade a donor to contribute further funding to the program. We may also seek to diversify funding sources and use NRC funding to help support the instructional costs and fundraise for student fees and other resources. We

can also limit the number of credit hours we offer, which would change the educational experience for students, but still give them an introduction to the region and language and help contain the costs of the program.

Other approaches to sharing with high schools relate to state-funded programs that allow students to simultaneously enroll both in high school and at the university. In previous iterations of the grant, we worked to develop Russian Studies trainings for social science and globally-facing high school teachers. Although these teachers would not be able to teach the language courses, they could help engage students with the cultural materials provided by us. We have also reached out to the one teacher in Kansas who teaches Russian at the high school level and will be hosting her and her students in the department. We may consider deepening this partnership and thinking of ways in which we can rely on high school teachers to help sustain our high school connections. We are also considering reaching out to the Board of Regents, which has been interested in deepening partnerships with K–12 programs.

Conclusion

In recognizing the significant access barriers to a LCTL like Russian, we thought long and hard about ways in which we could construct language pipelines for our college-level classrooms. Multiple years of language learning in order to obtain any type of proficiency in Russian has been a consistent problem we face in our ability to reach more students. If we are unable to get students into our classroom during their freshman or sophomore years in college, it is unlikely that they will surpass the Novice or Intermediate Low proficiency level. Because this kind of problem is not one that could be fixed immediately and because we knew that we could not realistically build a more robust student base in the short term, we sought more long-term solutions by reaching out to high school students throughout the state. We felt this benefited the districts and the state at large, because we were sharing expertise with them and offering unusual educational opportunities that these districts would not have been otherwise able to extend to their students.

When it comes to enrollments in LCTLs, we believe it is important to not be territorial but to think in a broader scope nationally. We do not know whether the high school students who are in the program will eventually seek to matriculate at KU or choose to continue studying the language in our courses. We hope that they do, and, ultimately, we think that any growth of interest in the language itself is a net positive for the profession, even if it does not immediately benefit our department. In sharing with this nontraditional group of high school students, we relied on our previous experience sharing courses with military students as part of another nontraditional language sharing opportunity.

Of course, these two nontraditional student groups are fundamentally different from one another in terms of motivation, maturity, and age, and we encountered ongoing challenges with the high school group that we never

encountered with the military population, since many of those adult students came with significant preexisting knowledge of Russian and were often simply seeking to maintain their skills. As we continue to assess the high school program and gear up for more language sharing, we anticipate learning a great deal about where our students are and how we move forward. There may be a range of configurations whereby we can expose students to the Russian language as well as multiple funding streams we can explore. Ultimately, we think that especially in light of current events, this is a ripe time to invest in Russian Studies with the hope of building out a much-needed next generation of Russian experts.

8 Expanding Language Programs via Institutional Partners

Notes from a Small Island

Eduardo Lage-Otero

Abstract

The language program at Yale-NUS College has managed to offer several languages since 2013, thanks to collaborations with local, regional, and international partners. Although language instruction had not been part of the original academic blueprint, given the institution's diverse student body and students' academic and personal interests, the need for creative and sustainable solutions soon became evident. This chapter describes the various approaches taken to develop our language program, from working with local institutional partners to establishing relationships with other institutions around the world via teleconference. It explains the rationale and steps taken to ensure this model was successful in addition to the challenges it posed to keep it running.

Keywords: teleconference, partnership, mode of instruction, enrollment, language program

The study of another language has occupied an ambiguous and contested space within Yale-NUS College[1]—a small liberal arts college in Singapore established in 2011—as language study is neither an academic major nor an independent minor, but is frequently associated with certain disciplines or fields of study (e.g., literature). The founding document of Yale-NUS—the academic report created by the inaugural Curriculum Committee—states that as students engage with materials in the common curriculum, majors, and minors, "[o]ne task that remains for future iterations of our curriculum is to address more satisfactorily the place of language training" (Garsten et al., 2013, p. 47). This task became an ongoing effort to align institutional priorities, faculty research interests, and students' motivation to pursue language studies with the inevitable budget constraints.

This chapter analyzes the evolution of language instruction at Yale-NUS College, in particular the need to work across institutions to ensure the success of the language program and its viability in a small liberal arts context. For more information on how we measured the success of these partnerships, see the section "Assessing the Experience." The chapter presents a combination of

contextual information on the development of language offerings at the college, the different academic areas where language study has directly contributed to students' education, followed by an analysis of the role institutional partnerships have played to ensure language instruction continues to be an integral part of the college curriculum. The success of these language partnerships is never guaranteed; however, it is important to emphasize the need for coordination and planning of the languages and courses to be offered every semester in addition to ongoing communication with the partner institutions. Before discussing this in detail, the chapter will first contextualize the origin of language instruction at Yale-NUS College.

Development of Language Study at Yale-NUS

Instead of a grand master plan, the growth of language study at Yale-NUS College has been the result of a combination of faculty research interests and student-initiated proposals to complement the central elements of the curriculum. To make this model work, it required appointing a faculty member as language coordinator to oversee the various language initiatives. Today, Yale-NUS students can study languages in person or via teleconference to achieve their academic and personal goals.

One critical issue from the beginning was the number of languages to offer. Established institutions have a default set of languages on the books and there is usually little question as to why those are taught, but not others. Being a new institution, this question became inescapable at Yale-NUS College, as there were many stakeholders and variables to consider. This could be, in part, the reason why the inaugural Curriculum Committee decided to leave the issue for a later time in the college's development.

Given the initial class size of about 200 students, it was not possible to teach many of the languages that students or faculty were interested in, as enrollment numbers were bound to be very low. Additionally, qualified instructors were not readily available locally for some languages. This is where collaborations and partnerships with other institutions helped us expand the range of languages available to our students (see Table 8.1). These partnerships entailed working with local, regional, and international institutions and evolved over time.

Local Partnerships

The National University of Singapore (NUS)

In 2013, a survey conducted by the Dean of Faculty Office showed that a significant number of students were interested in studying another language. One option was to take classes at the NUS Centre for Language Studies (NUS CLS; https://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/cls/), where students could study any of the languages offered at the time (i.e., Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Mandarin

Table 8.1 Languages Available to Yale-NUS Students in AY 2021–22

	Language	Delivery Mode
Yale-NUS		
Classical (4)	Classical Chinese	Face-to-face
	Ancient Greek	Face-to-face
	Latin	Face-to-face
	Sanskrit	Via teleconference
Modern (5)	Bangla	Via teleconference
	Chinese (Mandarin)	Face-to-face
	Italian	Via teleconference
	Singapore Sign Language	Face-to-face via external partner
	Spanish	Face-to-face
NUS Centre for Language Studies		
Modern (13)	Arabic Japanese	
	Bahasa Indonesia Korean	
	Chinese (Mandarin) Malay	All face-to-face via external partner
	French Spanish	
	German Tamil	
	Hindi Thai	
	Vietnamese	

Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Tamil, Thai, and Vietnamese) at no cost to Yale-NUS College. A concern, though, was how to ensure Yale-NUS students could get into the courses they wanted, given the size of the NUS student body (approximately 28,000 students). A creative solution was needed.

Yale-NUS had received external funding to support Mandarin Chinese and Spanish language and culture at the college. Given its location in Singapore, Mandarin Chinese was bound to be a popular choice among international students and heritage speakers, but it was already available at NUS CLS, and thus of no interest to them. Spanish, on the other hand, was not offered at NUS CLS at the time, so the Dean of Faculty Office worked out an agreement: NUS students could take Spanish at Yale-NUS in exchange for Yale-NUS students getting priority allocation into NUS CLS courses. This ensured that Yale-NUS students could get into the language courses they wanted. The partnership with NUS CLS has remained strong and evolved in productive ways (e.g., workshops and co-sponsored talks), thanks to regular meetings with the NUS CLS director and frequent participation of the Yale-NUS language coordinator in NUS CLS faculty searches and promotion reviews. Additionally, for popular languages among Yale-NUS students such as Japanese, Yale-NUS has regularly worked with NUS CLS to offer a beginning section on the Yale-NUS campus.

This example of a local partnership has made it much easier for our students to study languages that would not be possible to offer,[2] given Yale-NUS's size and budget allocations. For example, regional languages such as Bahasa

Indonesia or Malay are very important for students considering employment within Southeast Asia after graduation. Working with NUS CLS has made it possible for our students to enroll and add this language training to their portfolio without having to worry about credit transfer issues. It significantly reduced paperwork and made the management of the partnership a lot easier. This was not the case with another local partnership, the Singapore Association for the Deaf.

The Singapore Association for the Deaf

Yale-NUS students regularly indicate their interest in studying other languages. Singapore Sign Language is a case in point. After several hearing-impaired students entered the college, they called for greater awareness of their situation. One way to address this was to offer Singapore Sign Language instruction. Hiring a dedicated instructor was not feasible, but, in Singapore, there is a well-established organization that advocates for the Deaf and hard of hearing—the Singapore Association for the Deaf (SADeaf; https://sadeaf.org.sg/). SADeaf also has an educational program with courses that can be offered at other institutions on a flexible fee structure. This worked well for us. To encourage students, we wanted the course to be credit-bearing and approved by our Curriculum Committee. This committee meets monthly and reviews course proposals on a rolling basis. We then worked with SADeaf to identify an instructor and finalize the details to teach the course. For the first semester, it was overenrolled, so we ran two sections.[3] Since then, enrollment numbers have been consistently strong, although the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to wear masks made it challenging to teach this language.

The partnership with SADeaf has been very successful, but it has also required more ongoing coordination than other languages. This stems in part from the difficulty in securing the same instructor every semester, having to onboard a new one each time. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the implications section. This chapter will now turn to some of our regional partnerships.

Regional Partnerships

Given the significant number of classicists, philosophers, and historians among our faculty, there was an early push to offer Classical Chinese, Ancient Greek, and Latin in-house. Interest in Sanskrit came primarily from faculty in Philosophy or with a background in Religious Studies. The difficulty with Sanskrit was to find a qualified, local instructor. After some unsuccessful attempts, we partnered with the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS; http://www.aiislanguageprograms.org) in India to offer Sanskrit via teleconference (see Figure 8.1). AIIS is an American-based institution established in 1961 that fosters American scholarship on India. Its work spans many fields,

Figure 8.1 Sanskrit at Yale-NUS. Image by Eduardo Lage-Otero.

including language training in Indian languages. This was very helpful as we aimed to include classical and modern languages from the Indian subcontinent.

We worked with the AIIS office in Pune, India, on the course logistics. Much like with Singapore Sign Language, the AIIS instructors submitted syllabi for the levels we wanted to offer (beginning, intermediate, and advanced) based on our learning objectives.

Once approved by our Curriculum Committee, we worked with the AIIS staff on the course schedule and trained the instructors on general teaching practices and expectations. Our faculty actively encouraged students to study this language, which ensured minimum enrollments. The small class size enabled instructors to work closely with the students and make sure they did not fall behind. In general, course feedback was very positive, but the courses required ongoing coordination to ensure they went as planned.

The success of this collaboration with AIIS led us to offer another South Asian language: Bengali. Working with the AIIS office in Kolkata, India, we were able to offer an introductory Bengali course online (see Figure 8.2). This approach gave us the flexibility to offer it whenever we had student interest, with the possibility of adding other Indian languages later. Additionally, the relatively small time difference between India and Singapore made course scheduling easy. This was not the case with our partnership with Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

International Language Partnership

Long before COVID-19 forced language instructors to switch to remote teaching, such courses were an important way to supplement the language options available at Yale-NUS. In the case of Russian, back in 2014, several students had expressed interest in studying it to facilitate their capstone research. At
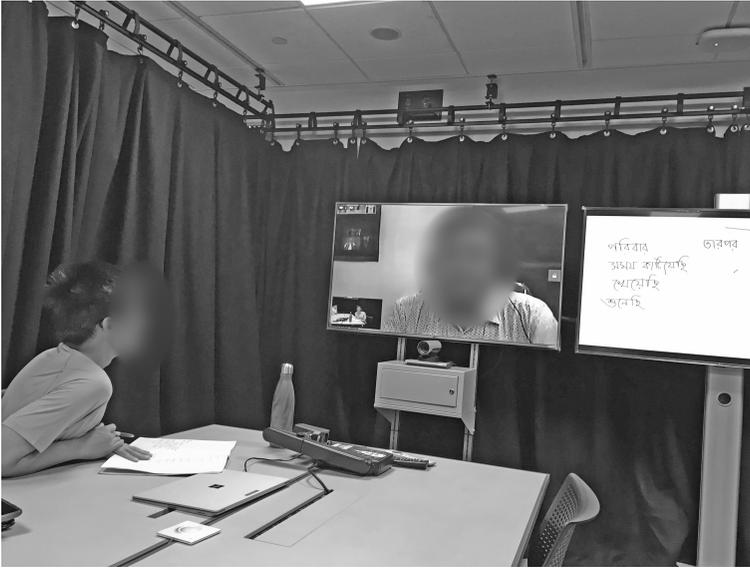
Figure 8.2 Bengali at Yale-NUS College. Image by Eduardo Lage-Otero.

the time, we were familiar with the Shared Course Initiative (http://shared-courseinitiative.org/) that Yale had undertaken with Cornell and Columbia Universities to make less commonly taught languages available and sustainable across the three campuses (see Chapter 3). After discussing the possibility of setting up something similar with the director of the Yale Center for Language Study (https://cls.yale.edu) and getting the approval and funding needed at Yale-NUS, we ran a pilot as proof of concept. The approach used in this case was for the Yale Language Center to hire an advanced graduate student at Yale University with training on the appropriate pedagogy to use with this technology. The course was initially designed as an independent language study module to provide a more flexible format that would not require the students to overload. It followed the Yale Russian textbook and syllabus. Because of the significant time difference with New Haven (12–13 hours), classes happened in the evenings on our campus. Although not an ideal time, the students liked it as it eliminated timetable clashes. Additionally, the teaching pace was fast, and the students were able to make remarkable progress in a short amount of time.

After the successful pilot course, it was evident that students wanted a language course more equivalent to the other courses available on campus, with the same credit. In addition, one student argued that our teleconference courses offered a learning experience more akin to face-to-face instruction (see Figure 8.3), noting how much it felt as if the instructor was in the classroom.

Figure 8.3 Russian course via Yale University. Image courtesy of Yale-NUS College.

The Curriculum Committee reviewed and approved the new course proposal with a revised syllabus and course credit. The following semester we offered the revised version. Although there were concerns about the significant time difference, student motivation eclipsed the late schedule. After Russian, we have worked with the Yale Center for Language Studies to include Italian and Portuguese, using a similar approach and with comparable outcomes. The Yale Center for Language Studies has been instrumental in identifying suitable candidates among advanced graduate students to teach these courses, but this also proved challenging at times when instructors had other commitments and were not available. This can be problematic if taking a language course is closely linked to a student's major or minor.

Integrating Language Study

At present, several majors allow students to count one or two intermediate or advanced language courses toward their major requirements, usually as they relate to the students' capstone projects. In addition, other majors encourage students to develop reading proficiency in those languages that may help them in their capstone research or graduate studies. There are also two independent minors (Chinese Studies and Global Antiquity) with an explicit language requirement; however, the lack of a college-wide language requirement makes it difficult to secure large enrollment numbers in most language courses. For the language program to grow and meet the needs of students and faculty, it is necessary to establish external partnerships with a dedicated language coordinator.

Coordinating Language Study

To coordinate the various interrelated aspects of language instruction at the college, it became evident early on that having a language coordinator would

be key. This person would provide expertise and a degree of centralization while working closely with relevant faculty and external partners on language planning, course offerings, timetable issues, and the hiring of suitable language faculty. This approach has worked well. Additionally, an advisory committee on language studies was set up to discuss, among other issues, curricular offerings, enrollment data, and student requests for additional languages, in order to make recommendations on language policy and initiatives to senior leadership. The committee has served as a critical sounding board and conduit to share information about various language-related issues with academic and non-academic partners.

Technology Solutions

Offering language courses from India or the United States would not have been feasible without technological solutions. From conference rooms, we quickly transitioned to dedicated classrooms (see Figure 8.4) where students could easily interact with each other and share materials with the remote instructors. Additionally, for courses such as Sanskrit, students used tablet computers to easily write the Devanagari script and share their work with the instructor. The goal was to bring students together and make these courses similar to other language courses on campus.

As the program evolved and new languages and levels were added, having to rely on a few dedicated classrooms became difficult. At that time, the college started installing videoconference equipment in most classrooms, and Zoom became the preferred platform. With the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, students could no longer be together in the same classroom; however, the transition was smooth.

Figure 8.4 Dedicated classroom for teleconference language instruction. Image by Eduardo Lage-Otero.

Assessing the Experience

Learning Outcomes

There is an inevitable tendency to compare face-to-face instruction with distance learning or online instruction along various metrics; some objective (e.g., contact hours, material covered, textbook used), others more subjective (e.g., use of technology, rapport between students and instructors, inability to see body language). Although many students prefer face-to-face instruction if given a choice, many of the students who have taken these teleconference courses have been pleasantly surprised. Teleconference courses, in particular prior to COVID-19, provided an equivalent learning experience to those taught on campus albeit mediated by technology. This is reflected in the content covered and student performance in the courses.

In terms of instructional differences, the instructors have noted that they enjoy teaching our students and find them as engaged as any others. Instructors are also aware of the limitations of this instructional approach, but they have been creative and resourceful in overcoming any challenge. The following sections provide a glimpse of the instructors' and students' experience.

Instructor Experience

As previously noted, language instructors have been consistently impressed by the students' motivation and willingness to learn. An Italian instructor noted that this approach to language instruction has the potential to match that of face-to-face instruction and that in one of the two semesters he taught via teleconference, Yale-NUS students were on track with Yale students. In the second semester, his biggest challenge was the time difference, as the course met very early in the morning, New Haven time, and he found it more difficult to be energetic. The instructor emphasized the need to present these courses to the students as identical to other language courses on campus in all respects, except delivery format, so that they frame the experience accordingly from the beginning. He indicated that students were "receiving better instruction and having better learning outcomes than [those at Yale]," which he attributed to the very small class size. Overall, he felt that his students were spending the same time, if not more, outside of class on his course, but he was sure that due to the class size, they got to speak and use the language significantly more than in more traditional settings.

Another Italian instructor emphasized the importance of careful lesson planning to ensure the instructor considers the affordances of the technology and the required reconceptualization of the classroom space and activities. In this regard, he was very grateful for the training and support that the Yale Center for Language Studies provided. He noted how he made use of Google Docs to replace activities that he would usually do in a different format or how he had to send links with various resources or post them on the learning management system prior to class. This forced him to be more organized and creative to achieve the desired results.

Finally, he noted how "unusually motivated" his students were, but also how "remarkably varied" their language skills were. This speaks to one of the common problems with less commonly taught language (LCTL) instruction: Having such small cohorts makes it difficult to place students into different levels, and the gap between students' proficiency can be greater than desired. All in all, the instructor appreciated the opportunity to teach these courses, noting that they "all had some truly remarkable moments of critical reflection on what it means to learn a language and culture."

Student Experience

Several students also shared their feedback on their experience taking language courses via external partners. A student particularly enjoyed the "small and intimate" nature of these courses and how beneficial it was for conversation and interaction. In his case, he liked having classes in the evenings as that meant there were no clashes with other courses. He stated that "the importance is not whether they are face-to-face or video classes, but how interested the student is in mastering the language." In his case, he emailed his professor regularly and worked diligently with the peer tutor to improve his pronunciation and fluency.

Another student was pleasantly surprised by the great audio and video quality but noted how the time difference made it challenging for some students to be as energetic as they could be. She felt that the small class size combined with a gifted professor were significant factors in making the course a success. She indicated how "given the size of the class, we had a lot of 'talking time' per student and easily received regular feedback from our instructor through emails." She was very wary, however, of shifting face-to-face language courses to this medium, as she greatly valued the exchanges and random encounters she had with previous language instructors on our campus.

Another student noted that the professor was not as in tune with students' responses and body language as in a face-to-face setting. This could be partially due to the instructor's Internet connection, as he usually connected from home. The student also mentioned that typing the non-Roman-script language using a keyboard in the course was very time-consuming and that he enjoyed the switch to tablet computers. In terms of time on tasks outside of class, this student reported "the same, if not more, time because ancient language classes take a lot of revision time."

Yet another student also remarked on the significant progress she had made in a relatively short amount of time. Although she would have preferred a different time for the course, she enjoyed the teaching style of the instructor and the variety of activities used. The student spent a lot of time outside of class practicing her "speaking skills, learning new vocabulary and working on assignments." She knew she could contact her professor via email or Skype and engaged with the language tutor in the course. She also found the technology to be quite transparent.

This sense of positive surprise with the technology was shared by another student in Russian. He indicated how he "was a bit skeptical of the online conference system going into the course, but I was really pleasantly surprised. In many ways, the system feels no different from a normal seminar class. Plus, the small class size means that you get a lot of help and attention." A fellow student shared this same sense of wonder when he stated that "not only were the classes as robust as the other face-to-face classes, but I could not notice that the class was in a different setting." When it comes to effort, the student reported "no difference when it comes to the preparation for my Russian class and the other face-to-face language classes I have taken (Chinese). Same standards, same effort."

Overall, instructors and students in these courses report a similar level of satisfaction with the courses. Their motivation and willingness to cope with time differences and unexpected glitches helped them learn as much as in any other language course.

Issues Encountered

Academic Credit Across Institutions

One potential thorny issue when dealing with external partners is academic credit. In the case of NUS, most of its language courses carry fewer credits than those at Yale-NUS. This created some challenges as students felt they should receive the same credit whether they took a language course at Yale-NUS or NUS CLS. After some discussion within the Curriculum Committee, the credit difference remained. For the other partnerships, however, the approach taken was to get the courses approved by our Curriculum Committee. This eliminated the need to deal with credit transfer and gave us greater control over the course content.

Course Coordination Across Institutions

Once listed as Yale-NUS courses, the need to coordinate all aspects of instruction with the partner institution started. Course instructors frequently changed from semester to semester, requiring onboarding a new person each time, making them aware of our academic calendar, grading practices, academic support units, academic integrity policies, and many other essential issues.

A related matter is the need to ensure instructor availability every semester, as they may be also working at other institutions, in the process of applying for jobs elsewhere, or have other commitments. To date, we have managed to secure instructors, but it can be challenging at times, and the possibility of having to cancel a course is always present.

A more critical issue is the reliance on the partner institution to select and hire a qualified instructor. So far, this has worked well, but we have had instances where the instructor was not as responsive to our students as we would have liked. In those cases, we worked with the partner institution to correct course and find a different instructor for the following semester.

Given the significant time and effort involved and the small number of students enrolled, we need to discuss the affordances and challenges of this approach going forward.

Moving Forward

From the beginning, this multipronged approach was meant to increase the language learning opportunities available to our students while building and maintaining ties to other institutions. In this respect, the approach has greatly succeeded. Through these partnerships, we have managed to offer students a suite of languages that would not have been possible otherwise. Student feedback has been very positive and the overall cost is manageable. In many ways, the experience gained in this area prior to the COVID-19 pandemic prepared us for remote teaching during that crisis. Although some may label this approach as "bespoke" language instruction, students in these courses are clearly spending a lot of time preparing and studying in these courses. In turn, instructors report high student participation and engagement rates. Given that these are electives and the class size is very small, students typically outperform those taking equivalent courses in face-to-face settings.

In terms of the administrative work involved, it is certainly significant and relies on having a dedicated faculty member to ensure everything runs smoothly. This may not always be possible, but without strong coordination, the continuation of the partnerships may prove untenable. For now, the emphasis has been on streamlining the process of setting up the courses and securing instructors to teach them. With some partners, this can be challenging and may require reconsidering the approach going forward. In other cases, it is running smoothly.

As we consider the future of these arrangements, several concerns need to be taken into consideration: (1) external language courses taking students away from in-house ones; (2) entire in-house language programs moved to external partners; (3) some in-house language courses shifted to external partners; and (4) language courses via external partners with sufficient enrollment numbers shifted to in-house delivery. Let us address these scenarios in more detail:

(1) Offering additional language courses via external partners may certainly take away students from in-house courses, although this may happen whenever the curriculum is expanded. We do not have evidence that a greater diversity of languages offered results in an enrollment drop for certain languages. The key is to help students decide what would be of greater benefit to them.

(2) A related concern with regard to the success of external partnerships is the possibility of the college shifting a particular language to this approach, either due to consistent low enrollment or as a cost-saving measure. This is a thorny issue to tackle and the continuity (or not) of a particular language in-house needs to be viewed in the context of the overall goals and

purpose it serves, the number of faculty members involved, connection to a major or minor, and relative significance of the language in the region or country. The outcome will inevitably vary on a case-by-case basis.

(3) In any language sequence, attrition from one level to the next is a serious concern. This may result, for example, in advanced language courses with consistently low enrollment numbers. For languages where this is the norm, the possibility of working with external partners may be considered. Consortial programs such as the Shared Course Initiative or the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare Program (https://btaa.org/resources-for/faculty/courseshare/introduction; see Chapter 1) are good examples of a carefully managed solution to this problem.

(4) If, on the other hand, enrollment numbers were to dramatically increase for a language offered via an external partner, we may consider alternative approaches. In the short term, we may offer additional sections, but if interest is sustained, we could teach it in-house instead. So far, we have not reached that point, but it needs to be part of our language plan.

In general, students and faculty prefer face-to-face, in-house language instruction, and this option should be considered first. However, this should not rule out partnering with other institutions. Having these partnerships in place gives us the flexibility to add other languages and thus contribute to the global education our students expect. Students and instructors in our external-partner courses— be they face-to-face or via teleconference—confirm that when the course has a standard number of contact hours, adequate academic support, and is viewed by students as any other language course, the learning objectives are usually met. Also, given the small class size for many of the teleconference courses, their pace and rigor are usually greater than in a face-to-face environment.

Going forward, we need to balance the number of additional languages that students and faculty may be interested in with what is realistic to support and sustain in the long term. This may result in languages being dropped or new ones being added. There is also a need to learn from other institutions involved in similar initiatives to avoid repeating mistakes and adopt suitable processes whenever appropriate. It is essential to ensure that all stakeholders understand these partnerships as enhancements to, and not replacements of, language programs. To this end, sharing end-of-year reports, giving departmental presentations, participating in national and international conferences, and publishing information about such initiatives can help contextualize and promote them within and beyond the institution and its partners.

Notes

1 Yale-NUS College, located in Singapore, is the result of a partnership between Yale University and the National University of Singapore (NUS). The liberal arts college admitted its first cohort in 2013 and is slated to merge with NUS College by 2025. The Yale-NUS language program has worked closely with the NUS Centre

for Language Studies, established in 2001, to address the language needs of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

2 For student reporting on this collaboration, read https://theoctant.org/edition/iv-10/allposts/arts/crossing-the-bridge/.

3 For reporting on this course, read https://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/story/31-march-2020-sign-language-module-offers-students-unique-learning-opportunity-and-insight-on-deaf-culture/.

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Part III
Case Studies

9 Out of Challenges Come Opportunities

Innovative Collaboration in Teaching East Asian Languages

Vance Schaefer and Tamara Warhol

Abstract

Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean require much time and effort to achieve a professional working proficiency. Their shared linguistic features—Chinese characters, lexicon, grammar, cultural references, and more—make these East Asian languages challenging for second language learners. These shared features conversely create opportunities for collaboration among East Asian language instructors/programs within or across institutions. Moreover, globalization is diversifying East Asian language learner demographics at English-Medium instruction universities: There has been an increase in heritage learners and advanced learners (i.e., international students from East Asia or learners who already know one East Asian language). Diverse demographics catalyze greater focus on individual needs to meet divergent language backgrounds and provide equity for students with varying proficiency levels.

Collaboration maximizes teaching efficacy and time through sharing experiences, issues, methods, and activities in teaching commonly shared features. Technology is key in meeting individual needs through collaboration in creating exercises, activities, and online resources. Blending/flipping the classroom augments the learning experience and time by utilizing online interactive activities. Student recruitment can be mutually promoted through joint cultural events. This chapter discusses shared linguistic features unique to East Asian languages, illustrates principles for collaborative teaching, and presents sample activities.

Keywords: advantaged learners, L3 learning, cognates, extensive skills, blended classrooms

East Asian languages such as Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are considered challenging. They generally require much time and effort to learn relative to most other languages commonly taught (U.S. Department of State, n.d.) as they vary linguistically in aspects such as lexicon, orthography, grammar, pronunciation, and pragmatics from the first (i.e., native; L1) and second languages (L2) of many learners. Despite their difficulty, these languages

are experiencing growing enrollments (Looney & Lusin, 2019), and learner demographics are changing due to greater exposure to East Asian languages through globalization and digitalization (e.g., immigration, international students, travel, entertainment media, popular music, social media, language platforms). Moreover, there are "advantaged learners" who already know one East Asian language and are learning another, for example, international students from East Asia studying another East Asian language, as suggested by large percentages of students in East Asian language courses at Australian universities in 2019 (Aspinall & Crouch, 2023, p. 35). Such diverse learners result in varying proficiency levels and less attention to and time for individual learning needs.

These challenges (e.g., linguistic differences, greater learner diversity) also present opportunities. Courses can be reconceptualized. Instructors can flip or blend courses by creating online interactive activities to increase both learning time and opportunities, thereby enhancing learning efficacy. These innovations offer learner equity by individualizing learning through modified or new activities (e.g., tailored online explanations, extensive reading) to meet students' varying proficiencies. Additionally, the shared linguistic features (e.g., lexicon, orthography, grammar) that make East Asian languages challenging can be exploited through collaboration among East Asian language instructors and programs in sharing teaching methods, materials, technology, etc. Pooling resources can reduce the time instructors need to devise do-it-yourself methods and materials. Moreover, instructors can hold joint events (Autumn Festival, New Year's celebrations, Asia night talent show, calligraphy workshops, etc.) to serve as student recruitment opportunities.

We hope this chapter might serve as a blueprint for collaboration among Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean language instructors and help them exploit similarities between the East Asian languages to meet pedagogical challenges. This can enhance sharing of the workload for these less commonly taught language (LCTL) instructors and can be expanded if these collaborative efforts in professional development and student events are shared among institutions. This chapter discusses (1) shared linguistic features common to East Asian languages, (2) guiding pedagogical principles for individualized learning, blending/flipping, extensive skills, and more, and (3) activity samples. These ideas can also serve as a template for developing workshops on teaching other LCTLs with shared features and issues (e.g., Slavic, Turkic languages).

Typological Similarities Between East Asian Languages

Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean share to varying degrees similar lexicon, orthography, grammar, phonology, and pragmatics. These three languages are not genetically related (i.e., not from the same language family), although there is some conjecture about a distant connection between Japanese and Korean (Shibatani, 1990). These three languages have, however, experienced long-time language contact, particularly through adopting/

adapting Chinese culture. To help instructors utilize shared features in teaching learners an additional East Asian language, we provide a basic description of linguistic similarities between these three languages.

Lexicon

As an arbiter of culture and lingua franca, or more apropos *lingua sinica*, in Asia, Chinese has exhibited a strong influence on Japanese and Korean, particularly in vocabulary and Chinese characters.

Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean share a large number of cognates. A lexical core consists of morphemes (i.e., smaller units of meaning within a word: *un-believe-able*) and words represented by Chinese characters that allow for newly coined shared terms for Western or modern concepts. Percentages of Japanese and Korean (written) lexicons derived from Chinese are both around 60% (Sino-Japanese: Shibatani, 1990; Sino-Korean words: Sohn, 1999). These words tend to be academic and/or formal, and depending on the language may carry different nuances (e.g., archaic). Consequently, Japanese and Korean feature different lexical tiers: (1) common words with native origins, (2) typically formal counterparts from Chinese or created from Chinese-derived morphemes, and (3) trendy or academic words from English or formed from English morphemes (see Table 9.1 for Japanese examples).

Orthography

Japanese and Korean have used Chinese characters for over a millennium. More recently, Mandarin Chinese in Mainland China (and Singapore) and Japanese simplified their characters. Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan generally did not. Korean switched almost entirely to *hangul*, its phonetic writing system (i.e., one symbol generally corresponds to one sound like the Roman alphabet), although in South Korea, unlike in North Korea, Korean may mix in Chinese characters for various reasons (Taylor & Taylor, 1995).

Chinese character usage among the three languages varies; there are different forms, different meanings/nuances, and the absence/presence of

Table 9.1 Three-Way Lexical Origins in Japanese

English	Native Japanese	Chinese Form	English Loanword
shape	*katachi* 形	*keitai* 形態	*foomu* フォーム
man	*otoko* 男	*dansei* 男性	*~man* as in *sarariiman* "salaryman" *wanman* "one-man-operated" (bus)
restructure	*tatenaoshi* 立て直し	*saikoochiku* 再構築	*risutora* リストラ

Note: Pronunciation is represented by Romanized systems commonly used to teach Mandarin Chinese (pinyin), Japanese (modified Hepburn romanization), and Korean (revised romanization of [South] Korean) throughout this chapter.

characters. These differences along with directionality (e.g., Japanese speaker reading Mandarin Chinese), educational background, and language-specific features impede or facilitate reading shared characters in a non-native East Asian language. Mandarin Chinese speakers reading Japanese must be able to read and understand Japanese grammatical inflections represented by *kana* script (i.e., *hiragana* script representing Japanese moras or sounds equal to or smaller than a syllable), for example, 驚かせる *odorokaseru* = to surprise someone:

odoro (Chinese character) surprise

(k)ase (kana) = make someone [surprised]

ru = habitual or future form

Syntax/Grammar

All three languages may share similar grammatical concepts: noun clause modifiers preceding nouns, topicalization, counters/classifiers, pro-drop (i.e., omitted pronouns), sentence-final particles (expressing questions, emphasis, mood), and more. Furthermore, Japanese and Korean feature subject–object–verb order, particles (indicating subject, object, topic, etc.), agglutinating verbal morphology (i.e., sequence of morphemes to form a verb as in the *odorokaseru* Japanese example), and honorific language (e.g., language showing respect to or social distance with another person of higher social status), oftentimes allowing word-for-word translation without greatly affecting meaning. Instructors should be aware of cross-linguistic similarities to help advantaged learners activate these forms while being careful of differences in meaning or usage.

Phonology/Pronunciation

Phonology is likely the least common area among the three East Asian languages. However, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and some Korean dialects (e.g., Gyeongsang dialect) use lexically-contrastive pitch (e.g., distinguishing words by using lower vs. higher and/or flat vs. contoured pitch on syllables within words). Mandarin Chinese places one of four tones (or "fifth no tone") on each word syllable, while Japanese places an accent on one mora (i.e., a unit of sound equal to or smaller than a syllable), creating a string of (relative) low and high pitches across words (e.g., [a.me] high + low pitch = *rain* vs. low + high pitch = *candy*). Mandarin Chinese has more pitch shapes/patterns, but is somewhat static, whereas Japanese lexical pitch patterns may change when combining words.

Pragmatics

All three languages share some culture: religion (e.g., Buddhism), superstitions, cultural references (e.g., historical, literary), and celebrations that imbue

language. Additionally, paralinguistic elements (i.e., non-lexical elements of language), such as bowing, gestures, and facial expressions, might also be examined for (dis)similarities, for example, bowing tends to differ in frequency, occasion, and style. Moreover, all three languages commonly address people by speaker-centered relationships (e.g., older brother, middle-aged man (uncle), customer, teacher). Particularly in Japanese and Korean, social hierarchy can be reflected in language (e.g., honorific language). The two languages, however, can differ: When talking to non-family members, Japanese would likely not use honorifics referencing one's parents and grandparents, while Korean might use honorifics when referencing these family members (Brown, 2008).

These shared linguistic features open up opportunities to share teaching issues and ideas among instructors of Mandarin, Korean, and Japanese.

Typological Distance and Learning

Additional language learners do not come with a blank slate. They may access their L1(s) and/or L2(s) in learning a third language (L3). Much focus of L3 research is on the influence of other L2(s), L1(s), and L1–L2 interaction on the development of the L3 (Hammarberg, 2018).

Typologically dissimilar language structures (i.e., language forms and structures that differ in type) can overwhelm L2/L3 learners, using up working memory (i.e., short-term memory used in the immediate processing of language), imposing greater cognitive load, and thereby impacting the rate of acquisition. Potential L1 transfer is mediated by perceived or actual L1–L2 similarity and non-linguistic factors such as proficiency and modality (perception vs. production) (see Gor & Vatz, 2009, for an overview). If learners recognize L1–L2 similarities, positive transfer likely occurs (Spada & Lightbown, 2013) and they may proceed more quickly through certain acquisitional phases, but in a similar order to other non-native learners (i.e., rate vs. route). L2–L3 similarity speeds up the rate necessary to acquire a feature in the L3 (Ringbom, 1987). However, a certain degree of proficiency is required to avoid confusing the L2 and L3 (Ringbom & Jarvis, 2011). An intermediate L2 proficiency appears to heavily influence the early stages of L3 acquisition, with L2 influence waning and L1 influence increasing as learners become more proficient in the L3 (Fernandes-Boëchat, 2007). However, the greater influence of L2 on L3 over L1 is suspected to be caused by perceived typological similarity by the learner (Wrembel, 2010). Ringbom and Jarvis (2011) propose that assumed or perceived cross-linguistic similarities exist on a continuum ranging from similarity to contrast to zero relations and suggest language instructors concentrate on L1–L2 differences, balance comprehension vs. production, determine language proficiency (i.e., required high level of L2 proficiency), and consider individual differences.

Learning L2 vocabulary can be challenging and time-consuming, particularly if there are few cognates. Cognates are easier to learn than non-cognates

with orthographic pairing facilitating learning over picture pairing (Lotto & de Groot, 2002). Having instant vocabulary in an L3 transferred from an L2 or L1 can potentially speed up the process toward advanced proficiency (Odlin, 2003, as cited in Gor & Vatz, 2009). A learner must know around 98% of the vocabulary for learning to occur with input (Nation & Meara, 2010). A large percentage of cognates may free up the cognitive load in learning (Odlin, 2003). For reading and listening comprehension, "procedures for comprehending and using identical or very similar L1 words in L2 are already automatized" (Ringbom, 1992, p. 102). Additionally, L1–L2 orthographic similarities increase and optimize input when learning L2 lexicon (MacWhinney, 2006), questioning the effect of cognates mediated by (dis) similar orthography (e.g., Chinese cognates written in Korean *hangul* vs. Chinese characters) and phonology.

Experience with Chinese characters should influence the learning of L3 Mandarin Chinese by advantaged learners (e.g., L2 Japanese learners). For example, L2 recognition of Chinese characters in Japanese (i.e., *kanji*) differs by L1 English speakers with phonographic orthography (phonological encoding, or simply put, the processes of converting sounds to symbols) versus L1 Korean and Mandarin Chinese speakers with morphographic (e.g., one morpheme to one symbol) orthography (automatic word recognition) (Mori, 1998). L1 Mandarin Chinese speakers process L2 Japanese characters more quickly and accurately than L1 English speakers, although both groups perform equally well on processing Japanese moraic *kana* scripts, i.e., two scripts using symbols representing sounds equal to or smaller than a syllable (Tamaoka, 1997). Accordingly, learners should access their L2 experience with Chinese characters in processing L3 Chinese characters with facilitative results, although with potential disadvantageous effects (e.g., L2 pronunciation blocking L3 pronunciation). Evidence for a facilitative L2-on-L3 effect is witnessed in learning pronunciation: L1 English speakers with L2 Mandarin Chinese outperform L1 monolingual English speakers on the naïve (i.e., non-learner) perception of non-native Thai tones (Schaefer & Darcy, 2020).

In sum, these typologically similar language features have the potential to impact the learning of East Asian languages by advantaged students who already are familiar with one East Asian language. As such, instructors should exploit these features in their teaching of advantaged learners and collaborate on potentially shared teaching/learning issues, methods, activities, and materials.

Teaching Principles

Much classroom time is needed to reach an Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) general professional proficiency of 2+/3, which approximates a Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) C1 level or ACTFL Advanced High/Superior level (ACTFL, n.d.; DLNSEO, 2016) in East Asian

languages. Approximately 2,200 classroom hours are generally required by L1 English speakers (U.S. Department of State, n.d.) and by extension by L2 learners with L1s differing from East Asian languages. To help students reach 2,200 classroom hours and achieve ILR 3 proficiency, the United States government sponsors Language Flagship programs at select American universities for designated critical languages like Mandarin Chinese and Korean; these programs increase learning time through summer courses, study abroad, tutoring, and an additional capstone fifth year (DLNSEO, 2016). The U.S. Department of State trains diplomats for two years in Mandarin Chinese, Korean, or Japanese at an expense of $480,000 each (Gaouette, 2021). In short, time and money are needed to reach high proficiency levels in East Asian languages by particular L1 speakers.

To increase the amount and efficacy of learning time, we suggest teaching East Asian languages through different approaches and activities and promoting collaboration among languages (see Gor & Vatz, 2009). Such efforts support meeting the needs of learners who already know an East Asian language. The following guiding principles consider that teaching LCTLs requires teaching materials, teacher training, research, basic tool development (e.g., dictionaries, grammars), and networking.

(1) **Harnessing technology via blended/flipped classrooms** for greater individualized lessons for learners with different backgrounds and proficiency levels, optimizing in-class practice time and using advantaged learners as resources for the class and less proficient learners.

(2) **Explicit instruction through online interactive explanations and exercises** to better understand L1/L2/L3 differences, boost metalinguistic awareness, and help learners make connections. Instructors compare differences in Chinese character forms, lexicon, honorifics usage, etc.

(3) **Greater focused practice targeting specific skills**, for example, form versus function, accuracy versus fluency, and vocabulary versus grammar, to increase noticing of target language features and potentially speed up the rate of learning.

(4) **Augmented input through extensive reading and/or listening** to activate L1/L2 knowledge and/or skills to practice and promote the acquisition of similar L3 features.

(5) **Increased work on oracy skills** to balance bias toward literacy skills by taking advantage of technology that allows students to record oral responses and listen more.

(6) **Exploiting linguistic similarities** (cognates, orthography, grammar) to free up cognitive load, direct greater attentional resources toward new language forms and concepts (Schmidt, 1990), and promote automatization.

(7) **Building vocabulary through knowledge of Chinese characters** and their morphemes/words.

(8) **Connecting L1/L2/L3 similarities** (e.g., lexicon, Chinese characters) to boost metalinguistic awareness and encourage active involvement of learners in the learning process.

(9) **Repetition and practice within a communicative approach** to activate L1/L2 features and apply them when speaking L3 (see automatization in Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 1988). This includes pragmatics-focused task-based language learning where learners must use appropriate language varieties to accomplish real-world tasks.

(10) **Increasing exposure and knowledge of instructors to learners' languages**. Although we recognize instructors' time constraints, we suggest instructors participate in short workshops about East Asian languages or share fairs to exchange teaching ideas, methods, issues, and activities.

We advocate for more research, including teacher inquiry and action research (i.e., instructors define/analyze an issue, plan a course of action, act on/ implement the plan, and observe the effect, reflect on results, and repeat; Dickens & Watkins, 1999), concerning teaching efficacy. To boost enrollment and motivate learners, we encourage offering talks on language, study abroad programs, career opportunities, and topics tailored to students' interests and needs along with joint cultural events (see Gor & Vatz, 2009).

Types of Activities

We now offer more detail and guidance related to the aforementioned guiding principles to help language instructors create, implement, and collaborate on teaching ideas targeting shared linguistic features.

Blending/Flipping

Blending and/or flipping classrooms may provide more individualized learning and optimize the teaching of students with a wide range of proficiencies. Blending classrooms involves combining face-to-face and online teaching. Flipping is a type of blending where traditional class lectures (explanations of grammar, etc.), and some explanatory exercises are done at home before class as assigned reading, videos, and online activities. Exercises traditionally assigned as homework are done in class where the instructor facilitates learners' interaction with and in the target language. This allows for more class time devoted to actual language usage and practice. Such meaningful interactions more readily promote language acquisition. This is particularly invaluable to advantaged learners who require less explanation, as they conceptually understand similar grammar, but require practice of forms.

Online Explanations and Exercises/Activities

Explanations (e.g., handouts, mini video lectures, blogs) can be tailored, allowing learners to devote the time and attention they need. These explanations

can be reinforced by interactive exercises or quizzes online to practice forms and concepts with feedback, ensuring students read and interact with these explanations. If possible, auto-grading can be implemented to free up time for instructors. Journals might be assigned to encourage dialogue between instructors and learners, noting issues and asking questions about language. Courses might also use websites like Duolingo to supplement such explanations with practice of grammar, vocabulary, writing, etc.

In-Class Activities

In-class time should be devoted to meaningful interaction (i.e., function) potentially in the form of task-based, problem-based, project-based, or content-based learning to replicate real-life authentic language usage and promote language learning. Instructors might create language stations that address different skills, language features, levels of difficulty, etc. Students can be grouped by proficiency levels, work at their own pace, and be assigned to certain language stations to address individual needs. Also, literacy skills can be addressed, making connections to L1s/L2s: Students can work in small groups writing characters, sentences, or paragraphs on whiteboards (e.g., grammar, writing process) or read aloud together to learn characters, pronunciation, etc.

Extensive Skills

Extensive skills (i.e., reading, listening, speaking, writing) can improve language knowledge and application. Learners in classrooms that utilize extensive skills outperform learners receiving traditional instruction. Extensive reading can increase vocabulary in its meaning and spelling, grammatical knowledge (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006), reading speed, and writing skills (Mason & Krashen, 1997). Knowing the most frequent 5,000 words enables learners to achieve Superior reading levels on the ACTFL scale (Tschirner et al., 2018). Extensive speaking enhances fluency, proficiency, and attitude (Gu & Reynolds, 2013).

Extensive skills focus on practice. Learners might write simple, short summaries of the content and comments for extensive reading (Mason & Krashen, 1997) in a log (see example in upcoming activities section). Extensive writing might involve 10 minutes of writing. Extensive oracy skills focus on developing fluency, that is, producing language, and less on accuracy, at least initially (Herder & King, 2012).

Extensive skills can address the individual needs of learners with previous knowledge of another East Asian language. Advantaged learners can activate cognates, shared Chinese characters, similar grammatical structures, and other common linguistic features in extensive literacy (reading, writing) or oracy skills (listening, speaking). Learners respond to prompts at their individual language proficiency levels in extensive speaking (i.e., free speaking) and extensive writing (i.e., free writing), allowing instructors to assess individual proficiency levels, issues, and needs and respond accordingly. Extensive skills can be done in class or online (see later samples for details).

Oracy Skills

Blending and flipping courses can upend the bias toward written homework assignments versus spoken classroom assignments. With recording technology, oral assignments are easier to assign, allowing learners opportunities for much-needed oral practice. Students can record responses on their computers or mobile devices and upload responses to learning management systems. Oral assignments can take more time to grade than written assignments and should therefore target specific features or outcomes and/or use a simple grading scale (3 = mostly on target, 2 = needs some work, 1 = needs much work, 0 = nothing turned in; completed vs. not completed) for quick assessment.

These descriptions of possible types of activities should guide instructors in devising, implementing, and sharing activities with other East Asian language instructors concerning shared features among Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

Sample Activities

We now offer a sample of possible activities. These activities are not exhaustive but should inform and motivate instructors to create and share activities by applying the aforementioned teaching principles. The numbers of the guiding principles for each activity are in parentheses.

Vocabulary (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10)

Students figure out patterns in cognates through examples (see Table 9.2). Cognates are generally academic or formal and feature the same or similar characters. However, pronunciation may vary. In cognates, one character is generally equal to one morpheme (i.e., smaller units of meaning within a word) with a monosyllabic Sinitic-based pronunciation.

Questions:

(1) What types of words are generally featured? (answers: academic, formal)
(2) What patterns do you see? (answers: same character/similar pronunciation, same character/different pronunciation, one character = one morpheme/root)

Table 9.2 Common Sinitic Lexicon in Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean

Language	Lexicon		
English	*economy*	*government*	*telephone*
Mandarin Chinese traditional	經濟jīngjì	政府zhèngfǔ	電話diànhuà
Mandarin Chinese simplified	经济jīngjì	政府zhèngfǔ	电话diànhuà
Japanese	経済keizai	政府seifu	電話denwa
Korean	경제 (經濟) gyeongje	정부 (政府) jeongbu	전화 (電話) jeonhwa

Table 9.3 Morphological Roots and Chinese Characters to Learn L2/L3 Words

English	Chinese Character	Mandarin Chinese	Japanese	Korean
exercise	運動／运动	yùn-dòng	un-dō	un-dong
museum	博物館／博物馆	bó-wù-guǎn	haku-butsu-kan	bag-mul-gwan
park	公園／公园	gong-yuán	kō-en	gong-won
Knowing these three words, how would you say or pronounce this word?				
zoo	動物園／动物园	dòng-wù-yuán	dō-butsu-en	dong-mul-won

Table 9.4 Extensive Writing Log

Day	Topic	How Many Words Did You Write in the Target Language?	Impressions
9月5日（金）	Last summer	121	I have forgotten many words we learned last year, and so I used the same phrases over and over like X しました, so I could write a lot.
9月１２日（金）			

Exercises can be done online interactively (see Table 9.3).

Exercise: *Look at the following words and write Korean pronunciations for* 食.

朝食 조식 jo**sig** *breakfast* (formal term)

昼食　주식 ju**sig** *lunch* (formal term)

食堂 식당 **sig**dang *cafeteria*

Vocabulary can be activated receptively through extensive reading and extensive listening and more actively through recall in extensive writing and extensive speaking, using logs to record progress (see Table 9.4).

Grammar (1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10)

Grammar can be conceptually similar, particularly between Japanese and Korean. Providing online explanations with comparisons (see Table 9.5) allows advantaged learners to notice (dis)similarities, connect grammatical concepts, and focus on forms.

Table 9.5 Grammatical Comparison between Korean and Japanese

Language	Example
English	I went to school by bicycle and ate lunch.
Gloss of Korean/Japanese	(I TOPIC) bicycle BY school TO go, lunch OBJ eat-PAST-formal (Kor) or eat-formal-PAST (Jpn)
Korean	(나는) 자전거로 학교에 가서 점심을 먹었습니다. (na-neun) jajeongeo-lo haggyo-e gaseo jeomsim-eul meog-eoss-seubnida.
Japanese	(私は)自転車で学校に行って、昼ご飯を食べました。 (watashi wa) jitensha de gakkō ni itte, hirugohan o tabe-mashi-ta.

Table 9.6 Extensive Reading/Listening Log

Day	Target Material	Story Highlights	Impressions
9月1日 （火）	Japanese baths	John did X. John thought X. Etc.	It was easy to read today. There was one word I couldn't understand. I'm enjoying the story. My reading is getting faster.
9月3日 （木）			

Extensive Reading/Listening (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

To help advantaged learners activate similar features (lexicon, orthography, grammar) between their East Asian languages, instructors can use extensive reading and/or listening. Learners should understand most of what they hear or read to practice and automatize shared L2/L3 features. Learners are not tested on the content but merely keep a log (see Table 9.6). Extensive listening while reading along can help learners with pronunciation (character pronunciation, tones, pitch accent, vowels, consonants), reading, and listening.

Oral Assignments (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9)

Advantaged learners may recognize written vocabulary or understand shared concepts (see Table 9.7), but need to practice producing vocabulary or forms. Learners react to prompts targeting certain vocabulary, grammar, etc. Learners respond to and upload recordings as homework. To encourage appropriate registers or honorifics, pragmatics-focused task-based learning might be employed by designating speaker identities/relationships, situations, etc. (i.e., learners must use both targeted vocabulary/grammar and appropriate authentic language to successfully complete real-world tasks).

Exercise: *You need help doing your homework. Persuade your teacher/your friend to help you.*

Table 9.7 Comparison of Registers for "To Do" in Japanese and Korean

English	Japanese	Korean
plain (do)	suru	hada
polite/formal	shimasu	haeyo
polite/formal	shimasu	hamnida (more formal than haeyo)
very formal/honorific/ respectful	nasaimasu, saremasu	hashimnida
humble	itashimasu	hamnida
polite (did)	shimashita	haessoyo

Note: The forms do not map directly between Japanese and Korean, for example, humble language in Japanese or two-way difference in Korean between *haeyo* and *hamnida*. The corresponding forms are inserted for possibly similar situations and to encourage discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the potential for greater cooperation among teachers in three East Asian languages to enhance learning/teaching, particularly as concerns advantaged learners. We promote collaboration among East Asian language instructors in sharing teaching ideas (e.g., teaching techniques, homework assignments, technology tips, etc., concerning particularly Chinese characters and lexicon) and holding joint events (e.g., New Year's celebrations, calligraphy and character writing). Such efforts hold promise for recruitment and boosting enrollments.

Future steps include instructors reflecting on their teaching, conducting action research, and applying L2 acquisition theory/findings to their teaching. Focus should be on the efficacy of teaching approaches, methods, techniques, materials, and activities as informed by L2/L3 learning and acquisition. Finally, we encourage all instructors teaching typologically similar languages (e.g., Germanic, Romance, Slavic, Turkic languages) to cooperate in enhancing teaching efficacy.

Acknowledgments

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10 Sharing the Teaching of Kaqchikel Maya Across Universities

Emily Tummons

Abstract

This chapter details collaborative, innovative less commonly taught language (LCTL) instruction at the University of Kansas (KU) during the first two years of COVID. Between 2020 and 2022, a team of language instructors and staff in KU's Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies expanded and enriched their Kaqchikel Maya language course offerings through relationships with sister institutions. Courses were moved to an online synchronous platform in March 2020, which allowed for novel collaborations across universities and programs. Historically modest LCTL enrollments grew as non-KU students were welcomed into these virtual courses; native speakers were brought in for increased immersive conversation opportunities for the students; and inter-institutional partnerships increased through shared virtual Language Table events, summer and winter break modules, bidirectional recruitment, and the addition of Yucatec Maya language course offerings. The chapter describes unexpected benefits, along with pitfalls, solutions, and processes, contributing to a roadmap for other institutions and instructors seeking to innovate LCTL instruction across universities and language levels.

Keywords: course sharing, Mayan languages, enrollment, partnerships

The sudden move to virtual instruction at the start of the pandemic allowed universities to widen their outreach, welcoming those outside their regions to enroll remotely in historically smaller less commonly taught language (LCTL) courses. Many teams of instructors and administrators took this opportunity to build new connections and bridges among communities of LCTL learners. This chapter chronologically recounts how one such team at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) at the University of Kansas (KU) expanded its Mayan language offerings from 2020 to 2022.

CLACS receives Title VI funds, both National Resource Center (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) funding, from the U.S. Department of Education. This funding supports the teaching of LCTLs at KU. The CLACS team as described in this chapter consists of the main Mayan

language instructor, the center's FLAS coordinator, center directors, several guest native speakers, and a graduate teaching assistant. The author, the main Mayan language instructor at KU, served as point person for the CLACS team during the time described in this chapter. She began teaching all levels of Kaqchikel Maya courses at KU in fall 2007.[1]

It is the period between when the pandemic lockdown began and the end of the spring 2022 semester that takes primary focus in this chapter (Year 0 = AY 2019–20, Year 1 = AY 2020–21, Year 2 = AY 2021–22). Some information from the year prior to the start of COVID-19 is also provided as a baseline for comparison.

Pre-Pandemic Kaqchikel Education at KU: Year 0

Table 10.1 shows official enrollments for Year 0. The average number of students per course, per semester was 3.25. Reviews of Kaqchikel enrollment data from the 20 years leading up to 2019 demonstrate that Year 0 was a typical year. The average number of students per course, per semester had been roughly consistent across the two decades.

Each semester, the Kaqchikel courses at KU draw a mix of undergraduate and graduate students. These students represent diverse disciplines and fields—some study LCTLs to meet a language requirement, others to pursue regional interests, and still others to study the language for its own sake. Like typical university courses in commonly taught languages, the Kaqchikel courses train students to read, write, speak, and understand the target language, focusing on vocabulary building, grammar facility, pronunciation accuracy, fluidness of discourse, pragmatic intelligibility, and sociolinguistic competence. Until March 2020, KU Kaqchikel courses had been taught in person only.

The Move to Virtual: Unexpected Opportunities

In March 2020, the program abruptly moved to a virtual, synchronous format. While delivering the second half of the spring 2020 semester online, the CLACS team quickly prepared several approaches for the coming year. First, the team designated funds to bring in native speakers to visit the virtual courses when they could, collaborating with the instructor to offer students more opportunities for immersive conversation practice. The team also began

Table 10.1 KU Kaqchikel Enrollments in Year 0, the Academic Year Before COVID

Semester	Course	Enrollments
Fall 2019	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	3
	Advanced Kaqchikel Maya I	4
Spring 2020	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II	2
	Advanced Kaqchikel Maya II	4

reaching out to other Kaqchikel programs and field schools that KU sends students to during summer or winter breaks, for example, Kab'lajuj Ey and Oxlajuj Aj.

Kab'lajuj Ey is a two-week Kaqchikel field school held in Guatemala, hosted by the nongovernmental organization Wuqu' Kawoq | Maya Health Alliance and the University of Maryland. When the COVID-19 lockdown began, the instructor reached out to the most recent student cohort, inviting them to enroll in KU's fall 2020 Kaqchikel courses. One student agreed and began the complex process of applying to and enrolling at KU as a non-degree-seeking student.

Oxlajuj Aj[2] is a six-week Kaqchikel immersion program held in Guatemala, hosted by Tulane University. In spring 2020, a team from Tulane, consisting of Kaqchikel language instructors and staff from the Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies, joined forces with the CLACS team at KU to cosponsor virtual Kaqchikel Language Tables, where learners around the world attended Zoom sessions led by native speakers. This collective work on three summer 2020 Language Table events sparked further conversations. Tulane already welcomed KU students each summer to enroll in Oxlajuj Aj in Guatemala; KU extended access to its Kaqchikel courses to Tulane students during the academic year, given the virtual nature of the courses, and two students from the summer 2020 Oxlajuj Aj program decided to enroll in KU's fall 2020 Kaqchikel courses.

The CLACS team also fielded questions differently than before. For example, a Princeton University undergraduate contacted CLACS with questions about fieldwork and contacts in Guatemala. This was not an uncommon request, but this time the team was able to reply differently: In addition to providing advice about research in Guatemala, the Princeton student was invited to study Kaqchikel through KU's virtual courses. She eagerly agreed, stepping in alongside the three students from the Kaqchikel field schools. These four students set about applying to KU and enrolling from afar as non-degree-seeking students.

Fall 2020 to Spring 2021: Year 1

Enrolling Non-Degree-Seeking Students

The CLACS team found, through trial and error, that non-KU students who wished to enroll in the virtual language courses should follow these steps:

(1) Apply to KU as a non-degree-seeking (undergraduate) student
(2) Select World Business Culture Certificate
(3) Pay a $40 first-time application fee
(4) When accepted, enroll in the appropriate 3-credit-hour Kaqchikel course
(5) Pay the $1,194 tuition

The relatively low cost for these virtual courses, $398 per credit hour, applies to anyone, within or beyond Kansas. This makes it possible for many to afford

the courses, despite not having in-state privileges. Without this online language course rate, the out-of-state tuition would be nearly three times the cost.

All four students from outside KU successfully enrolled for fall 2020. They paid the tuition from their personal finances, a financial burden for many. They attended two Kaqchikel classes per week that fall, Zooming from far beyond Kansas.

Integrating Upper Levels

For fall 2020, there were only enough total Kaqchikel language enrollments to offer two courses. This was the case despite having students located in four discrete levels of Kaqchikel study: elementary, intermediate, advanced, and post-advanced. The new beginners, the elementary students, needed to be kept separate from the remaining students with existing proficiency; therefore, a new upper level would need to house everyone else.

The team had managed this challenge in prior years; however, that was when every student was a KU student, coming up through the language levels as they are taught at KU. Now, for fall 2020, two advanced students and one post-advanced student enrolled at KU from other Kaqchikel programs and curricula. Non-KU students receive training from other programs, where instructors and pedagogies emphasize different dimensions of Kaqchikel in differently ordered sequences, using different dialects and variants. Integrating these students into one upper course at KU would be a challenge.

Rather than a typically scaffolded grammar-based course, the decision was formed to make Kaqchikel poetry the focal point for this upper course. The upper course modules of Year 1, the first full academic year after the pandemic began, were entirely built around several dozen Kaqchikel poems, with level-specific instruction. For each poem, these basic resources were provided: a Kaqchikel text, an audio recitation from a native Kaqchikel speaker (often the poets themselves), a Spanish or English interpretation, and a poet photo and bio. Each module also contained poem-centered learning tools with worksheets, micro-lessons on grammatical concepts represented in the poem, and other learning and assessment tools. In most cases, one set of lessons was designed for intermediate-level learners and another set for advanced-level learners. As often as possible, the whole group stayed in the same Zoom room, learning and practicing together. When appropriate, the two levels separated into breakout rooms, a native speaker educator leading one level while the main instructor led the other level.

For these two semesters, the native speaker team expanded to allow two Kaqchikel poets to visit the course as well, joining the group from their hometown of San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala. Students were given the chance to explore Kaqchikel poetry; ask questions of the featured poets; write their own original Kaqchikel poetry; and stretch their language acquisition, cultural knowledge, imagination, and sense of community.

Table 10.2 KU Kaqchikel Enrollments in Fall 2020, Noting Local and External
            Students

Semester	Course	KU Enrollments	Non-KU Enrollments	Total
Fall 2020	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	6	1	7
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya I	4	3	7

Fall 2020

Table 10.2 shows that the average number of KU enrollments grew to 5 per
course from 3.25 per course. Another column is added this time: the non-KU
enrollments column. The first four non-KU enrollees increased the average
number to a total of seven enrollments per class.

The non-KU students performed excellently in KU's fall 2020 courses. But,
given the challenges of self-funding, it was not clear if they would be able to
continue in the spring 2021 semester.

The teams at KU and Tulane continued working together to host Kaqchikel
Language Tables beyond the first summer, continuing throughout Year 1.
Student feedback continued to show that students enjoyed meeting others
from around the world with an interest in Kaqchikel. In addition to this pro-
gramming, the University of Arizona hosted a half-day virtual Kaqchikel work-
shop in October 2020. KU's Kaqchikel instructor and eight of her students
participated. Over the subsequent weeks, the instructor followed up with
the new contacts: students, professors, and the FLAS coordinator from the
university. Through these conversations, two University of Arizona graduate
students were welcomed to join KU's virtual Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II
course in January 2021.

Joining Midyear

Throughout pre-pandemic Kaqchikel education at KU, beginners could only
start their language journey in the fall. Virtual classes suddenly allowed for
the recording of class sessions with more ease than before, and the decision
was made to build a direct-entry module from class recordings and materi-
als for students wishing to start their Kaqchikel study at a time of year other
than fall.

The first testing of the direct-entry module was used for two University
of Arizona students and one KU graduate student, all of whom needed to
move through the entirety of the first-semester material between November
and January. The non-KU students were given special user accounts for KU's
learning management system. All three students were provided with a daily and
weekly schedule of recordings and language learning tools to work through
independently before the start of the spring semester.

The instructor regularly met with these direct-entry students during these in-between months to help guide their independent study. In addition, she created a seven-week winter break program to help Kaqchikel learners of any language level keep their language skills sharp. Every Tuesday, the students met with a teaching duo of the instructor plus a native speaker. An upper cohort convened in the mornings, and a beginner cohort convened in the afternoons. The instructor served as a volunteer for these school-break modules and programs, and funding for the native speaker's work was separate from KU CLACS funding: Each of the 14 students who enrolled in this program paid the guest native speaker directly a flat fee of $35. Within the beginner cohort, the three direct-entry students learned and practiced alongside those who had just completed the fall 2020 Elementary Kaqchikel I semester. This further helped their midyear integration go smoothly.

Creating a New KU Course for Spring 2021

As the CLACS team continued reaching out beyond Kansas to find potential Kaqchikel students with interest in enrolling from a distance, they also reached out to the staff and students of the UNC–Duke Consortium's Yucatec Maya Summer Institute, where KU's Kaqchikel instructor had served as the resident director for three years.[3] In partnership with native Yucatec Maya speakers, KU's Kaqchikel instructor built a new virtual Elementary Yucatec Maya I course for spring 2021. The CLACS team's goal was to create a new virtual Yucatec Maya language program at KU during the academic year, sending the KU students to the UNC–Duke Consortium's courses in the summers.

KU also partnered with UNC-Chapel Hill to offer a virtual Yucatec Maya Language Table in April 2021, cohosted in a similar fashion to the Kaqchikel Tables shared by Tulane and KU. In addition to learners from many different universities that day, high school Spanish students from Topeka, Kansas, also joined the event via Zoom.[4]

Year 1: LCTL Exploration and Growth

In Table 10.3, enrollments are mapped for the full Year 1 at a glance. In this first year of virtual courses, a new LCTL, new winter break modules, and new cohosted Language Tables were all added. Average enrollments per course more than doubled (from 3.25 to 7). Non-KU students constituted more than a third of Year 1 enrollments.

All four non-KU fall 2020 enrollees continued taking Kaqchikel in the spring in some form or other. Two of the non-KU students reenrolled officially for spring. However, the other two students shifted official status: The student from the Kab'lajuj Ey field school did reenroll for spring but switched columns to count as a KU enrollment because she began a KU graduate program in January 2021. Her decision had much to do with KU's courses in Indigenous languages of Latin America and the ease of virtual courses. One

Table 10.3 KU Mayan Language Year 1 Enrollments, Noting Local and External Students

Semester	Course	KU Enrollments	Non-KU Enrollments	Total
Fall 2020	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	6	1	7
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya Poetry I	4	3	7
Spring 2021	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II	6	3	9
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya Poetry II	5	1	6
	Elementary Yucatec Maya I	5	1	6

of the original four is not listed in the spring enrollments at all; he could not afford a second semester. He was welcomed to functionally remain part of the course.

Fall 2021 to Spring 2022: Year 2

Year 2 was marked by the deepening of relationships, the exploration of new directions, and the strengthening of KU LCTL offerings through collaboration that was both logistically complex and at times unexpectedly inspiring. In summer 2021, prior relationships continued to bear fruit: The UNC–Duke Consortium granted summer FLAS fellowships to a KU undergraduate student and a KU graduate student in order to attend the Yucatec Maya Summer Institute. Tulane also granted several KU students summer FLAS fellowships in order to attend its Oxlajuj Aj language immersion program. For fall 2021, KU planned to launch an upper-level Yucatec Maya course, alongside reoffering the elementary level. In preparation for this, and to help non-KU students find a smooth path into the program, an informal summer break Yucatec Maya program was built after the pattern of the informal winter break Kaqchikel gatherings. Yucatec Maya learners of any level, who were not enrolled in the Summer Institute, could sign up for this program and work to keep their language skills fresh through meeting biweekly with KU's guest native speakers. Fourteen students participated, some in a beginner cohort, and the rest in an upper cohort. Like with the winter break sessions, each student paid a flat fee to the native speakers to participate. Of the seven language learners from outside KU who participated in these Yucatec Maya summer sessions, three enrolled in the fall 2021 virtual Yucatec Maya at KU.

FLAS Collaboration

In 2021, staff at Tulane's Kaqchikel summer program, Oxlajuj Aj, connected the CLACS team with a graduate student who wanted to enroll in KU's Kaqchikel courses for the academic year. Around the same time, the

UNC–Duke Consortium's Yucatec Maya Summer Institute did the same with a graduate student who wanted to enroll in KU's Yucatec Maya courses for the academic year. Both learners were full-time graduate students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW), and they expressed interest in applying for an academic-year FLAS fellowship in support of their language studies.

Prior to 2021, it was only KU students who had leveraged FLAS funding in order to study Kaqchikel through KU. No previous non-KU enrollees had received FLAS fellowships to study Kaqchikel at KU. The CLACS team eagerly embraced the challenge of adding non-KU FLAS-funded students to KU's Mayan language courses. The process called for many layers of planning and coordinating, securing approval from the FLAS program officers and administrators. The two students were selected for the FLAS, applied to KU as non-degree-seeking students, and enrolled in upper Mayan language virtual classes at KU for fall 2021. The University of Wisconsin–Madison FLAS funding paid the $1,194 tuition bill for fall and spring 2022. Both students also enrolled in an independent study course at their home institutions in order to receive graduate-level credit for their KU language course.

The FLAS coordinator in Madison and the CLACS team kept in touch throughout the year about the students' performance and activity. At the end of the academic year, the instructor compiled a large packet of physical printouts: weekly homework, exams, reflections, quizzes, worksheets, and more. The stacks for each student were organized into two portfolios, one for each semester, and mailed to Madison for review and record-keeping.

Fall 2021

As the Kaqchikel/Yucatec Maya teaching load at KU expanded to four courses in fall 2021, funds to bring in native speakers increased accordingly. A graduate teaching assistant, a student who had studied both Mayan languages, was also added to the team in Year 2. This wider, well-equipped team was even more agile than before, designing both upper-level courses to meet each sublevel's distinct language acquisition needs. Through regular, strategic use of Zoom breakout rooms, Intermediate Kaqchikel and Yucatec Maya students worked toward language goals that were distinct from those of Advanced Kaqchikel and Yucatec Maya students, while under the same administrative umbrella. Despite an increase in the number of courses offered, the average number of enrollments per course, per semester continued to grow, as seen in Table 10.4.

Table 10.4 KU Mayan Language Enrollments in Fall 2021, Noting Local and External Students

Semester	Course	KU Enrollments	Non-KU Enrollments	Total
Fall 2021	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	6	2	8
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya I	6	2	8
	Elementary Yucatec Maya I	6	2	8
	Upper Yucatec Maya I	2	5	7

Joining Midyear

For the second consecutive winter break, the CLACS team continued what had worked well the prior year: running an intensive online module, including daily and weekly learner tasks, audio and video tools, and printed materials. Students worked with these resources independently, and they met with the instructor regularly. Four new students used these modules to direct-enroll in Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II in spring 2022, after not having been part of the group for fall 2021.

The CLACS team also operated a second annual winter break sessions program. Nine learners, the guest native speaker, and the main KU instructor gathered online weekly for informal language practice; as before, each student paid the native speaker a flat fee.

2021–2022: Expansion and Success

Table 10.5 displays enrollments for Year 2, which included continuing students, from KU and beyond, who had taken the KU classes in prior semesters. Two non-KU students who had enrolled in Elementary Yucatec Maya in fall 2021 and two non-KU students who had enrolled in upper Kaqchikel Maya in fall 2021 were not able to enroll again in spring 2022 due to financial constraints. All four of them joined the spring 2022 courses unofficially, so they are not reflected in Table 10.5. While this approach might not be possible everywhere, the CLACS team has found that encouraging students to participate in the following semester regardless of the ability to pay allows students to feed their authentic desire to learn a Mayan language, regardless of financial context. Additionally, each of these students who participated in one unpaid semester after a paid semester contributed in unique and rich ways to everyone's learning.

Table 10.5 KU Mayan Language Year 2 Enrollments, Noting Local and External Students

Semester	Course	KU Enrollments	Non-KU Enrollments	Total
Fall 2021	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	6	2	8
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya I	6	2	8
	Elementary Yucatec Maya I	6	2	8
	Upper Yucatec Maya I	2	5	7
Spring 2022	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II	6	2	8
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya II	8	1	9
	Elementary Yucatec Maya II	6	0	6
	Upper Yucatec Maya II	2	5	7

Closing Thoughts

By the end of Year 2 of delivering courses virtually, the CLACS team had added language levels, improved and added to direct-entry modules, improved and added to summer and winter break programs of informal gatherings, expanded the teaching team, and added a Yucatec Maya Language Table to a calendar already filled with Kaqchikel Language Tables. The average enrollment rose. Table 10.6 brings all three years together for comparison and shows the transformation of KU Mayan language learning through virtual and cross-institutional collaboration.

Problems and Solutions

During the process of expanding KU's Mayan language offerings between 2020 and 2022, much additional outreach work was devoted to the cause. The instructor spent considerable time coordinating with other universities and conducting administrative tasks. She also took on additional work shepherding students through the ins and outs of the KU application process, enrollment, payments, and more. Without abundant one-on-one follow-up with students, KU could have lost them to the laborious inter-institutional process. Many students did drop off, never ultimately enrolling; some might

Table 10.6 2019–2022 KU Mayan Language Enrollments

Semester	Course	KU Enrollments	Non-KU Enrollments	Total
Fall 2019	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	3	NA	3
	Advanced Kaqchikel Maya I	4	NA	4
Spring 2020	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II	2	NA	2
	Advanced Kaqchikel Maya II	4	NA	4
YEAR 0	4 courses, averaging more than 3 students per course			
Fall 2020	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	6	1	7
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya Poetry I*	4	3	7
Spring 2021	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II	6	3	9
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya Poetry II*	5	1	6
	Elementary Yucatec Maya I*	5	1	6
YEAR 1	5 courses, averaging 7 students per course			
Fall 2021	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya I	6	2	8
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya I	6	2	8
	Elementary Yucatec Maya I	6	2	8
	Upper Yucatec Maya I	2	5	7
Spring 2022	Elementary Kaqchikel Maya II	6	2	8
	Upper Kaqchikel Maya II	8	1	9
	Elementary Yucatec Maya II*	6	0	6
	Upper Yucatec Maya II*	2	5	7
YEAR 2	8 courses, averaging more than 7 students per course			

*Courses new that semester.

have given up if the instructor had not helped them through each step. If KU formally created an inter-institutional LCTL program, for example, a distance arm of CLACS, a program director could spearhead those efforts. At KU, now that the team knows what is needed, beyond instruction, to recruit and enroll non-KU students, steps are being taken to build infrastructure for the 2022–2026 Title VI funding cycle.

The relatively low cost of $398 per credit hour, available to non-KU students who take virtual language courses, allowed students from elsewhere to add one Mayan language class to their semester. This might not have been attainable for most of them at out-of-state rates. Even so, several students could only gather enough personal funds to enroll in one semester per year. These learners were invited to remain with their cohort during their unpaid semester, and many therefore continued learning and reenrolled for the following semester.

The CLACS team is actively seeking solutions for these challenges, in part by looking to LCTL educators and administrators at sister institutions to discover what creative solutions could work for CLACS as well.

Benefits of Collaboration

In most summers, some KU students study Mayan languages through the six-week programs that are run by Tulane (Kaqchikel) and the UNC–Duke Consortium (Yucatec Maya). Although these enrollments were unidirectional in the past, the arrangement was still mutually beneficial: KU students experience academically rich, immersive Mayan language programs. Moreover, often it is these sister institutions that grant summer FLAS fellowships to KU students. The move to a virtual format for KU's Mayan language course offerings opened the flow in the opposite direction: KU now invites Tulane and UNC–Duke summer program students to continue Mayan language learning at KU during the academic year if they wish. Enrollments are able to flow smoothly in both directions—one way in the summer, the other way in the academic year.

KU is open to further collaboration with additional institutions, but CLACS still lacks a financially feasible way for its students to take academic-year LCTL courses through other institutions. If a KU student wanted to take another university's virtual Nahuatl language course, for example, they would likely hit a prohibitively expensive wall. It has not been easy for CLACS to find other universities' equivalents to KU's World Business Culture Certificate. At many other institutions, KU students would pay more than three times the tuition rate they find at KU. Yet the CLACS team hopes to build on the successes of 2020–2022 to further collaborate, foster mutuality and shared love of LCTL learning, and discover new avenues for partnership.

Teaching virtually has brought KU's Mayan language courses immense growth opportunities, not least of which is the ability to easily and frequently bring in native Mayan language speakers, trained teachers, and poets to synchronous class sessions, where they hold engaging and dynamic conversation practice with KU and non-KU students.

Conclusion

It is sincerely hoped that this short retrospective might be of use to those seeking to expand course offerings; integrate expert native speakers; and welcome students across disciplines, training levels, and regions. This team's goal was to offer a few fresh, practical ideas to those charged with the task of sharing LCTL courses, whether they are seasoned experts at collaborating across institutional lines, or they are headed into their first academic year as an instructor or administrator in support of LCTL courses. Likewise, the CLACS team at KU looks forward to continuing to learn from other programs and schools around the country, aiming to open ever more gateways for students worldwide to learn these vibrant languages and foster equally vibrant connections with the communities of people who speak them.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Kaqchikel Maya is one of about 30 different Mayan languages spoken today. It is spoken by approximately 500,000 people in Guatemala.
2 Oxlajuj Aj is also known as the Mayan Language Institute, a name it took on in 2014 when it joined with Vanderbilt University's K'iche' Maya program.
3 Yucatec Maya is spoken by approximately 800,000 people in Mexico.
4 The next winter, the CLACS team worked with one of those Topeka high school students to draft an application for the Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship. She then started her freshman year at KU in fall 2022 as an academic-year FLAS fellow.

11 Sharing African Language Courses
Embracing Initiatives with Caution

Kazeem Kẹ́hìndé Sanuth

Abstract

This chapter explores course sharing in the field of less commonly taught languages with a focus on its implications for teaching African languages in institutions in the United States. Drawing on critical applied linguistics, it raises concerns associated with course sharing involving African languages, predicated on the declining priority for language education in general and the important professional strides that the field of African language pedagogy has achieved in the last two decades. The chapter argues that, while course sharing is inevitable, the field needs to approach sharing with considerable caution.

Keywords: African languages, critical applied linguistics, enrollment, language learning initiatives

> When an instructor for one of our languages retired, there was so much interest in the language from the other schools. … We expressed to the relevant administration that all three schools depend on this language, and so they hired another instructor. This allowed us to be able to bring to bear the ongoing academic needs of not just one university, but three. So, in that sense, we got an African language that otherwise might not have continued.

The opening quote, from an interview with a coordinator of a course sharing arrangement involving African languages, illustrates the central issue of this chapter. It highlights course sharing as the practical deployment of strength in numbers and unity to achieve a common goal. Language programs, in this case less commonly taught African languages, often use sharing initiatives as opportunities to extend instruction of an African language to collaborating campuses, thereby sustaining classes frequently characterized by low enrollments. It allows programs to ration the resources, such as materials, curriculum, and instructors, and sustain a language in which students have shown interest. Projected outcomes of collaborations like this commonly underscore a positive impetus for course sharing. However, beyond the obvious benefits

enthusiastically shared by the coordinator, a critical examination of the statement indicates a less conspicuous but common fact: The African language in question "might not have continued" despite "so much interest in the language from the other schools in the sharing arrangement." Second, the host institution needed to be reminded of the growing interest in the language to make a case for hiring a new instructor and retaining instruction in this language. Although the coordinator stated during the interview that the institution in question clearly "understood the shared need for the language to continue" and they did hire a new instructor, the possibility that the language could have been eliminated and the need to highlight enrollment interests as justification to continue the support of the language stand out. This brings to light the fragile state of language courses, an unsettling issue these sharing initiatives, in this case involving an African language, do not address. The sharing arrangements could sidestep the ingrained dispensability of not only African languages but all less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in institutional priorities.

Course sharing appears to be inevitable as learning is becoming more individualized, mobile, and flexible. This chapter, however, cautions against the unintended consequences of sharing African languages. It begins with a concise critical analysis of course sharing. It gives a summary of course sharing involving African languages, followed by a description of the milestones of African language programs in the United States. It raises a few issues with course sharing, linking the discussion of the African context to them. Overall, this contribution presents an evolving opinion in the form of questions intended to bring forth collective scrutiny of the embrace and practices of course sharing in the field of African language teaching.

Course Sharing Initiatives in LCTLs

Sharing is not just limited to the academic setting and language instruction. The term *sharing economy* is used frequently to describe actions across a wide range of human endeavors. The concept is defined as "a wave of new businesses that use the Internet to match customers with service providers for real-world exchanges such as short-term apartment rentals, car rides, or household tasks" (Slee, 2017, p. 9). The same principle applies to course sharing, whereby university campuses embrace the idea of sharing academic resources and collaborating to advance their academic and professional goals. For instance, the Council of Independent Colleges, an organization of nonprofit independent colleges and universities in the United States, promotes an initiative known as the Online Course Sharing Consortium (OCSC). Through OCSC, member institutions can "support student success, expand the curriculum, drive enrollment, and generate new revenue by sharing courses with trusted partners online" (Council of Independent Colleges, n.d.). Similarly, the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) promotes CourseShare, a program that "allows students to take less commonly taught language courses offered at other Big Ten Academic Alliance institutions from

a distance" (Big Ten Academic Alliance, n.d.; see also Chapter 1). In this manner, course sharing is established as a strategy to enable campuses to reach more students, circulate their programs, and meet certain enrollment benchmarks. Although there is little empirical research on the sharing of LCTLs and their overall efficacy for both learners and institutions, available commentaries (e.g., Van Deusen-Scholl, 2014), such as opinion pieces, interviews, blogs, and program reports at organizational meetings, have outlined the advantages of course sharing, including the capacity to expand language instruction to colleges that would not otherwise be able to finance such programs and reach more students outside the immediate campus of the collaborating institutions.

Beyond Course Sharing: Drawing on Critical Applied Linguistics

In his book, *What's Yours Is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy*, Tom Slee (2017) uses Airbnb as an example to highlight the shortcomings of the sharing economy: "Airbnb has been known to promote its home-sharing service using the language of altruism and generosity" (p. 23), in which a homeowner temporarily accommodates a visitor in their spare room. However, the reality is that due to the profit they make, many Airbnb hosts now rent out their entire house through the short-term hosting company. In areas like San Francisco, this has since limited housing available to long-term renters (Barron et al., 2020). This outcome, according to Slee, points out the real "contradictions built into the name sharing economy" (p. 11). It proves that the notion that consumers exercising their freedom to self-determination would always result in the best outcomes is erroneous; in reality, the idea typically serves companies.

Slee's work underscores the key perspective of critical applied linguistics (CALx) through which this chapter examines course sharing. CALx is "a way of exploring language in social contexts that goes beyond mere correlations between language and society and instead raises more critical questions to do with access, power, disparity, desire, difference, and resistance" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 6). A key aspect of CALx is the call to engage with power and social inequality within language education (Makoni, 2003). To make the field of language teaching more politically accountable, CALx scholars invite us to critical engagement with issues of contemporary concerns in our discipline, such as, in this case, language course sharing, through the rigorous process of "constant skepticism" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 6), which connects applied linguistics to issues of inequality, injustice, identity, politics, ideology, rights, and wrongs. This exploration combines insights from CALx, interviews with two practitioners who are involved in course sharing (an instructor and a coordinator), and the available data on African language courses shared through the BTAA. The main concern here is to explore manifested discourses and practices relating to course sharing in the context of African language instructions. However, since these data sources are limited, generalizations cannot and should not be made.

From the CALx perspective, "the classroom functions as a kind of microcosm of the broader social order" (Auerbach, 1995, as cited in Pennycook,

2001). This chapter connects course sharing to two macro-level issues, the first being the status of world languages. According to McQuiggan and Wozolek (2020), "world languages have become a declining priority across the country" (p. 22). Among the factors, they pointed out that languages are competing unequally for resources with science, technology, engineering, and math programs. Similarly, the Modern Language Association (MLA) enrollment report (Looney & Lusin, 2019) has shown that enrollments in most languages other than English have steadily declined. The second issue, a corollary to the first, centers on the effects of low enrollment on language programs. Reviewing the MLA data, Flaherty (2018) touches on institutional disinvestment in language programs, with anecdotal evidence of many institutions tending to reduce their world language offerings in the face of financial difficulties. Scholars discussed this in terms of neoliberal ideology, based on the principle of a free market economy and competition (Kubota, 2015), in world language education. Neoliberalism "manifests through the propagation of neoliberal keywords such as *accountability*, *competitiveness*, *efficiency*, and *profit*" (Holborow, 2012, as cited in Bernstein et al., 2015, p. 6). The impact of neoliberalism on world language education is that language teachers are seen by some as expendable and replaceable knowledge workers, language learners as entrepreneurs and consumers, and world language education is no more than a commodity in a larger teaching industry (Bernstein et al., 2015). This chapter finds these trends antithetical to African language program development in the United States. While no empirical research on actual program elimination has been published, the constant exercise to justify African language offerings and expansions is common a discussion within the circle of African language professionals.

While sharing does present the benefit of expanding language instruction to a wider reach, this chapter calls attention to the outcomes it can produce, conceived as the tendency to stunt a similar expansion of new language programs in other universities and an oversimplification of administrative concerns in the areas of language teaching. The echoes of the principle of economic determinism, a theory that supply and demand, among other economic variables, determine all social phenomena (Bakker, 2007), might impact LCTLs that frequently yield low enrollment.

Course sharing offers a workable solution to the issues of decreasing language enrollments, declining funding, and pressure from university administration, but it has not yet been extensively investigated. This chapter, therefore, cautions against the uncritical embrace of course sharing, particularly when it focuses on the strength of enrollment.

An Overview of Course Sharing Initiatives Involving African Languages

There is no known course sharing initiative that is exclusive to African language instruction in the United States. Instead, African languages have always

constituted part of a larger collaborative ecosystem of course sharing arrangements. The types and structures of course sharing arrangements involving African languages vary across institutions, but all share the common motive of providing learning opportunities for students interested in specific African languages at collaborating institutions. Two similar but characteristically distinct models have been popular: (1) conference-wide sharing arrangements and (2) university-system sharing arrangements.

Conference-Wide Sharing

Some universities in the United States are classified into conferences, which although mostly known in popular culture for athletics, also translate into related academic associations. While each institution is unique in its organizational structure, institutions in the same conference often share common abiding values, including commitments to collaborations in the areas of teaching, research, and personnel management. Concerning African language sharing, this chapter will examine two conference-wide arrangements, namely, the BTAA CourseShare Program (see also Chapter 1) and the Shared Course Initiative by a consortium of Ivy League institutions (see also Chapter 3).

CourseShare Program—Big Ten Academic Alliance

CourseShare is a platform designed to offer distance-learning courses in LCTLs and area studies to students at BTAA universities. It is the result of official collaboration agreements among the member universities that have decided to pool resources through sharing. The agreement, as specified on the BTAA website, is intended to create "opportunities for students and faculty and serve the common good by sharing expertise, utilizing university resources, and working on new programs" (Big Ten Academic Alliance, n.d.; see also Chapter 1).

From 2020 to 2022, five African languages—Akan, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Yoruba, and Zulu—were shared in the BTAA CourseShare Program, representing a total of 32 courses (see Appendix A for a complete list). CourseShare operates as a system, managed by a team of coordinators at member institutions, through whom students can request a language course. The coordinators will then match students with the institutions that offer the requested course.

Owing to the strength of the academic partnership of the BTAA, this model has the potential to extend African languages offered by member institutions to a large network of universities. This model does not require a corresponding language-for-language exchange. Instead, institutions leverage one another's resources. It is possible for a university to offer a language course and not receive a corresponding language course. The institutional coordinator of the program regularly works with the BTAA to fine-tune policy and logistics. Sharing arrangements like CourseShare break barriers to accessing an African language for receiving institutions. However, as argued in this chapter, the

arrangements provide the opportunity to receive language instructions or access enrollment elsewhere, which may run the risk of not motivating the growth or creation of new language programs in either the hosting or receiving institutions.

Shared Course Initiative—Columbia, Cornell, and Yale Universities

The Shared Course Initiative (SCI) is a collaborative arrangement among Columbia, Cornell, and Yale Universities to share LCTLs, taught synchronously via videoconferencing (see Chapter 3). The three partnering institutions are members of the Ivy League, but the arrangement is not conference wide. The initiative was originally established through the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to address the diminishing number of languages across the institutions. In fall 2022, the consortium offered 20 LCTLs, which included three African languages: Wolof, Yoruba, and Zulu.

The SCI has the advantage of being established by language programs and directly managed in conjunction with language instructors at each of the partnering institutions. The arrangement for African languages is uniquely crafted to avoid disrupting the African language program at each of the partner institutions. The collaborative framework ensures that each institution shares a language that is not available at the receiving institution. Yale shares Zulu with Cornell and Columbia, Cornell shares Yoruba with Columbia (Yale offers Yoruba as well), and Columbia shares Wolof with Yale and Cornell. This organization and meticulous consideration of language statuses at host institutions make this model outstanding. However, as exemplified in the opening quote, the need to justify replacing a retiring instructor brings to question the value of the course sharing arrangement, and perhaps the language itself, to its host institution. While the institution would have valid reasons, it seems to suggest that hiring to replace the instructor—to continue the collaboration—did not manifest in the institution's priority. This raises further questions as to whether participation in initiatives such as this, where institutions make deliberate choices of mutually beneficial language exchange, does address the vulnerability of African languages.

University-System Sharing

Whereas the conference-wide collaborations connect classes in institutions located in different states, other sharing models are limited to institutions within a university system. In this category, affiliated universities and colleges in one state, which are usually geographically distributed throughout the state, leverage their shared system and resources, including specialized courses and languages, to benefit students in all sister institutions. Collaborations in university systems are not always limited to language programs, such as the Intercampus Course Sharing at the University of Missouri System, but a few such initiatives are exclusively for languages, such as the Collaborative Language Program at the University of Wisconsin system and the University

of Florida College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (UF–CLAS) Shared Language Program. UF–CLAS offers language courses (synchronously and asynchronously) to students in the State University System of Florida. Students can choose from up to 17 language courses, including five African languages, namely, Akan, Amharic, Swahili, Yoruba, and Zulu. Upon completion, students can transfer credits to their home institutions.

Developments and Milestones of African Language Programs

The field of African language pedagogy has undergone several developmental stages and withstood constant institutional overhaul to emerge as an independent professional subfield within the field of LCTLs. According to Bokamba (2002) and Moshi (2011), teaching African languages in the American classroom began in the 1950s as Programs in African Languages (PAL). PAL was a central component of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 that created African and other area studies centers. At the time, PALs were usually subsumed under departments of linguistics and African literature. Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) were the primary instructors of the African languages, supervised by tenure-track linguists or literature scholars, many of whom had little or no application for African languages in their research. These scholars who served as "African language coordinators" (Moshi, 2011, p. 27) from various institutions would meet annually at the African Studies Association conference, which at the time focused mostly on literary studies. However, PAL failed to exhibit a sense of the field.

Scholars agree that the emergence of the field of African languages began in 1999 (Bokamba, 2002; Folarin-Schleicher & Moshi, 2000; Moshi, 2011). But this momentous achievement for African language programs was ushered in by the long, concerted, and collaborative efforts of many scholars, particularly Africanist linguists who drew inspiration from the organizations that they had been a part of. Several successive milestones that set the ground for the field include the establishment of the Annual Conference on African Linguistics (ACAL) in 1970 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the creation of the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA) flagged off at an ACAL meeting at the University of Georgia in 1988, and the establishment of the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC) in 1999 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Additionally, ALTA became a cofounding member of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) founded in 1990 at a conference at Johns Hopkins University.

As each milestone builds on the previous one, a sense of community has opened channels for thoughtful debates about the numerous difficulties the developing field of African language pedagogy faces and an examination of potential solutions. All relevant aspects of professionalizing, such as the development of professional training for GTAs and instructors, the production of high-quality instructional materials, the development of a standardized curriculum, the mobilization of national coordination, the opportunities for publishing peer-reviewed research, and the implementation of study abroad

programming, were all carefully considered and operationalized from the outset. Most of these initiatives were executed by the NALRC. Since then, the NALRC has been creating pedagogically sound projects and professional development programs with the aid of a Title VI grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education and through collaboration between vibrant African language departments and programs, ALTA, and NCOLCTL. Beyond workshops on various aspects of language instruction, African language teaching has grown to include more chances for advanced degrees and a greater number of faculty positions in African language pedagogy. Some institutions are beginning entirely new African language programs, while others with existing African language programs are steadily expanding their language offerings.

The visionary efforts by the African language program coordinators included planning for strategic curricular development and field expansion. According to Wiley and Dwyer (1981), African languages were grouped into four strategic priorities (see Appendix B for the full list) based on three criteria: (1) number of speakers; (2) political, cultural, and social importance; and (3) importance for national interest. The first priority languages consisted of 23 languages that are widely used in one or more African countries. The second priority languages consist of 30 languages that are predominantly spoken in the respective African countries. The 29 third-priority languages are considered significant national languages of the countries. The fourth priority languages consist of all other African languages.

The hallmark of the professionalization of the African language field is expanding opportunities for teaching as many African languages as possible. The "superstructure" of the field (Moshi, 2011, p. 34) emerges through the constellation of disjointed organizations and language programs as well as the national coordination and strategic planning to expand language programming initiated by visionary Africanist linguists and pedagogists. The field was mobilized through dedication to the educational utility of African languages in the American educational system, which guided the choices of pedagogical interventions, curricular decisions, and all professional engagements. Arrangements for sharing African languages, by obligation, must reflect and be shaped by the professional strides that the field of African language pedagogy has achieved in the last two decades.

Some Issues for Consideration

There is a dearth of empirical research and no conceptual framework for course sharing in the field of LCTLs, particularly in the field of African language pedagogy. Existing documentation (e.g., Van Deusen-Scholl, 2014), at best, describes the logistics of specific arrangements and highlights the widespread benefits of sharing language courses. Sharing of African languages, especially when justified in terms of enrollment, may undercut the complexity that the ever-changing world brings to language pedagogy. This section discusses some potential field-specific concerns associated with not only African languages but LCTL sharing in general, about which little has been written.

Sharing Is Institutional, Not Instructional

The interactional architecture of language classes and the learning opportunities afforded to learners are determined by pedagogic purposes (Seedhouse & Young, 2004). The success of every language program rests on the richness of the instructional activities. Yet planning for and about language pedagogy rarely places language instruction or instructors first. A common observation, particularly involving African language instruction, is that instructors are rarely involved. With the languages mostly taught by non-tenure-track teaching faculty, lecturers, and GTAs, the instructors do not always play major parts in the decision-making, such as in the sharing arrangement. And since sharing relies on technological affordances, language instructors are consequently required to modify their teaching and obtain additional training to deal with the pedagogical challenges of technologically-mediated instruction. The BTAA CourseShare may be viewed as an example of collaboration that is imposed upon instructors, especially if instructors have no choice or voice in their modality. This is due to the fact that criteria for a successful CourseShare are (1) room to accommodate three or more additional enrollments from another member institution and (2) courses that can be delivered by technology or other internet solutions and do not require in-person contact between students and the instructor (Big Ten Academic Alliance, n.d.). Arrangements like this are top-down for language pedagogy. In principle, they present opportunities for everyone. However, as Pennycook (2001) noted about structures, arrangements like this are not always neutral but have the ability to "reproduce social inequality" and constitute "sites of social struggle" (p. 117). While they are not apparently insidious, if instructors are not given a voice, the placing of administrative priorities over pedagogy would exemplify a power interplay.

Whose Enrollment?

The model of sharing varies widely across institutions. A common excitement shared by the instructors of African languages involved in language sharing is the fact that additional students count toward their enrollment. They claim that sharing allows their language programs to continue by sharing classes with other institutions that do not have that language. This may raise questions about whose enrollment the shared course boosts. With respect to credits and student records, institutions generally account for enrollment locally, however, there is no uniform system across sharing structures for how to count enrollments from sending institutions. This means that enrollment numbers in shared courses are not uniformly reported for African languages. Additionally, we may ask: If there is no local enrollment, how long might a host institution retain the language? Furthermore, if a receiving institution has on its campus at least a few willing learners enrolled in a specific language, would it not be better to capitalize on the potential for such language on campus?

Decreasing African Languages

A problem that may be exacerbated by sharing African languages is the probability that institutions may limit their language offerings to a small number of African languages, particularly those that are popular in the Western world. African languages make up around one third of all languages spoken around the globe, with an estimated 2,000 languages spoken by 1.4 billion people (Worldometer, 2023) in 54 nations (Heine & Nurse, 2000). Over 100 different African languages are spoken by 1 million or more people, and 11 of the languages are decamillionaire languages with at least 10 million speakers today. However, only about 12 African languages are regularly taught by institutions in the United States; the rest are rarely provided to students. Except for Harvard University, which offers on-demand instruction in as many as 30 languages, other programs and departments that purport to champion strategic engagement with the continent regularly offer the few common African languages, including Akan, Swahili, Wolof, Yoruba, and Zulu. A common fear is that sharing may not only reduce the range of course alternatives available to students but also may narrow the opportunity to gain exposure to the vast continent, which will reverse the field's ongoing professional efforts.

Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has centered on the point that well-intended initiatives, like course sharing, can produce contradictory outcomes. The connection between the sharing economy and language sharing is not so much believing that a learner's choice is all-powerful, but it is the side-stepping of the real issue, which is the tacitly waning priority for world languages (McQuiggan & Wozolek, 2020). The future of higher education will see a significant role for distance learning (Saba, 2012), particularly given the recent experiences during the pandemic. Sharing of courses is inevitable and has great potential for teaching African languages. The field must, however, proceed with sharing with great prudence. Public education may not be completely insulated from the social and economic environment in which it operates, but every innovation in language learning should not only be guided by a philosophy that establishes a logical connection between program objectives and learning outcomes, but also, importantly, drawing on the body of knowledge regarding language acquisition in the relevant subfield.

The role of languages in the mission to prepare students to understand and contribute to the increasingly diverse and interconnected world will take new forms, requiring new thinking and pedagogical innovations. African language education has developed over time through a process of continuous innovation and reinvention. The development will undoubtedly continue in the sharing era. But for course sharing to successfully benefit the field, it should be approached by institutions, scholars, and specialists in African language

teaching using professional strategies that are in tandem with the dynamics of practice in the field and be conceptually foregrounded.

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Appendix A

African Language Courses in the BTAA CourseShare Program from 2020 to 2022

	Year	Semester	Language	Hosting University	Receiving University
1.	2020	Spring	Swahili, 4th Semester	Iowa	Ohio State
2.	2020	Fall	Yoruba, 1st Semester	Wisconsin	Minnesota
3.	2020	Fall	Yoruba, Introductory	Indiana	Maryland
4.	2020	Fall	Yoruba, Introductory	Indiana	Purdue
5.	2020	Fall	Zulu, Introductory	Indiana	Ohio State
6.	2020	Fall	Zulu, Introductory	Indiana	Chicago
7.	2020	Fall	Zulu, Introductory	Indiana	Illinois
8.	2021	Spring	Yoruba II, Elementary	Indiana	Maryland
9.	2021	Spring	Yoruba II, Beginning	Wisconsin	Minnesota
10.	2021	Spring	Zulu II, Elementary	Indiana	Chicago
11.	2021	Fall	Swahili, Advanced	Michigan State	Purdue
12.	2021	Fall	Kinyarwanda, Beginning	Indiana	Minnesota
13.	2021	Fall	Swahili, Advanced	Ohio State	Penn State
14.	2021	Fall	Swahili, Advanced	Ohio State	Purdue
15.	2021	Fall	Yoruba, 1st Semester	Wisconsin	Minnesota
16.	2021	Fall	Yoruba, Intermediate	Indiana	Minnesota
17.	2022	Spring	Kinyarwanda II, Elementary	Indiana	Minnesota
18.	2022	Spring	Swahili, 4th Semester	Wisconsin	Ohio State
19.	2022	Spring	Swahili, 4th Semester	Wisconsin	Penn State
20.	2022	Spring	Swahili I, 3rd Year (Advanced)	Iowa	Ohio State
21.	2022	Spring	Swahili II, Elementary	Indiana	Penn State
22.	2022	Spring	Yoruba II, Beginning-2nd Semester	Wisconsin	Minnesota

(*Continued*)

	Year	Semester	Language	Hosting University	Receiving University
23.	2022	Spring	Zulu, Intermediate	Indiana	Chicago
24.	2022	Fall	Akan, Elementary	Indiana	Rutgers
25.	2022	Fall	Kinyarwanda, Elementary	Indiana	Michigan
26.	2022	Fall	Kinyarwanda I, Elementary	Indiana	Minnesota
27.	2022	Fall	Swahili, Introductory	Ohio State	Penn State
28.	2022	Fall	Yoruba, 1st Semester	Wisconsin	Chicago
29.	2022	Fall	Yoruba, 1st Semester	Wisconsin	Minnesota
30.	2022	Fall	Yoruba, 3rd Semester	Wisconsin	Chicago
31.	2022	Fall	Yoruba, 3rd Semester	Wisconsin	Minnesota
32.	2022	Fall	Zulu, Advanced	Indiana	Chicago

Source: BTAA central office.

Appendix B

Classification of African Languages by Priority for Material Development

First Priority Languages	*Second Priority Languages*
1. Akan (Twi/Asante/Akuapem/Fante)	1. Anyi/Baule
2. Amharic	2. Bamfeke
3. Arabic	3. Bemba
4. Chewa/Nyanja	4. Berber (Tamazight/Tamacheq/Kabylle)
5. Fula (Fulfude/Peuhl)	5. Chokwe/Lunda
6. Hausa	6. Efik/Ibibio
7. Igbo	7. Ewe/Mina/Fon
8. Kongo	8. Ganda (Luganda)
9. Malagasy	9. Gbaya
10. Mandingo (Bambara/Mandinka/Dyula)	10. Kalejin (Nandi/Kipsigis)
	11. Kamba (Kikamba)
11. Ngala (Lingala)	12. Kanuri
12. Oromo (Galla)	13. Kikuyu
13. Ruanda/Rundi (Kirwanda/Kirundi)	14. Krio/Pidgin (Cluster)
	15. Luba (Chiluba)
14. Sango	16. Luhya
15. Shona	17. Luo (Acholi/Lango)
16. Somali	18. Makua (includes Lomwe)
17. Sotho/Tswana (Ndebele)	19. Mbundu (Kimbundu)
18. Swahili	20. Mende/Bandi/Loko
19. Tigrinya	21. Mong/Nkundo
20. Umbudu	22. More/Mossi
21. Wolof	23. Nubian
22. Xhosa/Zulu/Swazi	24. Senufo
23. Yoruba	25. Songhai
	26. Sukuma/Nyamwezi
	27. Tiv
	28. Tsonga (Shitsonga/Ronga or Shironga/Tswa or Shitswa)
	29. Yao/Makonde (Bulu)
	30. Zande (Azande)

Third Priority Languages	*Fourth Priority Languages*
1. Dinka (Agar/Bor/Padang)	All other African languages
2. Edo (Bini)	
3. Gogo (Chigogo)	
4. Gurage	
5. Hehe	
6. Idoma	
7. Igbira	
8. Ijo	
9. Kpelle	
10. Kru/Basra	
11. Lozi (Silozi)	
12. Maasai	
13. Mauritian Creole	
14. Menu	
15. Nama (Damara)	
16. Nuer	
17. Nupe	
18. Nyakusa	
19. Nyoro	
20. Sara	
21. Serere/Sine (Serer)	
22. Sidamo	
23. Soninke	
24. Suppire	
25. Susu	
26. Temne	
27. Tumbuka (Chitumbuka)	
28. Turkana/Teso	
29. Venda	

Source: Wiley and Dwyer (1981).

12 Inter-Institutional Collaboration in Arabic Language Instruction

Successes and Challenges

Hanada Al-Masri and Cheryl Johnson

Abstract

Less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) face many challenges, particularly low enrollments in upper-level courses. To overcome this challenge, inter-institutional collaborations have been utilized by many institutions. This chapter presents various models of inter-institutional collaborations supporting the teaching of LCTLs. It focuses specifically on the Great Lakes Colleges Association's Shared Languages Program, exploring its successes and challenges. The chapter uses the Arabic program at Denison University as a model to address challenges facing Arabic language instruction as a LCTL and within the context of small single-person programs. It aims to answer the following questions: What factors contribute to successful inter-institutional collaboration? What obstacles hinder inter-institutional collaboration and result in possible failure?

Keywords: Arabic, inter-institutional collaboration, Shared Languages Program, technology

Less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) appeal to students with diverse backgrounds and interests. These include career goals, language learning passion, heritage, religion, or a major field of study. A 1991 report from the task force for teacher training in LCTLs (McGinnis, 1994), as well as a more recent study by Magnan et al. (2014), found that the main motivation for American students to learn a LCTL is to interact with its culture. This highlights the need for educators to develop ways to improve everyday communicative competence and for administrators to recognize the critical role LCTLs play in higher education.

Ryding (2001) has noted that LCTLs support the educational mission of institutions to serve local communities by offering younger generations the opportunity to study their heritage languages. Moreover, LCTLs foster critical thinking skills and contribute to the nation's interests through their importance to international relations (NSEPnet, 2011). Arabic, in particular, is considered a critical language and is significant for national security and

economic prosperity. It is included in the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship Program, which is supported by the American Councils for International Education.

Despite the significance of LCTLs, several challenges exist in the American academic context that hinder their study and instruction, including limited parental support and course offerings in high schools; inadequate resources and teaching materials; a shortage of trained teachers; and a lack of research on factors that complicate the language learning process, such as non-Roman scripts, non-Indo-European origin, complex inflectional systems, different word order structures, and unfamiliar phonological elements (Al-Batal, 2006; Ellison, 1977; Greenberg et al., 2018; Looney & Lusin, 2019; McGinnis, 1994; Ryding, 1989; Wooldridge, 1985). Additionally, the time required for successful language learning (U.S. Department of State, n.d.) is often not reflected in the limited formal instruction available. Furthermore, language enrollment and course cap policies can lead to course cancellations for LCTLs, whose course offerings are generally "fragile and transitory" (Looney & Lusin, 2019, p. 5). According to Abrams, cited in Greenberg et al. (2018), low or irregular enrollments, particularly in small language programs relying on a single person, are due to their rigid course offerings.

To meet the demand for language instruction and address challenges in LCTLs, various consortia and sharing initiatives have been established; some of the most successful examples include the University of Wisconsin System Collaborative Language Program (https://www.wisconsin.edu/collaborative-language-program; see Chapter 2), the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare Program (https://btaa.org/resources-for/faculty/courseshare/introduction; see Chapters 1 and 2), the Shared Course Initiative (http://sharedcourseinitiative.org; see also Kraemer, 2019, and Chapter 3), and the Five College Center for World Languages (https://www.fivecolleges.edu/academics/languages/about). This chapter will focus on yet another consortium, the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA), and highlight its language sharing efforts.

This chapter consists of five sections: The first highlights challenges in Arabic language instruction. The second details the Shared Languages Program (SLP) of the GLCA, including a summary of the SLP model and an overview of Denison University's Arabic program. The third explores successful inter-institutional collaboration in Arabic. The fourth examines unsuccessful inter-institutional collaboration in Arabic. The final section provides a conclusion.

Challenges in Arabic Language Instruction

Arabic as a LCTL faces unique challenges in addition to the aforementioned general challenges. The major challenge in teaching Arabic as a second language is the lack of agreement on the best approach. Many programs in the United States continue to emphasize the traditional approach that teaches either Classical Arabic[1] or Modern Standard Arabic[2] (MSA), ignoring the

realities of diglossia[3] and vernacular Arabic in the Arab world. This traditional approach is seen as problematic since it overlooks sociolinguistic realities and is inadequate in preparing students to communicate with native speakers. Ferguson (1963) noted the difficulty in learning more than one language variety in a single course and accurately pointed out "the teacher and student alike must face the fact that there is more to be learned than one language; perhaps it is not as much as two full languages, but it is certainly more than is generally attempted in a single language course" (p. 166). Ryding (2009), who identified the issue as a traditional mindset, claimed that "for most native speakers of Arabic the literary language is the only possible language of and for instruction. To suggest otherwise, to incorporate the cultural pragmatics of interactive colloquial discourse into Arabic instruction, could be an unsettling and destabilizing proposal" (p. 69). As such, Ryding called for agreement on communicative competence in Arabic, while addressing the negative stigma attached to teaching vernacular Arabic.

Furthermore, the perception of the Arabic language and culture in the United States is a broader and ongoing challenge. Ryding (2009) noted that a general lack of knowledge about Arabic is connected to "complexities of immediate media transmissions and their interpretive power directed at a global community" (p. 69). This media coverage is influenced by current political and economic considerations, particularly instability in the Middle East, which contribute to the decline in enrollment in Arabic classes, as noted by Greenberg et al. (2018).

Additionally, the shortage of qualified Arabic teachers with expertise in pedagogy and language instruction combined with limited career paths pose challenges for Arabic language programs. Many positions, including those created after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, are low-security, part-time instructor positions with limited benefits, compared to tenure-track positions (Al-Batal, 2006). The current situation has become more dire with program terminations and job loss. Consequently, relying heavily on adjuncts, particularly at smaller institutions, can harm the effectiveness of the program and hinder inter-institutional collaborations due to the potential loss of trained adjuncts, causing instability in offerings (Blaich & Wise, 2018). These challenges will be further explored later in the chapter.

The Great Lakes Colleges Association's Shared Languages Program

Overview of the SLP Model

The SLP—created by Gabriele Dillmann for the GLCA Consortium—began in 2017 as part of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation–funded Global Crossroads Initiative. This program aims to establish and expand course sharing initiatives for LCTLs and other underenrolled languages. It allows students from the 13 participating institutions to take virtual courses at a partner institution and receive full credit at no extra cost (Johnson, 2018). Dillmann (n.d.) notes that

the program "allows languages to be offered when enrollments at individual campuses may not justify the requisite allocation of resources."

In the first year of the program, two languages were selected for piloting: Arabic as a LCTL and German as an under-enrolled commonly taught language. The choice of German was based on the relatively lower number of German majors within the consortium compared to other commonly taught languages in smaller, Midwestern universities.

Since successful collaboration typically requires "a great deal of organization, creativity, energy, patience, and time" (Glisan, 1986, p. 58), Denison University hosted a training workshop in summer 2017 for professors interested in participating in the SLP. The participants represented Arabic and German programs from four institutions: Denison University, Earlham College, Hope College, and Oberlin College.

The efforts of the SLP working group resulted in the development of four advanced undergraduate courses: two in Arabic and two in German. These courses were delivered using a synchronous, interactive videoconferencing format, which made them accessible to students in either a completely online or blended environment. The courses were listed in the course catalogs of the partnering institutions prior to registration, and students enrolled in them in the same way as traditional courses. The logistics of grading were coordinated and shared among the registrars of the participating institutions at the end of the semester. To provide additional support to SLP students, in addition to the primary instructor, each student had the Arabic instructor from their home institution serve as an SLP mentor to provide additional academic or logistical support. Finally, as the participating institutions did not have a unified academic calendar, it was agreed that the host school schedule would be binding for all parties involved.

Overview of the Arabic Program at Denison University

Denison University, a small private liberal arts college located in Granville, Ohio, has an Arabic program housed within the Department of Modern Languages. The Arabic program's goal is to educate students about the Arab world through its rich linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. With only one tenured faculty member (a single-person program), the program offers a teaching load of five courses per year. Currently, there are no major, minor, or concentration options in Arabic. However, Denison requires undergraduates to complete the equivalent of one year of language instruction as part of its general education requirements. Certain majors and programs, such as International Studies, Global Commerce, Global Health, and Middle East and North African Studies, require an additional year of language instruction.

The program's teaching philosophy is based on the integrated approach, which emphasizes the simultaneous teaching of MSA and the Levantine vernacular. This approach prepares students to communicate effectively using educated spoken Arabic while maintaining the formal level associated with

MSA in writing. The Arabic curriculum consists of seven courses, including six sequential language courses and one content course taught in English. The language courses offered annually include Beginning Arabic, Intermediate Arabic, and Conversational Arabic. Advanced Arabic I has not been offered since 2015. The content course, Culture of the Arab World, alternates with Conversational Arabic, based on demand. Students who wish to continue building their Arabic proficiency may study abroad in an Arabic-speaking country or enroll in a third-year language course on campus. If the number of students enrolled is low, which is often the case, the professor may offer a directed or independent study in Arabic as overload.

The Arabic program at Denison differs from others at peer institutions in three ways. First, it differs in its integrated approach to teaching Arabic. Unlike other institutions in the consortium, Denison integrates the teaching of both MSA and Levantine Arabic simultaneously. Although some peer institutions, such as Kenyon College and Allegheny College, have adopted a similar approach, their methods differ from Denison's. Second, Denison's curriculum employs the *'Arabiyyat Al-Naas* [Living Arabic] textbook series (Younes & Al-Masri, 2014) to equip students with a more authentic understanding of the Arabic diglossic situation. This sets Denison apart from other institutions that primarily use the widely used *Al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-'Arabiyya* [The Book of Arabic Learning] textbook series (Brustad et al., 2004). Third, the course offerings are also different. Denison does not offer literature courses due to its tenured faculty member's specialization in linguistics, unlike other institutions. These differences are noteworthy when evaluating collaboration opportunities among small institutions.

Successful Inter-Institutional Collaboration in Arabic

The Arabic faculty member at Denison saw the SLP as a way to enrich the Arabic curriculum and address underenrollment in upper-level language courses. Additionally, the SLP offered an opportunity to establish a community of learners for students to practice their language skills with peers, particularly in a campus setting with limited Arabic native speakers. The SLP also provided the faculty member a chance to collaborate with colleagues in the consortium. For these reasons, the Denison faculty member was enthusiastic about inter-institutional collaboration and actively participated in offering SLP courses with Earlham College and Oberlin College. These collaborations lasted for a total of four semesters; a summary is presented in Table 12.1.

The Denison–Earlham collaboration was the most consistent Arabic collaboration in the SLP, although it lasted for only three semesters. It was successful and effective for a variety of reasons: First and foremost is the shared commitment and work ethic among the Arabic colleagues. Both faculty members aimed to offer an intermediate or upper-level SLP course every semester. Second, the Denison–Earlham model was reciprocal in that the two faculty members served both as SLP instructors and student mentors. Moreover,

Table 12.1 Arabic SLP Course Offerings at GLCA Institutions Since 2017

Term	Denison University	Other Institutions
Spring 2017	Media Arabic	Advanced Arabic Literature (Earlham College)
Fall 2017	Intermediate Arabic I	Advanced Writing Skills (Earlham College)
Spring 2018	Intermediate Arabic II	Advanced Arabic: Audio Visual Media (Earlham College)
Fall 2018	Intermediate Arabic I	The Arabic Language and Culture (Oberlin College) Advanced Arabic Literature (Earlham College)

the inter-institutional collaboration created a sense of accomplishment, as both faculty members broadened their course offerings and/or increased their enrollments. Unfortunately, this collaboration was halted in fall 2018 when the Arabic professor at Earlham left to pursue a different career path, as they saw no prospect or future stability in their current job as an adjunct. As the Arabic program at Earlham was discontinued, and to accommodate the demand of Earlham's Arabic students, the Arabic professor at Denison continued to honor the established collaboration and offered her Intermediate Arabic I as an SLP course. This marked a significant change in SLP, as it shifted from being reciprocal to unilateral.

In fall 2018, there was a collaborative effort among three GLCA institutions—Denison, Earlham, and Oberlin—to offer an SLP program. As part of this collaboration, Denison offered its Intermediate Arabic course as an SLP course to Earlham students, and a few students from Oberlin participated in Earlham's Advanced Arabic Literature course as SLP students. Additionally, the Arabic professor at Oberlin (which is also a single-person program) offered their Advanced Arabic course as an SLP course, and one student from Denison enrolled in the course. This collaboration provided students with an opportunity to continue their education in low-enrollment language courses that may not have been available at their own institutions.

Unfortunately, the Arabic professor at Oberlin left the institution after their position was terminated.

In spring 2019, Denison was the only institution offering its Intermediate Arabic course as an SLP course due to staffing challenges at other institutions. Similarly, in fall 2022, Denison was again the only institution offering these SLP courses. However, despite being the only option, these courses failed to draw students from other institutions, as will be discussed in the following section.

In May 2022, professors from five GLCA institutions (Allegheny, Denison, Kenyon, Oberlin, and Ohio Wesleyan) gathered for a professional development workshop to discuss the future of the SLP and explore potential

collaborations. The group acknowledged the value of the program, which had been reported by Blaich and Wise (2018) as addressing low enrollment in language courses, providing a high-quality learning and teaching environment, increasing students' language skills and proficiency, and fostering engagement among students and faculty. Participants also appreciated the flexible online format of the courses.

However, the group was also concerned about the potential elimination of positions and programs associated with the SLP and its misuse for cost-cutting rather than educational purposes. To address these issues, the group decided to revise the SLP model to meet current needs. They focused on promoting cocurricular collaborations, including shared guest speakers, cultural events, experiential learning projects, and cotaught theme-based units to sustain the language learning community. The first collaboration was a calligraphy workshop cohosted by Denison and Kenyon in November 2022. The group aims to continue this type of collaboration to foster a community of learners.

Unsuccessful Inter-Institutional Collaboration in Arabic

Inter-institutional collaborations in the SLP program encountered various challenges that impeded their full success. Three main obstacles that were identified included staffing, lack of administrative support for online course accreditation, and pedagogical concerns.

Staffing was cited earlier as a significant challenge for the program. For example, the termination of adjunct faculty members in Earlham and Oberlin resulted in a loss of valuable expertise. As Blaich and Wise (2018) noted, "when people leave a GLCA institution after mastering those skills, their knowledge about teaching an SLP course effectively and the support they could provide to a colleague who might teach an SLP course leaves with them" (p. 18). To prevent the closure of Arabic programs, the administration of these colleges promoted SLP collaborations as a solution. However, Earlham students participated, while Oberlin students, still wary of the SLP's effectiveness, were hesitant (Allen, 2019).

Another difficulty for smaller institutions is finding suitable replacements for SLP faculty on sabbaticals or leave. For example, when Denison's tenured faculty took a sabbatical in spring 2019, the college needed to hire a visiting faculty member experienced in teaching with technology. This proved difficult, especially in the pre-COVID-19 era. Although the new SLP visiting faculty member was competent, students from other institutions within the consortium declined to participate. This lack of interest may have been due to various reasons, such as unfamiliarity with the new SLP instructor or a lack of on-campus support. The Arabic students at Oberlin still had reservations about the SLP's effectiveness and blamed it for their Arabic instructor's termination, which they saw as unjust to the adjunct faculty (Allen, 2019). In sum, the lack of support for staffing to instruct and guide SLP courses resulted in

a shift from a reciprocal SLP program to a unilateral one, ultimately causing a deadlock in Arabic SLP course sharing.

Lack of administrative support for online course accreditation also emerged as a hindrance in fall 2022. Despite Denison's Arabic professor's attempt to restart her SLP courses, no students from other institutions enrolled, due to administrative restrictions. GLCA institutions no longer approve credit transfer for online courses, which presents a challenge for programs like the SLP. Until this issue is addressed, it is unlikely that institutions will pursue course sharing collaborations.

Pedagogically, differences in teaching approach and textbook selection can also create collaboration challenges. GLCA Arabic programs that do not teach dialectal Arabic or use different textbooks are less likely to participate in course sharing. Similarly, Abdalla, cited in Greenberg et al. (2018), regarded textbooks as a significant pedagogical challenge in summer programs, stating that "the dominance of the Al-Kitaab series and the linkage between the students' proficiency level and the number of lessons drawn from this textbook adds pressure to small Arabic summer and immersion programs and seriously affects the quality of learning and teaching" (p. 33). Finally, Blaich and Wise (2018) noted additional logistical difficulties with the SLP that have an impact on collaboration, such as coordinating institutional academic calendars, occasional technology issues, and requiring some faculty to adapt their teaching to the online format.

Overcoming the challenges facing the SLP requires support from the administration for collaborative courses, active involvement from faculty, students' understanding of the value of shared courses, and a well-defined, consistent long-term plan for course sharing between institutions. This plan should clearly outline the institutions involved and their roles, the courses that will be consistently offered, and the semesters in which they will be offered, among other details.

Conclusion

The decline in enrollment in languages other than English in American higher education institutions, as reported by the Modern Language Association, decreased by 9.2% from 2013 to 2016 (Looney & Lusin, 2019). To address this issue of under-enrollment, particularly in LCTL courses, many institutions have turned to inter-institutional collaboration, specifically course sharing. This chapter focused on the SLP model within the GLCA and evaluated its successes and challenges using the Arabic program at Denison University as an example.

We conclude that the two key factors for successful inter-institutional collaboration are administrative support and faculty engagement. The administration can support collaboration by providing incentives such as financial compensation or course releases, recognizing faculty innovation during

reappointment and promotional reviews, establishing policies for credit transfer of online courses, and providing professional development opportunities for instructional technologists.

Faculty play a crucial role in creating productive collaborations, as they need to be motivated, committed, and innovative. It is important to consider sustainable career paths for faculty and staff involved in inter-institutional collaborations to ensure the success of these programs. They should be flexible, collaborative, and willing to experiment with new pedagogies and be supportive mentors for students. Workshops and conferences provide a good starting point for identifying interested faculty and building a community of like-minded professionals.

Notes

1 Classical Arabic is the highly codified language that is also known as Fusħa. It is the language of the Holy Qur'an and literary heritage.
2 Modern Standard Arabic is a simplified form of Classical Arabic. It is used for writing, media, and formal situations. MSA is no one's native language in any Arabic-speaking community, yet it is what helps make one an Arab, while the dialect is what helps make one, for example, a Jordanian, a Saudi, or a Moroccan.
3 The term *diglossia* was introduced by Charles Ferguson (1959) to refer to "a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety—the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature either of an earlier period or in another speech community—that is learned largely by means of formal education and used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation" (p. 336).

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13 The Portuguese Language Working Group

A Successful Partnership

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Abstract

The teaching of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) in the United States faces numerous challenges. In the struggle against lack of visibility, minimal institutional support, and scarce quality opportunities for professional development, LCTL program directors often carry the burden of running a "one-person show," as they encounter demands to develop pedagogical materials, increase course offerings, and design courses for advanced students to promote curricular continuity. In this chapter, the authors explore conceptual and practical matters they experienced while collaborating to create materials suitable for the population of their respective institutions. The authors address the difficulties and solutions encountered while navigating inter-institutional administrative systems. The chapter describes how the Portuguese faculty at Michigan State University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign established the Portuguese Working Group. Sponsored by an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant and facilitated by the Center for Language Teaching Advancement at Michigan State University, the group, through CourseShare, developed intermediate- to advanced-level Portuguese language courses, which were made available to students of Big Ten Academic Alliance partnering institutions. The experience proved that collaboration can lead to innovation while meeting student demands.

Keywords: LCTL collaboration, BTAA CourseShare, Portuguese language course development, online teaching, Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership

Understanding the Challenge

Language educators understand the value of preparing new generations to respond to global demands, assisting students in developing global citizenship and global competence, and laying foundations for a more diverse society based on respecting differences. The survival of less commonly taught language (LCTL) programs is undergoing challenges because of a downward

trend in enrollment (Looney & Lusin, 2019). To succeed, stakeholders need to approach this downtrend in enrollment—and the resulting limited course offerings—as a collective challenge and find solutions through collaboration. This chapter presents an overview of factors permeating the declining enrollment in LCTLs, focusing on Portuguese, and describes a strategy adopted by our Portuguese programs as a viable solution to the problem.

Most American high school graduates seeking to enter a postsecondary institution have had some contact with a world language. According to Kathy deJong (2021), an independent educational consultant, most colleges require candidates to have at least two years of a world language to be considered for admission. Despite the broad imposition of such a requirement, *The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report* (American Councils for International Education, 2017) affirms that most students graduate from high school without needing to fulfill a language requirement. The report states that "foreign language enrollments account for approximately 20% of the total school age population" (p. 6). The report also establishes that, among this group of students, "Spanish is by far the most widely taught language in all 50 states and Washington, D.C." (p. 9). It is not a coincidence that postsecondary students sign up for language classes they are already familiar with, such as Spanish, German, or French.

Listed by the U.S. Department of Education (2022) as a LCTL, Portuguese, alongside other LCTLs, is fighting declining enrollments. Historically, Portuguese programs in the United States, due to their small sizes, have depended largely on the dedication of a handful of professionals who, by default, work in isolation. According to the 2016 Modern Language Association census, "course offerings can be fragile and transitory, since the programs tend to be small and may depend on a single instructor" (Looney & Lusin, 2019, p. 3). Kissau (2020) noted that the critical shortage of world language teachers in the United States is well documented, and it was recently reported by ACTFL (2017) to be the worst on record. The U.S. Department of Education, in its 2017 report, stated that the national teacher shortage is particularly acute in high-need areas, including in language instruction. Consequently, LCTL programs end up lacking the quantity and quality of pedagogical resources awarded to courses traditionally offered by most institutions of higher education in the United States. This problem also impacts the training available to teachers of Portuguese. Most Portuguese faculty are adept at working long hours, developing teaching materials, and relying on a limited amount of funding for professional development and support. In addition, administrative pressure from departments for LCTLs to increase the number of course offerings and design courses for advanced students to promote curricular continuity is high. This is coupled with the necessity to recruit students and maintain enrollment numbers to justify running courses.

Another consequence of low enrollments is that Portuguese language programs in the United States tend to be small and do not justify investment in publishing new textbooks or updating existing ones. Therefore, Portuguese

language faculty reuse and recycle materials, hoping that a new quality text-book will materialize. They revitalize outdated textbooks by devising in-class activities, promoting extracurricular events, and adopting new ideas to supplement dated materials. Institutions expect innovation, variety, and promotion of activities, but fail to provide time and financial resources for such goals to be accomplished. The lack of incentive for institutional collaboration comes from the fact that the definition of success, effectiveness, and growth is not always shared. In addition, administrative obstacles prevent the establishment of successful inter-institutional collaborations. Due to such unfavorable dynamics, Portuguese programs in the United States typically run with a limited number of resources.

Collaboration Efforts

To tackle such challenges, Michigan State University (MSU) received two grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support, facilitate, and promote collaboration among institutions. The Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership aims "to create sustainable models for language instruction" (Michigan State University, n.d.). The objective of the partnership is to cross bridges by connecting institutions to join efforts in course development and, afterward, offer resulting courses through CourseShare by attracting students from across the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA). The Center for Language Teaching Advancement (CeLTA) at MSU facilitates the grant and advertises courses offered by a partnering institution.

Based in Champaign, Illinois, the BTAA is an academic partnership established by higher education institutions, mostly located in the Midwest or the Northeastern coast, to streamline inter-institutional collaboration (see Chapter 1 in this volume). The creation of CourseShare in 2003, a mechanism that allows the sharing of courses across institutions, facilitated access to courses with low enrollments and removed the limitations imposed by physical distance. CourseShare opened the doors to meaningful collaboration across BTAA institutions, increasing recruitment strategies, boosting course enrollments, and employing new technologies while filling curricular gaps and allowing students to take courses not offered by their home institutions. This program continues to benefit students by letting LCTL major and minor students meet scholarship/fellowship enrollment requirements when their home institution is not offering a course that fulfills that criterion. CourseShare supports LCTLs' efforts for institutions to share courses without sharing expenses among partnering schools and without charging students any additional fees to enroll (see other chapters in this volume, especially Chapters 1, 2, and 17, for some complexities of course sharing).

Since its creation, over 900 language courses have benefited from the CourseShare initiative. This process depends on several factors, most importantly, on people: the faculty who develop and teach the course, the department chair who approves it, the CourseShare staff who establish the bridge

between institutions and advertise the information to students, the host institution registrar staff who transfer grades, and the registrar who, in turn, receives and processes them so they appear on the students' transcripts. The steps and the players are many, and it can be either a successful operation or one that will require tweaks along the way. Instructors should be aware that much of the follow-up work to ensure that processes are running smoothly might fall upon them.

Trajectory of the Portuguese Working Group

In 2019, CeLTA called for partnership proposals, sponsored by the Mellon grant. The Portuguese group—composed of faculty from MSU, the University of Chicago (UChicago), and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)—was among the selected ones. The MSU faculty member served as Project Coordinator, while UChicago and UIUC faculty members served as Language Specialists. Combining their experiences, the working group maximized efforts to develop a new curriculum, drawing on each other's strengths to create content to address proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The objective was to rethink traditional approaches to course offerings, supplementing them with online teaching resources.

The partnership among the three institutions received strong support from their respective departmental chairs. All three institutions had a clear understanding that the need for online course offerings was real, and, most importantly, that making instructional materials available to other institutions through Creative Commons would reach a population beyond the BTAA constraints, thus strengthening the teaching of Portuguese in the United States. CeLTA's Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership represented a key factor in the establishment of a fruitful collaboration between MSU, UChicago, and UIUC.

The financial backing awarded by the Mellon Foundation allowed the Portuguese Working Group (PWG) to collaborate over a period of two years to create three Portuguese language courses exploring the culture not only of Portugal and Brazil but also that of the Lusophone world. This support was essential for participants to attend pedagogical trainings, meet regularly, and develop materials for three new courses spanning three semesters of instruction. The proposed courses, targeting intermediate- to advanced-level students, sought to boost enrollment and meet the needs of our upper-level students, making the pursuit of a major or minor in Portuguese feasible.

The Portuguese Challenge

A successful implementation of courses through CourseShare requires solid advertising efforts and inter-institutional trust. Though publicity can be far-reaching, not every institution chooses to partake in opportunities such as CourseShare because some fail to see the positive aspects of sharing courses

and students with other institutions. This type of collaboration requires open channels of communication and coordination of offerings so that there is no repetition of content or competition that could represent a decline in course enrollment among participating institutions.

Collaboration is not always a seamless process, particularly when one encounters non-negotiable difficulties such as academic calendars, institutional opposition to offering purely online courses, and diverging opinions among course developers regarding course objectives. The PWG conquered conceptual and practical obstacles in designing materials suitable for their student population by working in sync to benefit not only their own programs but also that of partner institutions, as they navigated the administrative systems that manage inter-institutional credentials.

The PWG faced many challenges over the course of its collaboration. Not all participants in the group had the same training in language pedagogy or the same views on how to reach course objectives. Such disparities caused conflicts when the group first started, but the members were able to negotiate expectations regarding the creation of materials and the development of the structure and content of the three courses to meet their individual and institutional requirements. The intervention of grant administrators early on and a session with a mediator were measures that steered the group in the right direction so that meetings were run in a productive way and duties were shared and completed in a timely manner. Assignments were distributed to take advantage of the training and pedagogical view of each group member as best as possible. For example, one person preferred creating text, so that role went mostly to that member. Other group members chose to brainstorm activities; thus, they developed most tasks for the modules. The division of assignments was equitable and fair. All group members contributed to one another's work. CeLTA also provided graduate student assistants to review the courses for structural consistency and, later, export the finished products to course shells within the institutions' learning management systems (LMSs). All input was welcome and necessary because developing online courses from scratch is a daunting endeavor.

Online teaching has become an important resource to create and maintain interest in language learning, but it is imperative that institutions offer classes that are well designed, present very clear objectives and expectations, and deliver measurable results. The pandemic required online tools for language programs to reach course goals. To address such demands, MSU offered excellent training in online language teaching (https://olt.cal.msu.edu/). The courses PWG members attended—Introduction to Online Language Teaching, Creating Engaging Materials, and Oral Communicative Tasks—fostered the development of task-based activities to maximize student engagement.

Courses: Structures and Resources

At the start of the project, the PWG met at MSU for a two-day workshop to brainstorm topics, discuss pedagogical approaches, determine objectives, and

Table 13.1 Courses Developed by the PWG

Course Title	Targeted Proficiency Level
Journey to Brazil: Beyond Survival Skills	Intermediate High/Advanced Low
Regional Cultures of Brazil	Intermediate High/Advanced Low
Cultures of the Lusophone World	Intermediate High/Advanced Low

plan a work schedule. The group established that the courses would target Intermediate High to Advanced Low students. The members had ideas for novel courses, but the final topics were only decided after regular meetings started.

The scarcity of commercially produced textbooks for the target population justified the development of new materials. The texts written for these courses are original, ensuring uninterrupted user access and avoiding common pitfalls when links to preexisting online resources such as YouTube or Wikipedia become unavailable.

Table 13.1 provides an overview of the three courses developed by the PWG along with the targeted proficiency levels.

All courses follow a preestablished structure (see Appendix A for an index of units and topics for the course on Regional Cultures of Brazil). They are divided into units, each of which takes one or more weeks to be completed, depending on the content. Each unit is divided into topics. Each topic is presented via an introductory text, followed by subtopics and corresponding activities (see Appendix B for a sample week of topics and subtopics). Sometimes there is a video with a corresponding activity, usually using the LMS discussion board. The discussion board is an excellent resource for student engagement, and it is also important for writing practice. Other activities involve Padlet (https://padlet.com), an online platform that offers a rich media space for students and instructors to create and share content in a variety of formats. Padlet is an invaluable resource for audio and video capturing, and it is also very effective for student engagement. Certain activities require voice recording, some ask students to select and upload videos of their choice from the internet. Padlet is an attractive and easy-to-use online tool where the material becomes available for the entire group and students can easily interact with each other. They can respond using video, audio, and/or text. Google Docs is another tool the PWG used extensively for student engagement. The creation of course glossaries on Google Docs, for instance, is very useful for vocabulary building. There is a wide variety of online resources available when building a language course, but one should be mindful of using too many tools because it can overwhelm both students and instructors. The three courses added regular Zoom sessions for classes and office hours. Zoom was also used for group presentations, individual oral evaluations, and final project presentations. All courses are structured to include reading materials, discussion boards, and voice and video recordings; every unit requires a high degree of student interaction with the intention of forming a community.

Journey to Brazil: Beyond Survival Skills

Journey to Brazil was the first course developed by the PWG, and it was the most problematic because the participants had not yet hit their stride. This course intends to prepare learners for a study abroad experience in Brazil as they explore various aspects related to living abroad. The course goes beyond survival skills as students also learn about Brazilian culture.

Creating materials for this first course raised some thorny issues. In fact, it was the course that took the longest to plan and develop because initially, the group spent a lot of time establishing productive routines. They soon realized that they worked best without constraints such as filling out templates. By having clear course objectives in mind and applying a backward design approach, the group focused on determining the main topic and subtopics for each unit as they progressed, and thus tasks were completed efficiently. Sourcing materials and using applications that turned out not to serve group needs also caused delays. At times, reaching a consensus regarding the selection of content and activities presented a challenge because of diverging pedagogical perspectives: Some wanted the course to be more practical in nature, while others wanted it to be more theoretical. In the end, the group came to a compromise that included a mix of both approaches. Placing the practical units at the start of the program and moving the more theoretical ones toward the second half gave the course a logical and scaffolded progression.

Journey to Brazil's initial units deal with the practical matters faced by a student who moves to Brazil for a study abroad program. It covers topics such as choosing a school, selecting classes, looking for accommodations, finding a roommate, using public transportation, opening a bank account, and learning about food and table manners. The following units expose the student to the particulars of Brazilian culture such as the concept of family, social life and behavior, access to health care systems, popular medicine, education, nonverbal communication, Brazilian stereotypes, and the myth of racial democracy. This course proposes to prepare students to live in Brazil, understanding not only how to get around but also how to negotiate cultural norms.

Journey to Brazil turned out to be a less organic course than the subsequent ones, but the PWG's experience of overcoming hurdles and becoming more accepting of each other's points of view was essential for streamlining the production of the two courses that followed. Journey to Brazil was taught asynchronously through CourseShare at MSU in spring 2020. Feedback from students and the instructor provided invaluable information for the remaining courses that were still in development.

Regional Cultures of Brazil

The second course, Regional Cultures of Brazil, was piloted by UIUC in fall 2021. The course had solid enrollment, and the 18 students included members from BTAA institutions outside the PWG affiliations: Pennsylvania State

University, University of Iowa, and University of Minnesota. The course was delivered asynchronously in a semester-based term. It was a four-credit course for graduate students, and three credits for undergraduates and students from other participating institutions. Two students enrolled in the class were recipients of the Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship. To meet FLAS requirements, the syllabus was modified to include weekly in-person contact hours for the entirety of the semester.

Regional Cultures of Brazil had a robust and well-defined structure, which simplified the development process. The course explored all five geopolitical regions of Brazil without being repetitive in activities (Appendix A shows an index of units and topics for the course; Appendix B presents topics, subtopics, and activities in Unit 1). In contrast with the first course—Journey to Brazil—which tried to accomplish too much by accommodating each PWG member's preferences regarding content and pedagogy, this second course benefited from an agreed-upon structure from the start, and such consensus resulted in a stronger and more efficient working environment.

In designing Regional Cultures of Brazil, the group also benefited from the valuable conclusions drawn from the piloting of Journey to Brazil by MSU. The MSU professor realized from the start that the course was overpacked with information and multilayered assignments. It required too many readings and included an excessive number of activities. Having this important piece of information at hand, Regional Cultures of Brazil was streamlined, and the number of assignments was reduced.

Some drawbacks are worth mentioning. There was a delay in getting students from partnering institutions to create local credentials to access the materials, but this was quickly sorted out and the course was launched. Before classes started, the instructor recorded and uploaded an introductory short video; she continued recording one video per week to make announcements and present the materials that would be covered during that given period. Overall, the instructor felt that having at least one synchronous Zoom check-in meeting a week would have been beneficial for strengthening the community and getting announcements across.

Other administrative difficulties were related to the fact that UIUC was using CourseShare for a Portuguese course for the first time. For various reasons, a few students dropped the course and stopped responding to emails without contacting the instructor. Since neither the instructor nor the hosting institution were informed of the drop until grades had to be posted, the instructor had to contact receiving institutions prior to posting grades to avoid assigning a failing grade when no grade was supposed to be posted for a given student.

Despite these drawbacks, the course was successful, and students were satisfied with the variety of materials presented. Student engagement was high and evaluations were positive. One student said that "[t]he course was very well-planned and well-thought out." Another added that "we know exactly what we will be graded on." A third one mentioned that "the coursework and

assignments were very detailed and helped clarify the topic which was being discussed."

Cultures of the Lusophone World

Cultures of the Lusophone World, taught at UChicago in the winter of 2023 synchronously using a hybrid format, was the third and final course designed and developed by the PWG. Enrollment included students from Pennsylvania State University, University of Iowa, and UIUC, totaling 10 students. There were no administrative hurdles in offering the course. UChicago's CourseShare coordinator managed enrollment details and students appeared on the roster during the first week of the quarter as expected. The course had to be taught synchronously because of regulations at UChicago, therefore classes met three times a week for 50 minutes each with remote students joining on Zoom. Meetings were held in a classroom outfitted for hybrid instruction.

In Cultures of the Lusophone World, each unit focuses on a country member of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, also called the Lusophone Commonwealth, or large communities where Portuguese has an official presence. Each unit explores a different aspect of a community such as history, politics, food, and cultural manifestations. This program was developed to be taught over the course of a semester, but UChicago's academic calendar runs on a trimester basis. This created a challenge because the materials needed to be reduced to be delivered during a period of nine weeks instead of fifteen. The advantage of using stand-alone thematic units and having such a rich variety of well-developed materials is the possibility of choosing specific focus areas when offering the course. The design of Cultures of the Lusophone World took advantage of the experience brought by the previous courses taught by members of the PWG. Reading materials were distributed over 23 meetings, and the number of assignments was also reduced. This resulted in a dynamic class that covered the entirety of the Lusophone world and offered a variety of homework assignments that provided the basis for classroom discussions. Teaching the class was enjoyable because the students were enthusiastic about discovering the Lusophone world in a creative way and interacting with classmates from other institutions on a regular basis. Student engagement was high, the hybrid format worked seamlessly, and student feedback was favorable.

Conclusion

The declining enrollments in languages is a concern that permeates all LCTLs in the United States. The downward trend starts in high schools across the country and continues in institutions of higher education. In this context, the PWG, backed by financial support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and through the Less Commonly Taught and Indigenous Languages Partnership established by MSU, presents an innovative way to collaborate to

increase course offerings and offer the possibility of boosting enrollments from intermediate to advanced courses in Portuguese across the BTAA. The establishment of this partnership allowed students to practice higher-level language discussions in Portuguese and helped them expand their knowledge not only of Brazil but also of the Lusophone world through a variety of resources that will be made public through Creative Commons. The three courses seek to prepare students to interact with the language in a variety of contexts, giving them an opportunity to acquire eye-opening experiences through real-world scenarios. The partnership also offered its members great opportunities for professional development.

The PWG's intention from the very beginning was to add to the participating institutions' individual language programs a breadth of topics and subtopics not always covered due to lack of time, enrollment, or institutional support for advanced courses. The opportunity to create upper-level language courses such as Journey to Brazil, Regional Cultures of Brazil, and Cultures of the Lusophone World was invaluable because these courses fill a gap, respond to a need, and, hopefully, will continue to be offered through CourseShare to students from other BTAA institutions who can join efforts to learn together online.

Future offerings of these courses depend on institutional and student interest. Well-rounded products with clear objectives and a solid structure using backward design will always play an important role in Portuguese programs. The challenges facing LCTLs in the United States will remain, but combining forces to tackle them as a collective problem will make LCTL educators stronger and will allow us to continue enriching the lives of our students.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A

Regional Cultures of Brazil: Index of Units and Topics

Unit 1: The Geographic Regions of Brazil

Topic 1: Introduction to the Regions of Brazil
Topic 2: Cultural Diversity and National Identity

Unit 2: Northeast

Topic 1: Introduction to the Northeast
Topic 2: Myths, Legends, and Superstitions
Topic 3: Traditional Food
Topic 4: Northeastern Recipes
Topic 5: Regional Music
Topic 6: Tourism in the Region

Unit 3: Southeast

Topic 1: Introduction to the Southeast
Topic 2: Cultural and Racial Diversity—Immigration
Topic 3: Traditional Food
Topic 4: Regional Arts and Music

Unit 4: South

Topic 1: Introduction to the South
Topic 2: Tourism in the Region
Topic 3: Traditional Food
Topic 4: Regional Music

Unit 5: Midwest

Topic 1: Introduction to the Midwest
Topic 2: Indigenous Cultures
Topic 3: Brasília—Brazil's Capital
Topic 4: Tourism in the Region

Unit 6: North

Topic 1: Introduction to the North
Topic 2: The Amazon and the Environment
Topic 3: Legends of the Region
Topic 4: Traditional Food
Topic 5: Regional Culture
Topic 6: Tourism in the Region

Unit 7: Brazilians in the Diaspora

Topic 1: Brazilians around the World
Topic 2: Brazilians in the United States

Unit 8: Review and Final Project

Appendix B

Unit 1: Topics and Subtopics

This is a sample week of topics and subtopics for a course primarily designed to be delivered online. It can also be adapted for face-to-face instruction.

Course Title: Regional Cultures of Brazil

Unit 1: The Geographic Regions of Brazil
   Brief introductory text to the course

Topic 1: Introduction to the Regions of Brazil

Activities

A. <u>Padlet</u>: Introductions
   Students introduce themselves to the class using Padlet's video recording feature.
B. <u>Reading</u>: Geographic regions of Brazil
C. <u>Discussion Board</u>: Expectations/Reflections

Students write about their expectations about the course and ask questions about the reading. They are asked to elaborate on the topics that they consider most thought-provoking. (Minimum 50 words)

Afterward, students reply to the comments of two classmates. (Minimum 20 words)

D. Video (YouTube): The Regions of Brazil: Midwest, Northeast, North, Southeast, and South

E. Padlet: Panorama of the regions
Based on the video *The Regions of Brazil*, students choose a topic from each region and conduct an internet search about them. Then they post a summary of what they found along with a link to each of their sources. (Minimum 50 words)

Topic 2: Cultural Diversity and National Identity

Activities

A. Reading: The cultural diversity of a country of continental dimensions
B. Discussion Board: Aspects of Brazilian culture
Considering the diversity of Brazilian culture, students reflect on the aspects that stand out the most to them.

Students mention positive and negative aspects of Brazilian culture and compare them with similar aspects of their own culture. (Minimum 100 words)

Afterward, students comment on the contributions of at least two peers.
C. Video (YouTube): Brazilian Culture and National Identity
D. Discussion Board: Globalization and Brazilian culture
After watching the video that discusses the transformation processes of Brazilian culture, which is always evolving, students reflect on the effects of globalization on the cultural aspects of modern Brazil.

Students write a 50–70-word paragraph explaining their perspective and giving examples, and respond to the contributions of at least two peers.
E. Padlet: Expectations about the course
Students determine which aspects of Brazilian culture they are particularly interested in and would like to explore further. Then they record a video talking about their interests and expectations about the course. Afterward, on Padlet, they comment on the contributions of at least two peers.

Part IV

Sharing Strategies

14 Intercultural Language Learning Communities

Teaching Strategies in the Shared Less Commonly Taught Language Classroom

Adela Lechintan-Siefer

Abstract

In the shared less commonly taught language (LCTL) classroom, which brings together students from different institutions with diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, skills, personalities, gender identities, and abilities, the instructor's role goes beyond teaching content and skills. Providing these diverse voices with an inclusive space and opportunities to participate requires communicative and active learning strategies. Successful teaching in a multimodal format, including synchronous online and face-to-face, requires the use of selective learning materials and techniques as well as a learning environment in which students feel comfortable sharing information about themselves and the world.

This chapter focuses on teaching and learning strategies that maximize the ways shared LCTL courses promote intercultural communication and information exchanges. Further, it describes and analyzes course design choices, practice activities, nontraditional final projects, and teaching techniques and resources used in an Intermediate Romanian II language course at The Ohio State University. These choices and techniques allowed the instructor to actively engage diverse students in different modalities. Extracurricular student activities that promoted cultural events, social interaction, and building communities will also be discussed.

Keywords: shared courses, learning communities, Romanian, intercultural learning

Intermediate Romanian II is part of a course sharing system and consists of face-to-face instruction shared with other institutions through videoconferencing. The course was uniquely designed to accommodate distance-learning students who join remotely. Intermediate Romanian II adopts a technology-enhanced teaching approach that allows students on campus to attend class in person and complete individual and group assignments asynchronously online. In addition, the course utilized technology-enhanced instruction, facilitating distance student learning through synchronous delivery via videoconferencing

as well as multiple online tools that allowed for inclusive collaboration among distance and non-distance students. This combination of different modalities helped all students overcome geographical barriers while offering considerable opportunities for increased learning.

This chapter draws upon my cumulative experience as a second language instructor in face-to-face, online, and technology-enhanced courses in Romanian, a less commonly taught language (LCTL), and a more commonly taught language, French. It examines course design and teaching strategies that aim to engage all students who participate in technology-enhanced learning, supporting the development of their linguistic, cultural, and intercultural skills while creating learning communities. It seeks to address the question: How do we create technology-enhanced learning spaces that foster optimal learning and community building while remaining loyal to inclusive, communicative, and active learning pedagogies?

The chapter starts by briefly framing the background and terminology used that laid the foundation for this project. The majority of the chapter describes the Intermediate Romanian II course, followed by a presentation of class activities and teaching strategies aimed at fostering participation and collaboration in the shared classroom. In conclusion, findings from an anonymous student survey are presented and discussed.

Background and Terminology

As this edited volume shows, shared instruction existed in LCTL classes long before COVID-19 lockdowns required the cessation of in-person instruction. While LCTLs often face difficulties inherent to their scarce presence—including fewer resources in the target language, less visibility in the education system, and enrollment pressures, to name a few (Kresin, 2017; Lauersdorf, 2000; Looney & Lusin, 2019; Nedashkivska, 2017)—collaboration through course sharing has become essential to increase student enrollment and make courses accessible to students from other universities.

The teaching approach described in this chapter refers to instructional courses that combine traditional face-to-face methods of instruction with synchronous or asynchronous online learning (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Gil et al., 2022). As a shared course, students not physically together in the same space are connected digitally in online communities. This combination of different modalities mediates learning and physical barriers that might otherwise prevent students from enrolling in courses not offered at their institution.

Teaching in an increasingly globalized world and the need for our students to work in diverse, multicultural environments calls for the inclusion of intercultural communication as an integral part of language curricula. Byram (1997) defined the concept of intercultural competence as "the ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately, and to communicate and potentially work with people from different cultural backgrounds" (p. 267). Numerous factors, some related to the composition of the Romanian

courses—including student diversity, students' experiences living in multicultural environments, their desire to learn about other cultures, and other factors pertaining to the choice of in-class intercultural activities and homework assignments—have shaped the way students demonstrate intercultural sensitivity and communication. These factors help foster intercultural competence as well as group cohesion among communities of learners.

For this chapter, it is important to clarify the concept of community, drawing attention to the changing meaning attached to the idea of community of learning. Historically, second language acquisition researchers and language instructors applied the concept of community of practice proposed by Wenger (1998) to language education. Later, theoreticians of learning looked at the social aspect of education and created and expanded the phrase community of learning as a unifying concept that joined people from the same geographical area who share the same interests. In general, these theories emphasized the individual learning benefits within the larger group, finding commonalities among different individuals as a learning goal (Calderwood, 2000).

Because shared instruction brings together students from diverse communities defined by diverse cultural backgrounds, geographic origins, academic interests, abilities, and gender and cultural identities, the concept of learning communities is examined. At present, it is imperative that language teaching and learning acknowledge the changing dynamic of cultural groups and languages as well as the multicultural and multilingual nature of communities. Often, language students enter the classroom with cultural heritage or knowledge of other languages as well as diverse academic and professional backgrounds and aspirations. The goal is to bring these communities together, in a classroom space where students can build intercultural exchanges and acquire intercultural competence.

To ensure inclusive learning and community-building opportunities as well as more easily accessible learning and assessment for all students, technology-mediated instruction utilizes a variety of online tools and platforms for collaborations, conferences, discussions, and group projects. Technology-enhanced learning benefits students in multiple ways, including offering authentic materials that target all learning skills, increasing proficiency, and building community (Goertler & Winke, 2008; Kostina, 2012; Kraemer, 2008; Spreen, 2002). The creation of digital teaching materials, presentations, modules, videos, and recordings can partially overcome the scarcity of digital teaching materials in LCTLs.

Course Design

Intermediate Romanian II is a technology-enhanced language course taught in person at The Ohio State University (OSU) and shared through videoconferencing with other Big Ten Academic Alliance Institutions. All students complete asynchronous assignments online, using the Canvas learning

management system. The four-credit course meets three times a week for 80 minutes for a total of 15 weeks in spring semesters. In order to be successful in this course, students are required to use Romanian at all times in the classroom.

Due to unique challenges that impacted teaching and student learning at the partnering institutions, the Intermediate Romanian II shared course was designed with specific goals that supported optimal learning experiences for both distance and on-site students as well as realistic course outcomes. Curriculum design choices aimed at providing all students with more transparency about the course structure and expectations (see Appendix A for excerpts from the syllabus and course schedule). They included (a) a biographical paragraph and recorded video about the instructor and an optional online assignment for all students in which they could share biographical videos; (b) a short description of the teaching approach with an explanation of learning outcomes that set students' expectations for an active, student-centered, intercultural, collaborative learning environment including online interactions; (c) frequent low-stakes assignments with detailed directions and online submission options; (d) daily communicative learning outcomes that place all students at the center of each lesson; (e) opportunities for extra-credit assignments, including digital resources such as film screenings and online access to extracurricular events and guest speaker talks; (f) resources and tips for successful online learning; (g) online resources for diversity and inclusion; and (h) information about disability accommodations and digital accessibility. Further, sufficient and specific assignment details, additional office hours (virtual and in person), and instructor availability outside of the classroom for learning support were offered to facilitate increased assignment preparation and class activity contribution for all students, including distance learners.

Ensuring the syllabus clearly stated course goals and outcomes, as well as how objectives would be reached, constituted a strategy meant to offer students the necessary information to better understand the purpose of class activities and assessment types.

Intercultural Learning Activities

Intercultural competence, as a pertinent goal for language learning, occupied a central place in the Intermediate Romanian II course, in addition to the learning objectives commonly attributed to language skills and cultural knowledge. Intercultural class activities and international virtual exchanges that aimed to support students' intercultural competence development supplemented language and culture teaching.

The Intermediate Romanian II class benefited from a technology-enhanced format that enabled the collaborative learning of a culturally and linguistically diverse student body. Undergraduate students, some of whom were first-time second language learners, greatly benefited from working with graduate

students, who specialized in other languages or linguistics and who showed genuine interest in the study of the mechanisms of languages and interlinguistic comparisons. In class, students were encouraged to draw comparisons between the different languages they spoke (including Albanian, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and other Slavic languages) and provide observations and examples. Distance students shared cultural perspectives and knowledge on cultural practices from the communities and geographical areas in which they lived. Literary and cultural analysis of Romanian fairy tales and their modern versions as well as the deconstruction of some cultural, racial, and gender stereotypes prompted conversations about popular culture from students' communities and their importance for the folklore of their region. Short collaborative creative assignments based on fairy tales offered opportunities for interaction between distance and non-distance students in and out of class.

The presence of Romanian heritage language speakers, who came from families with Romanian and Moldovan cultural and linguistic backgrounds, provided the class with numerous cultural and linguistic resources and prompted students to entertain numerous class discussions and share intercultural reflections. Motivated by their family's wish to ensure that children maintain active use of their language (Kramer, 2004; Kresin, 2017; Petrescu, 2014) or their own desire to acquire writing skills and further develop their speaking skills, heritage speakers constituted between 10% to 30% of Romanian class students. Typically, heritage speakers perform better in activities requiring conversational skills because their listening and speaking proficiency in Romanian is higher than their reading and writing proficiency. Heritage speakers come from diverse cultures within the Romanian sphere and often speak different regional dialects.

Accommodating heritage dialect speakers enriched class conversations and inspired students to create projects and deliver cultural presentations about language dialects, regional accents, and other endangered Romance languages related to Romanian, including Istro-Romanian, Megleno-Romanian, and Aromanian. Istro-Romanian, Romanian, and their common origins were the focus of one student's presentation that she later developed into a scientific undergraduate research thesis, presented in fulfillment of her bachelor's degree with research distinction, for example (Cantemir, 2020).

Decentering dominant cultures, as a means to consider the global multicultural society, was also attempted through the research, study, and discussion of ethnic diversity within the Romanian sphere. This included examples of cultural elements from German, Hungarian, Jewish, and Roma cultures (in Romania) and Moldovan and Russian cultures (in Moldova), celebrating common elements as well as cultural differences. The peaceful and, at times, conflictual relationship among these diverse cultures, as well as their historic coexistence, offered insight into the complexities of the contemporary multiethnic societies of Romania and Moldova.

Reflection on and analysis of cultural productions were encouraged. Class activities that prompted students to describe and analyze aspects of the culture(s) studied were used. Assessment methods became instrumental tools, measuring the extent to which students reflected on cultural differences while becoming more aware of perspectives within their own culture(s). Students worked individually or in groups to complete intercultural activities that included descriptions and analyses of cultural situations, images, and video clips. Simulations of intercultural encounters involving various role-plays offered students opportunities to negotiate meaning and test their intercultural competence skills.

Film sequences and literature excerpts were integrated throughout the course. Feature films proved to be successful even among students less acquainted with Romanian cinema. Viewing and analyzing films that describe cultural elements and depict intercultural interactions offered journeys into other worlds, experiences typically limited to travelers and study abroad students. The exploration of the linguistic and cultural appeal of cinema revealed the potential for intercultural meaning and transfer. Often, Romanian films are politically and socially charged artistic creations. As a result, an introduction to the film by the instructor or students, prior to viewing, was necessary. Further, students engaged in an exploration of paratextual elements, including synopses, film trailers, casting choices, reviews, and interviews with directors and actors.

Technology-Enhanced Learning Activities and Teaching Techniques

Due to the scarcity of teaching and learning materials in LCTLs, students need additional exposure to authentic language input both in and out of the classroom as well as activities specifically designed to support and increase language competence, particularly skills that require active listening and speaking practice. In the Intermediate Romanian II language course, practice activities, student-centered instruction, and collaboration among students were used to enhance the acquisition of skills and overcome a significant teaching challenge in LCTL classes: collaboration between distance students and face-to-face learners.

Pairing distance students with their non-distance peers allowed collaboration on partner speaking quizzes, partner recordings, group assignments, and group projects. Students chose a partner using Canvas or were assigned partners, ensuring they benefited from class assignments and inclusion in class activities. Discussion forums and student group chats, integrated into Canvas and via informal group chat applications such as GroupMe or WhatsApp, allowed student conversations outside of class as well as collaboration on assignments and group projects.

Equal participation opportunities for all students in class activities were facilitated by videoconferencing and group rotation. During these activities, distance students worked with student groups in the traditional classroom using the classroom equipment (Zoom, screen, and desktop or ceiling

microphone). The videoconference format also allowed distance students to contribute equally to student-centered class activities during which they were encouraged to lead conversations, debates, or games. Canvas-based online assignments that allowed for equal participation included video recordings requiring students to work in pairs or groups to record dialogues based on a given theme or prompt.

Active learning methods and activities contributed to student engagement and facilitated the development of language skills. Using games such as Show and Tell, Jeopardy, Bingo, and Battleship, when practicing vocabulary and grammar or reviewing culture, increased student interest and participation. To offer distance students opportunities to equally participate in cultural readings and film or literary conversations, Jamboard (https://jamboard.google. com) was employed as a versatile tool for activities such as lexical mapping, cross-cultural comparisons, brainstorming, and panel discussions with group rotation. Jamboard is a free application that offers a digital whiteboard for collaborating in real time. An example of an activity about *Mărțișor*, a cultural tradition found in Romania, Moldova, and Bulgaria that celebrates the first day of spring, is presented in Figures 14.1 and 14.2. The first Jamboard page (Figure 14.1) presents a lexical activity during which students were asked to write words, expressions, and ideas that came to mind when they heard the

Figure 14.1 Mărțișor: Lexical mapping on Jamboard.

Atașați o imagine sau o frază despre o tradiție
culturală asemănătoare cu Martisorul

In
Bulgaria
exista
Martenita

Dragobete
este o tradiție
similară în
România în 24
Februarie

In Albania
exista o
sarbatoare
similara

În Rusa, este o
sărbătoare
care ei
sărbător
sfârșit de
iarna.

In
Moldova
exista
Martisor.

In Statele
Unite exista
Ziua Cartitei
(Groundhog)

Figure 14.2 Mărțișor: Intercultural analysis on Jamboard.

word *Mărțișor*. On the second Jamboard page (Figure 14.2), an intercultural
activity required students to create a paragraph (with or without an image)
about a similar tradition in their culture or a culture they knew. Using text,
handwriting, drawing, images, and/or stickers allowed for creativity. A discussion
followed during which information about similar cultural traditions was
exchanged and cultural similarities and differences were analyzed.

Interactive Online Activities

Applications such as H5P (https://h5p.org) or ThingLink (https://www.
thinglink.com) facilitate the production of new teaching materials, including
animated video clips and dialogues, and are useful for output activities such as
presentations or input activities such as listening and viewing. For text analysis
and text-based discussion, programs like Hypothesis (https://web.hypothes.
is) help ensure inclusive participation for distance-learning students.

H5P is a plug-in tool that helps produce and run interactive content and
interactive video within a learning management system. It allows students to
explore film, video clips, or music videos that can be incorporated into viewing
or listening activities. Further, H5P segments video to ease comprehension,
facilitating analysis and discussion. For example, a lesson on Bucharest
was based on a short video clip presenting the city (Figure 14.3), followed by
a series of interactive activities, including the exploration of a city map (Figure
14.4). Utilizing H5P facilitated the creation of a series of activities that combined
vocabulary practice and the acquisition of cultural and intercultural skills.

Culture and literature texts at the intermediate level were explored using
Hypothesis. Hypothesis, a collaborative annotation tool, allows for social
annotation and cultural and literary text analyses and discussions, offering

The documentary, "România, pas cu pas" (Romania, step by step), by Florin Andreescu, tells the story of the city of Bucharest by combining shots of neighborhoods, parks, as well as cultural and historical sites with detailed descriptions and information about the history of the Romanian capital. The video excerpt below presents the old neighborhood, Lipscani, the Palace of Parliament, and other tourist attractions. Watch the video twice then complete the activities provided.

▶ Part 1: Vizionare.

Part 2: Check Your Understanding

Respond to the following questions based on the information presented in the video clip in Part 1 above.

1. Old Town in Bucureşti is called Lipscani.

○ True   ○ False

✓ Check

Question: 1 of 5 questions

Figure 14.3 H5P example of a video analysis and discussion task.

interactive and engaging opportunities for online collaboration with distance students. The program combines text annotation with online discussion boards, allowing students to work in groups and be creative. They can also communicate with their peers by asking and answering questions about vocabulary, grammar, and text composition. In addition, Hypothesis can become a forum for idea exchange.

While Hypothesis serves as an in-class tool that enables collaboration, it can also be used as a homework assignment platform. Its features let students highlight words, expressions, or entire sentences they wish to explain, discuss, or use as examples to support a point of view. Figure 14.5 illustrates a text annotation activity and discussion about popular culture sports in Romania. It is based on a cultural text describing a legendary Aromanian-Romanian soccer figure, Gheorghe Hagi.

Figure 14.4 H5P example of a vocabulary and culture activity.
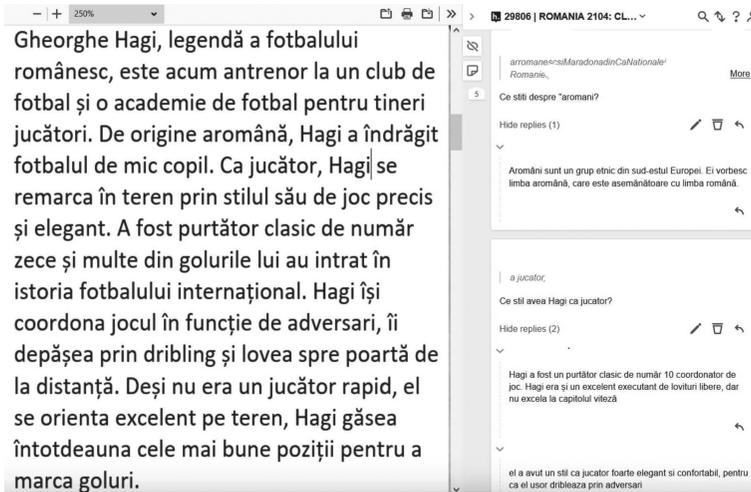
Figure 14.5 Text annotation and cultural discussion about popular culture and sport in Romania using Hypothesis.

International Virtual Exchange

A virtual exchange module was incorporated into the course in order to connect students with native speakers. Students in the Intermediate Romanian II class joined their peers from Babes-Bolyai University in Romania for a series of five sessions. Students met after class once a week for five weeks to discuss cultural topics related to the material covered in class. This online collaboration offered students the opportunity to converse in the target language while learning about local culture. They were able to exchange ideas while

developing intercultural sensitivity and communication. Each virtual conversation session lasted 30–40 minutes and was followed by an essay that prompted students to reflect on what they learned about the other culture as well as their own. In addition, the essay allowed them to analyze and reflect on cultural practices from their own culture(s) and those different from their own. This virtual opening toward internationalization resulted in enthusiasm for learning, improved language and intercultural skills, and informal collaborations and friendships. Additional benefits for LCTL students included increased exposure to language input, extended student interaction, meaningful communication, connection with peers from another culture, and increased language proficiency.

Nontraditional Final Projects

Language courses lend themselves to the exploration of creative assignments that are meant to take students out of their comfort zone while simultaneously offering them opportunities, and the creative freedom, to apply and show their personal interests. The COVID-19 period challenged students and instructors, but it also prompted them to think creatively. Some nontraditional final projects created in the Intermediate Romanian II class included storytelling narration in the target language, dialogues, projects that modeled TV shows (especially cooking shows with live demonstrations), essay videos, and stage performance competitions, including reenactments of film sequences, songs, and theater role-play. Sketches, musical cultural performances, and interpretations of short literary texts or students' creations and adaptations of texts offered opportunities to demonstrate language skills as well as artistic talent. Other final projects were based on interviews with native speakers from Romania and Moldova, building on the virtual exchange conversations and students' experiences abroad. A flexible choice of format for the final projects was proposed (in-person or virtual presentations). The projects included an interactive follow-up activity involving the whole class either face-to-face or as a discussion forum on Canvas.

Open-Source Digital Materials

Traditionally, LCTL instructional resources have been insufficient (Johnston & Janus, 2007). The scarcity of modern textbooks and digital teaching materials continues as a challenge for instructors and students. To optimally support student learning, students must have access to information and resources in the target language; resources that provide them with opportunities to practice the language outside of the classroom. Practice opportunities can be accessed through films, music, written media, books, and educational websites. In my Romanian classes, I make lists of digital learning resources available to my students on Canvas (see Appendix B).

The creation of free, open-source learning materials by language instructors is common practice to supplement existing teaching resources. Their availability, accessibility, and interactive features, when used in conjunction with other materials, benefit and positively impact student learning. For example, the website *Exerciţii audio şi video în română* [Audio and video exercises in Romanian] (http://video.elearning.ubbcluj.ro), created by a team of educators and scholars from Babes-Bolyai University in Romania, was one of the open-source web-based learning supplements used in the Romanian course. The website features audio and video materials in Romanian designed for beginner and intermediate language courses and is accompanied by activities and worksheets that can be incorporated into lessons and homework assignments. Their exploration complemented the course teaching materials and constituted appealing and accessible culture and language aural input that reinforced listening skills and provided all students with more opportunities for speaking and writing practice.

In 2020, I created an online learning module, *Youth Culture in Postcommunist Romania* (https://www.romaniayouthculture.com/). The learning module incorporates cultural aspects of youth culture in postcommunist Romania as well as illustrations and practice activities. It is written in English and designed for university students unacquainted with the Romanian language and culture and as a cultural exploration tool for K–12 students. In addition, the website can be used in beginner- or even intermediate-level Romanian courses as a base for cultural activities. As seen in Figure 14.6, texts and illustrations of cultural aspects significant for youth culture can be a starting point for cultural conversations. Each page is designed around a theme—including academic life, cultural practices, and activism and change—and comprises texts, illustrations, and activities. Figure 14.7 presents a film
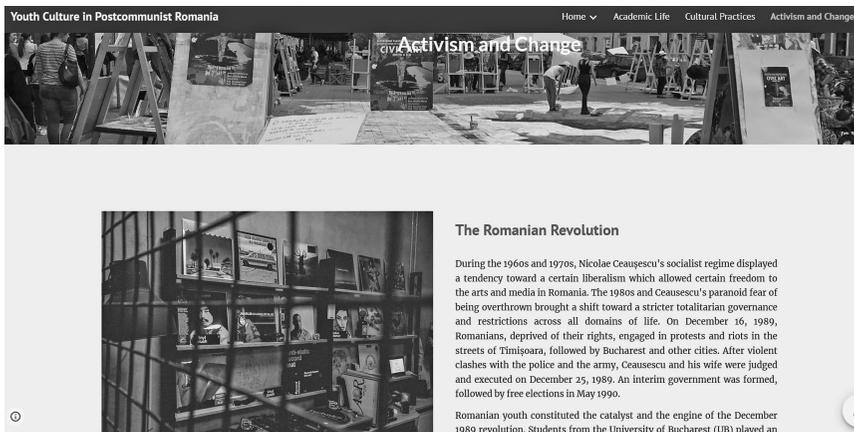
Figure 14.6 Web-based cultural activity (https://www.romaniayouthculture.com/ activism-and-change).

Figure 14.7 My Beautiful Dacia previewing activity. (Google Form accessible from http://tiny.cc/MyBeautifulDacia.)

previewing activity, completed by students as a homework assignment to prepare for the screening and discussion of the documentary *My Beautiful Dacia* (Constantinescu, 2010). The documentary viewing was followed by a cultural mini-module about the Romanian Revolution of 1989 and the transition from communism to capitalism in postcommunist Romania.

Conclusion

A survey of students' opinions and thoughts at the end of the course demonstrated that face-to-face students and distance students alike found positive outcomes in the shared model of instruction. One face-to-face student in spring 2017 stated:

> Having the chance to participate in a distance-learning class was a great opportunity to have an additional student be part of the learning of a language that is less common. The way the room was set up and the use of cameras provided a space that allowed the distance student to be seen and heard as well as interact with the class in the traditional classroom space.

Another student noted in spring 2016, "I feel as if my interaction with the distance learning student was almost the same as if she were in the classroom." A distance-learning student in spring 2018 wrote:

> Overall, the class involved very large amounts of communication—almost every activity was discussed with input from all the students in the class. Some aspects of the class which helped facilitate our communications included: role-playing group activities in which we would pair off into small groups and hold conversations in Romanian with each other in different every-day contexts.

Course sharing, especially when combining face-to-face and distance students, requires experimentation and adaptation. Despite instructor and scholar efforts to overcome related obstacles, challenges remain: lack of physical interaction and engagement, the challenge of in-person collaboration with distance students, as well as difficulties inherent to distance learning such as the lack of nonverbal cues and eye contact, isolation, reduced face-to-face socializing, and reduced opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

In spite of the challenges distance students faced, the results of the survey confirmed that they considered the shared class a positive learning environment, and assessments showed that their language proficiency levels increased.

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Appendix A

Course Syllabus and Schedule Excerpts

Course description and objectives

The main objective of this course is to perfect your communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in Romanian in the areas mentioned above and in that order of priority. In addition to providing instruction in the above skills, Intermediate Romanian II is also designed to acquaint students with aspects of Romania's culture and current affairs through the study of cultural texts and videos.

At the end of the course, students should be able to

- Understand and engage in conversations in Romanian on different topics
- Read and understand texts in Romanian such as short articles and short excerpts from literary texts
- Write short essays on topics related to the material studied in class
- Demonstrate knowledge of various topics related to Romanian culture, society, and current affairs and compare them with/to topics from their own culture(s)
- Demonstrate familiarity with the products, practices, and perspectives of Romanian-speaking cultures and be able to discuss in an informed and respectful way their diversity across cultures and individuals
- Identify, analyze, and demonstrate attitudes on cultural diversity reflective of an interculturally competent global citizen (such as respect, openness, curiosity, and adaptability)

Excerpts of course schedule

Date	Reading assignments (due before class)	Writing assignments (due in Canvas)
Week 1		
Learning outcomes		
1. Discover what you have in common with your classmates so far. 2. Talk about your home and campus spaces and activities.		
Analyze cultural elements related to the home, community, and the city.		
1/10	Introduction to the course. Review activities.	
1/11	**U1**: Vocabular La Bloc. Organizare. Gramatica Adjectivul, adverbul. p.10–12;18	3/p.9; 4/p.10
1/13	Activitati. Organizare de șantier p.13–14; Secvențe film *La Bloc*, discuție	20/p.20
Week 2		
Learning outcomes		
1. Describe features and qualities of objects that surround you. 2. Analyze cultural aspects related to sports in the Romanian-speaking regions. 3. Talk about your favorite sport and famous sports figures in Romanian culture and your own culture.		
1/17	Activitati. Redecorare Gramatica Adjective; Timp verbal. Cultura p.15–19; Cojocaru (Grammar) p.49–56; p.165	17/p.17; 23/p.21

1/18	**U2**: Hai Romania! Vocabular Sport. Gramatica p.20–22	**Homework due: U 1**; **Prep check 1:** study Vocabulary in U2
1/20	Activități Cultura Fotbaliști români. (see Carmen) p.23–25	7/p.25; **Speaking Quiz 1 (Carmen)**

Week 4		

Learning outcomes

1. Describe means of transportation, traffic rules, and circulation habits in cities and on campuses.
2. Talk about the role and cultural significance automobiles have in Romania, Moldova, and your culture(s).
3. Find out the importance of the automobile Dacia in Romanian society before and after 1989.
4. Describe and analyze symbols representative of your culture and community.

1/31	**U3**: Vocabular automobilul; mașina mea; Dacia p.32–34	**Homework due: U 2**; **Prep check 2:** study Vocabulary in U3
2/1	Înmatriculare; codul rutier; gramatica substantivul p.35–37	4/p.40; **Virtual exchange session 1**
2/3	Secvențe film *My Beautiful Dacia*, discuție	11/p.42; 20/p.46

Appendix B

Digital Learning Resources

- Romanian grammar: http://www.seelrc.org:8080/grammar/pdf/comp-grammar_romanian.pdf
- Youth culture in postcommunist Romania: https://www.romaniayouth-culture.com
- Audio and video exercises in Romanian: http://video.elearning.ubbcluj.ro/?page_id=2584
- Romanian artists: https://www.last.fm/tag/romanian/artists
- Romanian online games: https://www.digitaldialects.com/iPad/Romanian.htm
- Romanian fairy tales: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tmZktQ5Sis
- Traveling in Romania: https://www.lonelyplanet.com/romania
- Romanian news: https://www.mediafax.ro

15 Building a Sustainable Less Commonly Taught Language Community of Practice Through Assessment-Driven Reverse Design

Catherine C. Baumann, Ahmet Dursun, and Phuong Nguyen

Abstract

Assessment is an indispensable part of instruction, as it provides teachers with the feedback necessary to respond to students' learning needs and adjust instruction. It is also the basis upon which the reverse design of curricula can be undertaken. However, language teachers often receive limited training in assessment and testing, an even more pronounced issue for less commonly taught language (LCTL) instruction. In 2016, the University of Chicago Language Center received a grant to transform the way LCTLs were shared and ultimately taught. Its overarching plan was the delivery of in-depth training for participants in proficiency assessment standards, curriculum design, and course sharing tools, and finally the design of assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of these new pedagogical models. The training in proficiency and design of assessments soon moved to the forefront of the project, resulting in an assessment-driven, proficiency-oriented, reverse design approach. As the project has matured, it has engendered the development of a community of practice across LCTL instructors, spanning an enormous variety of languages and institutions across the United States. Within this community, the transformation of assessment and curricular design occurred, making it possible to share practices across languages and institutions.

Keywords: assessment, reverse design, proficiency, community of practice

The Project

Since AY 2013–14, the University of Chicago (UChicago) has been participating in course sharing via three consortial partnerships. One is the CourseShare program of the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA, then called the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, or CIC; see Chapter 1), specifically targeting less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). The second is the Ivy Plus Exchange

Scholar Program which includes, in addition to UChicago and the Ivy League institutions, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, and University of California, Berkeley. UChicago also has a separate memorandum of understanding with the Chicago Metropolitan Exchange, linking the institution locally with Northwestern University and the University of Illinois at Chicago. By means of these agreements, UChicago students can enroll at over 25 institutions to take courses in languages not offered at UChicago, and students at any of these other institutions can take advantage of UChicago's language course offerings.

The University of Chicago came late to the shared course table, as CourseShare has existed since 2003 (Big Ten Academic Alliance, n.d.). Although the BTAA had enabled a large number of LCTLs to be sent and received across campuses, there had not been any sustained collaborative programming. In that regard, UChicago hoped to make a decisive intervention: Engaging LCTL instructors from different institutions to develop coherent, multiyear curricula, pegging the levels of their curricula (elementary, intermediate, advanced) to nationally recognized proficiency levels and assessments, and offering their courses to students across multiple campuses. It was hoped that establishing formal partnerships across institutions and connecting LCTL instructors into collaborative pairs would foster the development of curricula that would bring students to significant proficiency levels, engage instructors in purposeful professional development, and sustain the teaching of that language across both campuses. Work was begun on a grant with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to carry out these objectives specifically targeting LCTLs.

One has to keep in mind that in 2015 when the Mellon proposal was being written, having remote students in one's classroom was not the norm. There was some evidence that when instructors engaged in shared-curriculum initiatives, they often rethought their pedagogy (Girons & Swinehart, 2020; Van Deusen-Scholl & Charitos, 2016), reflecting on course design, especially on the particular demands of the new setting, and considering what the best way would be for instructors and learners to maximize shared instructional time. In order to capture that moment of reflection, an intentional component of the grant project was to promote and support curricular change in the context of LCTLs. The new director of UChicago's Language Center (principal investigator (PI) for the Mellon grant) had been learning where the more than 50 languages taught on her campus "lived" and simultaneously becoming acquainted with their particular challenges. Many LCTL instructors had no formal training in language pedagogy, were the only individuals on their campus teaching the language, and had access to (at best) outdated or, more typically, nonexistent textbooks and materials. They faced a constant existential battle for enrollments and often found themselves faced with having to meet the various needs of graduate and undergraduate students as well as heritage and traditional learners. These challenges were also faced by LCTL instructors at consortial institutions.

In 2016, the University of Chicago Language Center was awarded $2 million by the Mellon Foundation to support a project that promised to "transform the way we share languages and ultimately the way we teach them" (wording from the original proposal submitted to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in October 2015). The Mellon-funded Transforming Language Instruction project promised to

> catalyze the creation of collaborative, multi-institutional language programs with partner institutions by supporting (1) in-depth training for collaborating instructors in proficiency-oriented assessment standards, curriculum design, and course sharing tools; (2) the development and delivery of shared collaborative curricula; and (3) assessments that evaluate the effectiveness of these new pedagogical models.

The plan was to establish collaborative partners—pairs of LCTL instructors on different campuses—who would together establish end-of-sequence proficiency outcomes, make curricular adjustments, including testing, to reach the goals, and ultimately share their students.

All of the prospective partners would begin by participating in four-day ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) workshops. The project's PI had been an ACTFL OPI tester since 1986 and a trainer since 1990 and had experienced multiple workshops as a trainee and trainer. In these workshops, she had seen a transformation take place and had come to describe it as "pedagogical incubation." Though it was a workshop designed to teach how to conduct the highly structured OPI, by the second or third day participants would begin asking questions about their own teaching. They asked each other in conversations over breaks and lunches, they asked the trainer, and they wrote questions in the workshop evaluations. Their questions spanned all possible aspects of their curricula: How to formulate questions effectively, whether the Superior level was testing thinking skills or language skills, what the difference between time frames and tenses was, what linguistic tools learners might need to make their language cohesive, or how they would manage to test their students on a regular basis. It was as if they were suddenly empowered by being able to think and talk knowledgeably about the speaking proficiency levels their learners might reach. The PI would learn that she was seeing the effects of assessment literacy and the beginning of a community of practice. Both of these impacts will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

Aside from raising the kinds of questions mentioned earlier, another almost immediate effect of OPI training was a desire on the part of participants to know how to begin reworking their curricula to ensure their learners' success with proficiency outcomes. In the first year of the Mellon project, Winter Workshops were offered to meet those expressed needs. However, informed by the post-workshop evaluations of both the OPI and Winter Workshops, a new determination was made, deeply informed by a language assessment expert who had been hired by the University of Chicago Language Center

with specific responsibilities related to the Mellon grant. In the first annual report for the project were these findings:

> we will need to hold a separate workshop for all collaborative partners to help them redesign their exams. … Despite shifts in learner outcome statements using proficiency terms and descriptions, many instructors still have traditional exams in place at odds with their stated goals.
>
> (Baumann, 2017)

The decision to foreground assessment (i.e., to place it ahead of curricular decisions) resulted in the design of an innovative reverse design approach. But before the approach is described, it is important to explore the assumptions underlying the assessment literacy that ultimately informed it.

Assessment Literacy

Knowing that assessment literacy was being delivered during the OPI workshops brought the issue of the lack of assessment training among language instructors into sharper focus. Recent research has highlighted this need (e.g., Malone, 2008; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). A study conducted by Dursun et al. (2022) with participants in the Mellon project revealed that it is an even more pronounced issue for LCTL instruction. Dursun et al. (2022) used an online survey adapted from Vogt and Tsagari (2014) and Fulcher (2012). The questionnaire items covered a wide range of language testing and assessment procedures and practices but went beyond those two studies in that it attempted to arrive at a fuller picture of LCTL teachers' training needs. Along with descriptive data about its 131 participants, comprised of both language instructors and program directors, it asked participants about their training and background in language assessment and about topics related to language assessment the participants deemed important. Across most of those 18 topics, participants reported only minimal training, including in areas such as using ready-made tests, giving feedback, and designing placement exams. Interestingly, even for the topic for which participants reported the most training, preparing classroom tests, 70.3% expressed a need for more advanced training.

With the confirmed knowledge that LCTL instructors needed and wanted assessment training, a Test Design and Development workshop was conceived as a way to provide them with the skills they needed to design tests aligned with their newly identified proficiency outcomes. The first of these workshops was held as part of the Mellon project in June and August 2019, for 40 participants teaching 17 different LCTLs across 21 universities. The insertion of assessment as an integral component of curricular design, rather than something one adds while one is teaching or when one has completed instruction, gave rise to the Chicago Approach: *proficiency-oriented assessment-driven reverse design*.

The Approach

Proficiency-oriented language instruction is not new. Higgs's 1984 volume, *Teaching for Proficiency, the Organizing Principle*, marked the formal, or perhaps better said, published beginning of a paradigm shift in language pedagogy, one that is still going on today. In the opening chapter, authored by Higgs, the heretofore historical search for the one true, right method of teaching language is set aside in favor of choosing approaches, materials, and techniques that best accomplish the outcomes described in the Provisional Proficiency Guidelines of 1982 (see Stansfield, 1992).

Reverse or backward design is also not new. (The authors prefer the term *reverse* over *backward* because of its resonance with reverse engineering.) Since the publication of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) and the work of Bloom, Bruner, Glaser, and Skinner—among countless others—outcome-based education has permeated the education system in the United States. It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to trace the steps from Bloom's Taxonomy to the Chicago Approach. Instead, we cite Wiggins and McTighe (2005) who, some 60 years later, reiterate what Bloom started: "Though considerations about what to teach and how to teach it may dominate our thinking as a matter of habit, the challenge is to focus first on the desired learning from which appropriate teaching will logically follow" (p. 14).

The integration of assessment within the process of curricular design is also not entirely new. In 1981, Bloom et al. wrote about a "broader view" of evaluation, suggesting it could serve as a "system of feedback-corrective to determine at each step in the teaching-learning process whether the process is effective or not, and if not, what changes must be made to ensure its effectiveness" (pp. 4–5). Bachman and Palmer (1996) also make the connection in their seminal work on language assessment: "Language tests can be a valuable tool for providing information that is relevant to several concerns in language teaching" (p. 8). What is new in our approach is positioning assessment as an indispensable component of pedagogy. Furthermore, an assessment-driven approach demands that decisions about how and what to assess are not made at an arbitrary time or at a moment of one's choosing. Rather, they are made as outcomes are identified (in the parlance of assessment, as the construct is defined), and they both inform and drive curricular choices. Our approach also presupposes that the instructors themselves will design the assessments, a task that ensures even deeper assessment literacy and engenders agency (Baumann, 2019; Lee et al., 2019). The components of our approach are shown in Figure 15.1.

The proficiency-oriented assessment-driven reverse design approach also informed the multistep professional development offerings that comprise the Mellon Transforming Language Instruction project.

Step 1. Participants begin the process of acquiring assessment literacy through participation in an official ACTFL-sponsored four-day Oral Proficiency Interview workshop. The workshop also delivers comprehensive,

The Chicago Approach to Proficiency-Oriented Assessment-Driven Reverse Designed Language Pedagogy

"What is evaluated reflects the de facto curriculum, and how it is evaluated reflects the de facto philosophy of learning and teaching." Kern, 2000

TARGET

LANGUAGE USE

DOMAIN

Where are the

learners using

language in the real

world? What

knowledge, skills,

and abilities do they

need to function

there??

CONSTRUCT

Target Functions

What can the learner do?
How well?

We use the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as a source for our construct.

The Guidelines are "descriptions of what individuals can do with language in the four skills in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context" (ACTFL 2012)

-> OPERATIONALIZATION <-

How EXACTLY will the learner demonstrate the Construct? What will I have the learner do?

I need specifically designed

ASSESSMENT TASKS

• that are authentic: the tasks mimic or imitate the types of functions learners will perform in the real world

• with rubrics that ensure reliability: the grading is fair and consistent and reflects the criteria of the construct

End-of-sequence tests that measure performance on targeted functions are **Summative Assessments**

CURRICULUM

Policies

Materials

Activities

Assignments

and

Formative Assessments
Evidence for me *and my learners* that they are making progress toward outcomes. Provide opportunities for me and my learners to make interventions.

ACCOUNTABILITY
How do I ensure that learners successfully reach the identified outcomes?
What methods and strategies will I deploy?

Performance on the assessment tasks measures learners' ability to carry out the target functions and is my evidence that they can function in the target language use domain.

TARGET

LANGUAGE USE

DOMAIN

REVERSE DESIGN IS AN ITERATIVE PROCESS
Is my curriculum working? Tweak policies, materials, activities.
Are my outcomes realistic? May need to revise outcomes up or down.
Reteach, retest, reevaluate, informed by the evidence from my assessments.

Figure 15.1 The Chicago Approach. © 2022 University of Chicago Language Center. Reprinted with permission.

functional understanding of the levels and sublevels of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

Step 2. Participants attend Test Design and Development workshops and learn the principles of reverse design, the impact of testing on teaching (i.e., washback), and how to operationalize language skills at different levels of proficiency in order to design meaningful and useful test tasks. Upon completion of this workshop, each participant has designed a proficiency-oriented, performance-based, criterion-referenced four-skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) end-of-sequence test (e.g., end-of-first-year instruction).

Step 3. Participants fully develop the designed test by writing prompts, finding or creating reading and listening inputs, finalizing response formats, and creating scoring rubrics. This work is done in close cooperation and collaboration with staff of the University of Chicago Language Center to ensure the tests serve their intended purposes and uses.

Step 4. With their test in place, in adherence to a reverse design model, instructors reexamine all aspects of their curriculum, assuming accountability for ensuring that all learners are successful with the assessment they have designed.

Step 5. Participants are now prepared to engage in the ongoing, iterative process of testing learners and reviewing and revising instructional practices, representing de facto evaluation of their curriculum. By administering end-of-sequence tests, instructors have evidence of how well learners are making proficiency gains, that is, how well their learners can function in the real world as defined by the identified outcomes.

To date, 91 instructors from 37 institutions in 29 different languages have completed 58 test projects. Forty-four of those instructors went on to complete 29 curriculum projects in 19 languages. This work is carried out by the collaborative LCTL pairs that were imagined in the first iteration of the Mellon project, and by cohorts of experts, small groups of instructors of different LCTLs on the same campus. We will now describe multiple instances and examples that demonstrate how the assessment literacy gained by working with components of our proficiency-oriented assessment-driven reverse design approach engendered transformative moments within the community of LCTL instructors and resulted in the establishment of diverse communities of practice (see Baumann, 2021, for a compilation of ways to foster communities of practice that do not depend on external funding).

Communities of Practice

Wenger's (1998) work defines three dimensions by which "practice is the source of coherence of a community: they are mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire" (pp. 72–73). Wenger (1998) states that membership in a community of practice is a matter of mutual engagement

because the members can accomplish what they accomplish because they are mutually engaged. Mutual engagement goes beyond group membership or networks or geographical proximity (or presumably happening to teach the same language). It also implies a commitment to the engagement; it is intentional, and it takes work. We witnessed this as pairs and groups of LCTL instructors tenaciously worked together on test and curricular projects. A community of practice also shares a repertoire, literally a way to collectively negotiate meaning. We will demonstrate that assessment literacy became the shared repertoire. Finally, Wenger's characteristics of the dimension of a joint enterprise are particularly salient for LCTL instructors. Not only is the joint enterprise "the result of a collective process of negotiation" and a goal with "mutual accountability" (p. 77), but the joint enterprise is also, for the participants, "their negotiated response to the situation and thus belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control" (pp. 77–78). That description accounts for the developing sense of agency we saw in participants in the Mellon project and speaks to the specific challenges of LCTL instructors noted earlier.

"What's the best way to get there? Should you take the bus or an Uber?" One cannot answer without knowing where one is going. That simple provocation presupposes reverse design as a pedagogical premise. Knowing where one is going makes it possible to make more intentional decisions about how to reach one's destination. Reverse design as a framework enables teachers to be more deliberate about the hundreds of curricular decisions they must make. The destination when learning a language? The target language use domain, where the language is used in the real world. For some language teachers, and for that matter, for many teachers across innumerable disciplines, the target use domain has been the classroom. The shift to a focus on language use in the real world, the knowledge, skills, and abilities one needs to function, presents a compelling reason for learning a language. For the many LCTL instructors who are native speakers of their language but have no formal pedagogical training, the shift to thinking about teaching language for use in the real world is already a profound paradigm shift. Positioning the target language use domain as the ultimate goal of reverse design positions it as both the starting point for thinking about curriculum and the final goal for our learners' language use.

While working with a group of American Sign Language (ASL) instructors, defining the domain presented a challenge. The abilities used by other language learners, including learners of LCTLs, after studying the language for one year are not controversial: the four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These do not serve ASL. The instructors, as domain experts, defined abilities appropriate to the ASL target language use domain: signed interaction, signed production, signed comprehension, and signed mediation. Later, in a Test Design and Development workshop, these posited abilities were discussed and further refined. It was the concept of the target language use domain that made it both possible and necessary to define different skills

and abilities, instead of adapting those used by other modern languages. The ASL community of practice uses a shared repertoire to negotiate new meaning, and, with agency, are committed to designing proficiency assessments for their language that are valid for the ASL context, based on skills that had never been defined.

We use the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) as a source for the language construct in our model with most modern languages. The ability to define "what individuals can do with language … in real-world situations" (p. 3), and test exactly that, is the starting point for assessment design. The guidelines not only describe language use in the target language use domain, but they are also a shared repertoire that allows us to talk about language abilities with specificity and independent of curricula. Once an instructor knows the difference between an Intermediate Low and Intermediate Mid speaker, they can talk about learner gains with others—even across different languages. A Swahili instructor might identify Intermediate Mid as the outcome for end-of-first-year speaking; a Vietnamese instructor might identify Novice High. An instructor of Turkish at a highly selective private university might identify Intermediate Low as the outcome for end-of-first-year speaking, while an instructor of the same language at a large public institution where 60% of the undergraduates hold part-time jobs might identify it as Novice High. The shared repertoire of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines makes these conversations possible and meaningful. On the other hand, we do not claim that ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines must be used across all contexts and needs. Some may well choose to use other guidelines or standards, or co-construct outcomes, as necessary.

In language programs with multisection courses and multiyear course sequences, instructors are often making assumptions about course outcomes. Those assumed outcomes play a dual role. They function as goals for an instructor teaching a course and as prerequisite skills learners can be expected to enter with for the instructor of the next level. In any case, unless they have been formally assessed, they are only assumptions. One of our Mellon cohorts was a group of four instructors of a LCTL on two campuses who wanted to work on their first- and second-year curricula. Using our approach, the first step is to identify outcomes. Right away it became clear that they had different assumptions about the proficiency levels their learners would reach. Table 15.1, the result of a long but worthwhile discussion, describes the articulation of both programs.

Table 15.1 Curricular Articulation Example

	End-of-First-Year Outcomes	*End-of-Second-Year Outcomes*
Proficiency levels by skill	Speaking – Novice High Writing – Intermediate Low Listening – Novice High Reading – Intermediate Low	Speaking – Intermediate Low Writing – Intermediate Mid Listening – Intermediate Low Reading – Intermediate Mid

The discussion and resulting table comprise all the dimensions of a community of practice. The discussion demanded mutual engagement, both in its intentionality and commitment. The shared repertoire can be seen in the use of the ACTFL outcomes; we would argue that the use of that repertoire makes the discussion possible. Ultimately, this group of instructors embarked on a joint enterprise of test development and curricular realignment. From the language testing side, positing that all students complete the first year with the identified levels makes it possible to identify end-of-second-year outcomes that are rational and achievable—in this case, all students should move up one sublevel. From the language teaching side, knowing both where learners are at the end of the first year, and what the targets are for the end of the second year, is tremendously useful in designing instruction. One begins knowing that, in speaking, the learners are at the sentence level but not sustaining. The second year can focus on bringing all learners to the Intermediate Low level in helping them develop the ability to consistently produce strings of simple sentences in writing and speaking. Often LCTL instructors who participated in our project were the first on their campus to be able to describe the articulation of their curricula in this way.

We now turn to operationalization, the core of test validation. In a proficiency-oriented, performance-based test, operationalization demands the design of authentic test tasks that are as close as possible, in terms of representation and format, to what our learners will encounter in the target language use domain, thereby connecting testing to the real world. Operationalizing reading comprehension at the ACTFL Intermediate level, for example, has multiple implications. First, we need to consider what learners at the Intermediate level would be reading in the target language use domain. Examples might include emails or text messages, online reviews, social media posts, or short articles. We also have to design authentic test tasks that mimic the way learners would comprehend those texts. Those tenets are taught in our Test Design and Development workshops. And over the course of four days, participants' test tasks evolved. The examples in Table 15.2 are based on an authentic Airbnb ad.

In the real world, one is never confronted by multiple-choice. Bachman and Palmer (1996) indicate this in their discussion of operationalization as the design of test tasks with "the distinctive characteristics of the target language use domain task types" in mind (p. 171). Additionally, the items in this example, like many multiple-choice items, focus the reader on individual words and invite vocabulary "matching" (Bernhardt, 1983, p. 28) rather than the sentence-level comprehension demanded by the ACTFL Intermediate level. Operationalization of Intermediate-level reading comprehension into multiple-choice items defines reading comprehension as the ability to recognize (i.e., choose) single words and phrases. In comparison, the table response item places the learner in a real-world situation (meeting someone in the target language use domain and planning a trip) and invites them to comprehend the text in the way they might do it if they needed to compare two options.

Table 15.2 Reading Comprehension Response Types

Example 1. Multiple-Choice Response		*Example 2. Table Response*
1. How far is it from Hyde Park to downtown?		You meet a friend in an English course in Atlanta and decide to take a trip to Chicago together. You find a great place in Hyde Park, where the University of Chicago is located. You send your friend the link, but they write back and tell you they want to stay closer to downtown. Read their email and compare the two locations by filling out the table so you can make a decision about where to stay. Write your response in English.
a. 10 miles	c. 5 miles	
b. less than 10 miles	d. 20 miles	
2. Which type of transportation is closest to the rental?		
a. subway	c. bus	
b. Zipcar	d. Metra train	

Source: From training materials used in the Mellon Test Design and Development Workshop, Summer 2022.

It also demands the sentence-level comprehension required for ACTFL Intermediate-level reading.

After LCTL participants in our Test Design and Development workshops have operationalized their identified constructs into authentic test tasks, a wide array of questions arose: If everyone in my country is texting with Roman script, why should we test writing in the language's script? My language is diglossic. Which should I test? There are no Intermediate reading texts in my language because it was only recently written down. Can I test at that level? Which version of the standard language should I teach? (This also pertains to Spanish.) My language uses different fonts and scripts. Which should be chosen when designing a test? In my language, one finds a lot of English in authentic reading and listening materials. Use it? Keep it? Translate it? What is the impact on testing?

The step of operationalizing outcomes derived from the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines into test tasks also comprises all three dimensions of a community of practice. There is a commitment to mutual engagement and a shared repertoire, not only of the ACTFL levels and skills but also the process of test design as well. The joint enterprise goes beyond the test development and ensuing course realignment to the broader questions raised about testing (and ultimately teaching) their languages. And should those questions be seen as a problem? On the contrary. The questions are their own, about their own language and their own tests. They have the knowledge to begin to investigate them and a community within which to do so, as before their participation in this project and the collaboration within partnerships or cohorts, these LCTL instructors did not enjoy the support and structure of an "American Association of Teachers" of their language. Armed with the shared repertoire of assessment-driven reverse design, and the expertise gained from their own program's projects, they build an association, a community of their own design.

Conclusion

The Chicago Approach also lends itself to a cylindrical model, shown in Figure 15.2, as opposed to a two-dimensional depiction. It is a more effective way of depicting the approach's iterative nature.

Assessment literacy is a shared repertoire and an essential knowledge base; without it, the other components are not accessible to instructors, nor do they have the same impact. Having instructors design and implement their own tests is a joint enterprise that heightens the washback effect of operationalization and fosters agency and ownership of the test and ultimately of the curriculum.

This project continues to promote effective curricula that enable students to attain a high level of proficiency in LCTLs. It also engages instructors in meaningful professional development and ensures the continued teaching of the language across campuses by establishing formal partnerships between institutions and pairing LCTL instructors in collaborative teams. The systematic design of our approach ensures these results: Language instructors who can independently design meaningful and useful proficiency assessments and align curricula, making deliberate choices about all aspects of their teaching. Our approach is sustainable because instructors have the skills to design tests and curricula independently within the community of practice. We become consultative partners with our instructional colleagues, and our approach makes it possible for them to begin to engage in ongoing program evaluation. Finally, because work in this project has largely taken place with instructors of LCTLs, we see those colleagues emerging as leaders and experts, not only in their language groups but also on their campuses and in the broader field of second language pedagogy.

Assessment Literacy & Utilization Cycle ™
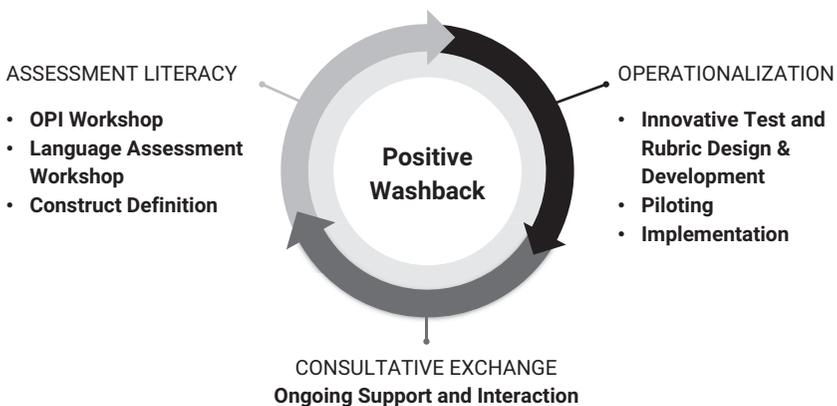
Figure 15.2 Assessment literacy and utilization cycle. © 2022 University of Chicago Language Center. Reprinted with permission.

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16 Languages Without Borders

Promoting Equitable Access to Language Education

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Abstract

This chapter describes an initiative in the state of Washington, Languages Without Borders, that seeks to improve access to education for all languages, prioritizing Indigenous and less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). It outlines several creative approaches to expand access to LCTL learning in both higher education and K–12 for language learners seeking credit. The initiative also aims to find avenues to create and preserve LCTL programs. Additional ways to credential language proficiency beyond granting credits on a transcript are provided. Finally, next steps are identified, exploring proposed legislation that can serve as a model for other groups.

Keywords: biliteracy, language access, equity, K–16, credentialing

Less commonly taught language (LCTL) classes are at risk of being lost if educational institutions are unable to increase and maintain enrollment. While heritage communities for LCTLs face enormous challenges in accessing quality educational programs, the majority of learners of all types have limited options for language education, particularly in rural areas. LCTLs are often characterized by low enrollment (Blyth, 2013), which puts them in jeopardy of cuts if administrators prioritize enrollment numbers. However, the past decade has brought opportunities, including external recruitment of students and affordable language proficiency testing, which have made it feasible to restructure the form and delivery of LCTL education and credentialing. The situation for LCTLs is urgent, and it is vital to advocate for immediate and substantial changes in a regional K–12 and higher education context.

LCTLs are a particular focus of the Languages Without Borders Project (LWBP), a coalition of the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction World Languages Program with education stakeholders at public and private higher education institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the state of Washington (Languages Without Borders, n.d.). The project seeks to create pathways for inter-institutional LCTL course

sharing, including dual crediting with high schools, as well as a recognition process for all languages and students through language proficiency testing and the seals of biliteracy.

The LWBP supports increasing access to all languages, especially LCTLs, which are unlikely to be guaranteed a place in schools or colleges and universities. The situation is especially concerning for what we call Super LCTLs, languages that are not taught at all or only taught at one or a handful of institutions in the United States (e.g., Guaraní, Inuktitut, Nepali). Restricted access and limited demand can result in the loss of opportunities to study these languages. Super LCTLs face unique difficulties, often having smaller heritage student populations and heritage language communities to sustain them materially (e.g., donations to a program), in addition to a lack of effective pedagogical materials and well-trained instructors (Blyth, 2013). Many Super LCTL programs at universities are created using initial grant funding with the assumption that they will eventually become self-sustaining. Such programs are rarely able to become sustainable.

Indigenous languages are particularly in need of support and improved access. Since most of these languages are place-based and require local control, there may only be a handful of institutions where an Indigenous language could be offered. With these programs generally underfunded and precarious, resources should be leveraged to support them and extend access where possible. Remote learning holds great promise since Indigenous nations may have a large diaspora of citizens. It would not be feasible for most of these individuals to attend an in-person class near the current geographic location of the nation. Unfortunately, access to remote learning is complicated by the fact that a startling number (18%) of those on Tribal lands in the United States do not have access to the internet at home (American Indian Policy Institute, 2019) and those with limited technology literacy (e.g., some elders of Indigenous languages) may not be able to access such opportunities. Nevertheless, with cultural and linguistic vitality threatened, these languages need swift action to ensure their survival.

This chapter explores approaches to expanding access to LCTL learning in both higher education and K–12 that can be replicated in many contexts. It then describes recognition and credentialing processes for languages available in Washington state through the Seal of Biliteracy and the Global Seal of Biliteracy. Additional creative approaches to increasing access to LCTL learning are shared, as well as next steps that outline ideas for draft legislation and policy changes.

Expanding Access to LCTL Learning

Higher Education Experience

In order to understand the context of LCTLs in higher education, one needs to consider the broader context of all university enrollments. Overall, enrollments

in universities in spring 2022 declined 4.1% from the previous spring, the fifth semester in a row that enrollments have gone down (Moody, 2022). Language enrollments have had a parallel drop in colleges and universities, starting even earlier. In the 2016 Modern Language Association report, it was reported that enrollments in language classes "dropped by 9.2% between fall 2013 and fall 2016" (Looney & Lusin, 2019, p. 1). Enrollments in LCTLs increased 16.4% between 2006 and 2009, then fell 11.7% between 2009 and 2013. "LCTL course offerings can be fragile and transitory, since the programs tend to be small and may depend on a single instructor" (Looney & Lusin, 2019, p. 5). At many institutions of higher education, any course with fewer than 10 students will most likely be canceled. Thankfully, there are potential solutions to these problems, although most options face new administrative roadblocks and complications.

Inter-Institutional Coalitions

One of the most demonstrable and effective tools for sustaining and increasing equitable access to LCTL programs is inter-institutional collaboration, which can be supported through in-person or remote learning. As an example, at a large public university in the state of Washington, there exists a Thai language program, one of the only institutions where it can be formally studied in the state. The Thai program had been offered for nearly half a century, but after the instructor retired, the program was cut. Due to a requirement that Thai needed to be offered for Foreign Language and Area Studies scholarship recipients, a federally funded Title VI center at this university collaborated with a pedagogical support center to create a stopgap solution, which ended up being a hybrid format first-year course series taught by visiting Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs). The development path took nearly four years until the course series was stable enough for new FLTAs to onboard with minimal resource investment. Admittedly, relying on FLTAs is not sustainable, but it has been difficult to secure funding without the enrollment numbers the institution requires.

While there is not yet sufficient demand at this university, one only needs to look beyond the borders of the institution to see a possible solution. Washington has a significant population of Thai heritage students, and many non-heritage learners could be interested in learning the language for a variety of reasons if the option were available. Many learners residing outside of the small number of densely populated areas of the state have limited formal learning opportunities for any LCTLs. These learners are both an untapped resource for institutions and a severely underserved population.

Administrative Roadblocks

Some key administrative challenges have been the issues of credit sharing, tuition fee structures, and physical access. The large public university that offers

the Thai program once offered German to a branch campus in the mid-2000s. Even with early videoconferencing technology, student interest and academic outcomes were excellent. Unfortunately, the university administrators at both campuses were unable to reach an agreement for credit sharing, and the program was ended. Various faculty, staff, and students worked over the next decade to advocate for expanded access to language courses and credit testing for all of the branch campuses, but the administrative roadblocks persisted. However, this has not been the case at all universities in the state.

Successful Collaboration

One small liberal arts university in Washington developed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) for credit sharing with a university across town and also with local community colleges, first for Japanese and then for German. For Japanese language study, students from one institution traveled across town to the other university to take classes and, per the MOU, paid tuition and received credits. For German, the MOU was more involved and included upper-division courses that alternated between the two universities and allowed for intermediate language courses to be taken by community college students (see sample MOU in Appendix). These examples involved students traveling to the different institutions for in-person experiences, which is effective if the distance is not prohibitive and could be even more attractive if students are supported for transportation costs. The institutions can set up parallel tuition fee structures and create a formal consortium agreement, which is important for financial aid purposes.

While the preceding example is worth celebrating, it is not a feasible option for many contexts, particularly educational institutions in more rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that remote learning technologies have advanced to a point where remote learning is feasible and cost-effective. Although some learners might prefer and even benefit from face-to-face learning, remote access is much better than no access. Except in extremely unusual circumstances, all learners in the state should have access to adequate technologies to remotely attend LCTL courses at other institutions at minimal additional cost to either institution. Successful examples of such programs existed prior to COVID-19, including at a large public university in the state where an Inuktitut course was offered with remote access. Students could attend in person in an active learning classroom or remotely via Zoom. What was unique to this program at the time (for this institution at least) was that the instructors were also remote, located in Canada, either in Iqaluit, Nunavut, or Victoria, British Columbia.

Top-Down Approach

While the aforementioned MOUs were a success, similar efforts have not been successful at other institutions due to a variety of institutional roadblocks.

Looking at other successful models outside of the state, it seems that a top-down approach has the most potential. Negotiating MOUs between a multitude of institutions is impractical in the long term if the goal is truly addressing the lack of equitable access and sustainability. Instead, the LWBP is taking a more pragmatic approach to work with the state legislature to formalize a system for inter-institutional sharing and provide the necessary funding. This effort is being led by the office overseeing world languages at the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with various NGOs and academic institutions.

The LWBP model extends beyond remote course access to involve credentialing language proficiency, leveraging centralized resources for curriculum development and specialized resource development (e.g., video production), as well as hosting (e.g., learning management systems) and distribution of course materials. This includes expanding support for open educational resource (OER) development, in partnership with the Washington State OSPI and the Washington OER Commons (OER Commons, n.d.).

K–12 Experience

Dual Crediting

Dual crediting is a process that allows high school students to earn both high school and college credit for specific courses. Washington recognizes three paths to dual crediting:

- College in the High School (Council of Presidents et al., 2021a)
- Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate/Cambridge International (AP/IB/CI) (Council of Presidents et al., 2022)
- Running Start (Council of Presidents et al., 2021b)

For College in the High School (CiHS), the high school teacher gets approved by a college to offer the college's course in the high school using the college course textbook, tests, and exams. On the student's high school transcript, the course will be designated as CiHS. Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International options are exam-based. Students who get high enough scores on the exams may be able to earn college credit (and advanced placement) after they enter a college that supports these programs. Running Start (RS) entails high school students enrolling in and attending a specific class offered at a community college. The college receives the tuition payment from the high school, and the students complete paperwork that qualifies them to receive high school credits for the courses completed at the college.

Dual crediting has been a successful option for commonly taught languages. There are a number of challenges, but also opportunities, to expand it to LCTLs, as outlined in Table 16.1.

Table 16.1 Dual Crediting Options for High School Students and Their Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges	Opportunities
College in the High School (CiHS) requires a teacher with a P–12 language endorsement who collaborates with a college course instructor, and the college agrees to offer CiHS for that language.	Colleges could increase enrollments in LCTLs if they could count the enrolled CiHS students. High schools could offer LCTLs using the Facilitated Interdependent Language Learning (FILL) approach (Aoki et al., 2022).
AP language tests do not include LCTLs (other than Chinese).	Other language tests are available for LCTLs, including the State Seal of Biliteracy (and Global Seal of Biliteracy), but colleges need to value the Seal of Biliteracy like they do AP tests.
IB language tests could include LCTLs, but the IB program is offered on a very limited basis in Washington, and no high schools with IB programs teach true LCTLs.	IB language tests could be offered outside of IB programs, or the tests could become more generalized for a wider range of applications (but still valid for IB).
Generally, the state has not funded dual crediting such as AP and IB testing or CiHS.	OSPI now offers Consolidated Equity and Sustainability Dual Credit Grant Form Package 154 to fund exam-based dual credit options (AP/IB/CI) and concurrent enrollments (CiHS, Dual Credit, and Running Start).
Community colleges offering Running Start (RS) generally have few LCTL offerings.	Running Start could help students get college credits if they can study the LCTL at a college approved to offer RS.

Community Involvement

Students in K–12 settings bring many languages to the classroom. In 2021, Washington state had 234 languages spoken by over 127,000 students in grades 6–12 (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.). These data, collected by home language surveys, are the most accurate way for districts to know what languages the community speaks.

Districts do not bear all of the responsibility to start language instruction; communities and families can also have a powerful impact on the languages their students learn. Northshore School District (NSD), situated in the suburbs of Seattle, enrolls over 23,000 students (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.). Microsoft Headquarters is 15 miles south of NSD, meaning thousands of employees from different countries and linguistic backgrounds live in the surrounding areas. The secondary schools in the area have over 2,100 students with 75 languages represented among them. For the Indian community, they have 12 of the 22 officially

recognized Indian languages represented in Northshore's secondary schools, including Hindi (91 students), Tamil (87), Punjabi (33), and Gujarati (20). Overall, almost 3% of secondary students in NSD speak a language from the Indian subcontinent. So parents decided to take action.

Although Hindi is the most represented language, the Northshore parents wanted to find a common language that could benefit more students. They settled on Sanskrit, as it is the root of many Indian languages, including Hindi, Kannada, and Marathi. Outside of school, many of these students attended Samskritam As a Foreign Language (SAFL), a three-year online education program for students in grades 8–12 (https://www.samskritabharatiusa.org/ index.php/study/safl). SAFL is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges as well as the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

No national Sanskrit proficiency assessments exist, meaning Northshore students were learning the language but were unable to earn credit toward high school graduation. This situation prompted a representative from the district to reach out to OSPI.

NSD was hesitant to accept Sanskrit credits without state approval. Two ways were determined that students could earn World Language credit for their Sanskrit work: by coding these courses as non-instructional credit and through Competency-based Credit (CbC) testing. CbCs are high school credits that districts award based on demonstrating content ability instead of completing hours of classroom instruction. Students demonstrate language ability on an approved proficiency assessment and can earn up to four high school World Language credits, one credit per proficiency level from Novice Mid through Intermediate Mid. All human languages, even those without a written form, are eligible for CbC, including Tribal and Sign languages. Public school students can start as early as grade 8 to earn credits, which will appear on high school transcripts. In 2020–21, 9,378 students earned at least one World Language CbC through testing (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.). The future of CbC and proficiency testing is exciting and filled with opportunities for students/users of LCTLs.

Recognition and Credentialing of Languages

Washington State Seal of Biliteracy

The astonishing spread of Seal of Biliteracy programs[1] in K–12 schools across the United States has made visible the dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of LCTLs found in our communities. Washington has had particular success in offering language proficiency assessments to the widest range of languages through the state's World Language CbC testing program, originally developed through funding from a Gates Foundation grant.

While the Seal is an excellent opportunity for public high school students, it is not available to students graduating from private schools. This opportunity needs to expand to others, particularly students enrolled in community colleges who want to transfer to a four-year college and need to meet the

Table 16.2 Recognition Processes for LCTLs in K–12 and Their Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges	Opportunities
Testing of LCTLs can be much more expensive than the testing of commonly taught languages.	Work with testing companies to expand offerings to include more LCTLs (Anciaux Aoki, 2022) has greatly reduced costs for districts paying for World Language CbC testing (for credits and for the State Seal of Biliteracy). OSPI has begun directly funding custom tests for Super LCTLs (Extempore, n.d.).
As an opt-in state program, fewer than half of Washington's K–12 districts have awarded a State Seal of Biliteracy.	OSPI World Languages is currently undertaking an intensive outreach effort to inform districts and provide guidance for recording credits and qualification for the Seal.
The Washington State Seal of Biliteracy has one qualifying proficiency level: overall Intermediate Mid proficiency (across all language skills tested). Heritage language speaker students, Dual Language Immersion students, and immigrant students arriving after middle school are able to demonstrate Advanced level proficiency, which the State Seal does not recognize.	OSPI is considering revising the state rules for the Seal of Biliteracy to recognize multiple levels. In the meantime, some districts and programs are encouraging students to submit their test results (including English test results) to the Global Seal of Biliteracy, which offers multiple levels (including working fluency at the Advanced Low level).
The legislation for the State Seal of Biliteracy established it as a recognition upon high school graduation. However, that's too late for many students to include in their college applications.	OSPI could consider adjusting the rules to allow the English requirement to be met earlier than high school graduation such that students could actually earn their State Seal of Biliteracy as early as grade 9. As noted above, the Global Seal of Biliteracy does not have a high school graduation limitation. The Heritage Language Grant program (International Education Washington, n.d.) is an example of how the Global Seal of Biliteracy can be awarded.

college language admission requirements (usually two high school credits). Fortunately, a national/international option exists: the Global Seal of Biliteracy (n.d. a). A path to recognition is the first step, but developing the required levels of proficiency to qualify for the Global Seal is next (see Table 16.2).

Recognition in Higher Education

Institutions of higher education can leverage the Seal of Biliteracy in several ways to support equitable access to LCTLs. First, universities can recognize the State Seal or the Global Seal for language entrance/exit requirements, or to grant college credit, or for placement in higher-level classes (similar to AP).

Public universities in Illinois, for example, must accept the Seal as the equivalent of two years of high school language study for the language entrance requirement and must develop criteria for awarding college credit. Universities can use the Seal for placement purposes into upper-division language courses, which can help increase enrollments (Davin & Heineke, 2018). Institutions may choose to develop their own home-grown Seal program or work with an existing program like the Global Seal of Biliteracy.

Creative Approaches to Increasing Access to LCTLs

In addition to the Big Ten Academic Alliance CourseShare, the University of Wisconsin System Collaborative Language Program, and the Shared Course Initiative (Chapters 1, 2, and 3, respectively), the authors of this chapter discovered the University of Northern Carolina (UNC) Language Exchange (The University of North Carolina System, n.d.) as another exciting example of inter-institutional sharing. The UNC Language Exchange not only shares among the three UNC campuses, but it also shares instruction with the state's high school students and provides academic and professional learning opportunities to citizens of the state as well.[2]

An emerging new approach to language learning and teaching outlined in a publication by the Center for Applied Linguistics, *Facilitated Interdependent Language Learning (FILL) in Action: Increasing Student Autonomy* (Aoki et al., 2022), could provide a context for high school students to have the opportunity to enroll in LCTLs offered at the college level. "In brief, the strategy calls for one high school language teacher facilitating the learning of multiple languages within the same classroom" (p. 6). In the examples of the FILL approach in California and Wisconsin shared in the brief, a number of students chose to learn LCTLs offered through colleges via Massive Open Online Courses. Some students were even able to officially register for the course and earn college credit (Aoki et al., 2022).

Other creative initiatives that help increase access are digital badging, as implemented by the University of Wisconsin System, and pathway awards offered by the Global Seal of Biliteracy (n.d. b). The Proficiency Pathway Awards initiative seeks to encourage lifelong language learning. The new pathway awards offer tools to track and recognize progress toward language proficiency.

Next Steps

In the summer of 2022, Washington state's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chris Reykdal, announced a commitment to dual language education across the state with a large proposal to the legislature (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2022). He asked the state to invest $18.9 million in 2023–25 to continue expanding dual language programs to more school districts while simultaneously building the educator workforce, setting Washington on a path to meet statewide implementation by 2040 (Lindsay, 2022). Along with Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese, five

dual language programs offer Tribal languages: Kalispel Salish, Lushootseed, Makah, Quileute, and Quilshootseed. OSPI has also been supporting a variety of heritage LCTLs in the state through a grant program that can serve these languages in other innovative ways.

In addition to spreading the word about the dual language and heritage language expansion opportunities in our state, the LWBP will be focusing first on challenging the state legislature to fund tuition for Indigenous and LCTL courses to provide equitable access for students to take them. The project also hopes to expand support for LCTL OER development.

To make connections and gather additional thinking on the topic of expanding access to LCTLs, the LWBP organized a LCTL Summit via Zoom through the University of Washington in August 2022. The agenda (see Aoki, 2022) could serve as a model for other states to hold similar summits to address the challenges and opportunities for LCTLs. This kind of summit can help groups garner deeper involvement from NGOs and communities, and the comments and information gathered have given the LWBP a roadmap for the next steps. If this project is successful, the approach could be promoted further outside of the state.

Although it may seem like a lofty and unattainable goal to hope that any student can study and/or receive recognition for any language, the examples and resources shared in this chapter can provide important steps toward this goal. From thinking creatively about how students are enrolled in LCTL courses to pursuing recognition processes for LCTLs, language advocates can take significant strides in promoting equitable access to language education for all languages and all students.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Since 2011, 49 of 50 states have adopted a Seal of Biliteracy program according to https://sealofbiliteracy.org/ (as of spring 2023).
2 The authors wish to thank Professor Susanne Rinner for sharing this program with us. Rinner was actively involved in the establishment of the UNC Language Assembly.

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Appendix

MOU Template for Higher Education Institutions

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between
INSTITUTION X

and
INSTITUTION Y

This memorandum of understanding summarizes agreements between Institution X (X) and Institution Y (Y) to allow students from both campuses to enroll in *language* classes.

The institution whose faculty are teaching the course will be the "host institution." The institution whose students will participate in the host institution's course will be the "visiting institution." The "home institution" refers to the college/university where faculty are employed and/or students are enrolled.

This agreement will serve as an administrative guide for this effort, until modified or amended.

I. BACKGROUND and GOALS

Language programs at both X and Y regularly seek to increase enrollments and improve options and access for their students.

The goal of this collaboration is to meet the needs of students who need access to courses in *language* but are unable to do so at their home institution. Students might need upper-division courses to be able to complete the major, courses that fit their scheduling needs, or simply access to any courses in *language*. With this partnership, we thus seek to maintain a healthy enrollment in *language* courses and increase equity in access.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES and LOGISTICS

Template for general access:

Students from both institutions will be able to enroll in *language* courses at X for the period of 20xx–20xx. The baseline cap number for enrollments of students from Y at X will be: # for *language* 101, # for *language* 102, etc. The cap can be increased on a per-quarter basis if space is available and the *language* instructor at X approves.

Template for upper-division course exchanges:

On an annual basis, *language* faculty at X and Y shall alternate teaching an upper-division course, in *language*, to students from both institutions. Y will host the first course in AY 20xx–20xx.

Faculty at the host institution shall:

1. Determine how to facilitate participation from students at both institutions (e.g., through face-to-face meetings or with appropriate classroom technology to enable virtual participation).
2. Coordinate the above logistics with language faculty from the visiting institution to ensure the plan is mutually agreeable.
3. Select course title and content in time for the visiting institution to allow students to register on schedule.
4. Select textbooks and inform colleagues at the visiting institution of the selections in time to have books ordered at both institutions.
5. Facilitate access to required resources (e.g., learning management system, library, parking) for students from visiting institution.
6. Maintain all attendance and academic records for students in the course.
7. Evaluate all student work and submit final grades for students from the visiting institution to that institution's *language* faculty, who will enter final grades into their home institution grading system.
8. Comply with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) Section 438, Public Law 90-247 Title IV, as amended, 88 Stat 571-574 (20 USC 1232g), otherwise known as the Buckley Amendment Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
9. Provide general liability insurance if/when students are in transit from one location to another in university-owned vehicles.
10. Facilitate students' signing an acknowledgment of risk form as part of enrollment in the course if the course includes transportation to/from one institution to the other.

The visiting institution shall:

1. Provide the host institution with enrollment information, both at the conclusion of the formal registration period and as enrollment changes.
2. Receive final course grades from host institution faculty and enter those grades into their home institution system.

Both institutions shall:

1. Provide general liability insurance for class meetings held on their respective campuses.
2. Treat student conduct issues through the student's home institution, regardless of where incidents occur.
3. Treat grade disputes through the student's home institution policies, regardless of where incidents occur.

III. COSTS, CREDITS, and BILLING

1. Students shall register for credit at their home institution.
2. Students shall be billed by and will pay tuition to their home institution.
3. Teaching faculty are paid through their home institution.
4. The host instructor is responsible for arranging disbursement requests (for guest speaker honoraria, gasoline, and other expenses) with their home institution.

IV. TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to/from host and visiting campuses will be facilitated by faculty at the host institution.

1. If vehicles from the visiting institution are used for a shared course, the visiting institution will invoice the host institution as needed for payment.
2. The host institution agrees to cover liability while students are in transit between institutions via host institution vehicles.
3. Student course assistants or faculty drivers may need to pass vehicle driver training in accordance with policy of the institution providing vehicles.

V. TERM, LIMITATIONS, and TERMINATION

1. The term of this agreement shall commence on January x, 20xx and is intended to be an ongoing agreement that is subject to annual review.
2. Amendments to this agreement must be in writing and approved by the designated representatives of X and Y.
3. This agreement can be terminated at any time by mutual written agreement. Either party may terminate this agreement upon 90 days prior

written notification to the other party. It is understood and agreed that at no time will termination of the MOU impede completion of a course in progress. If this agreement is so terminated, the parties shall be liable only for performance rendered or costs incurred in accordance with the terms of this agreement prior to the effective date of termination.

VI. RECORDS MAINTENANCE

FERPA-protected information collected, used, or acquired in connection with this contract shall be used solely for the purposes of this contract. Parties agree not to release, divulge, publish, transfer, sell, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons FERPA-protected information without express written consent.

VII. INDEPENDENT CAPACITY

The employees or agents of each institution who are engaged in the performance of this agreement shall continue to be employees or agents of that institution and shall not be considered for any purpose to be employees or agents of the other institution.

Signatures

17 Building a Community of Practice

Pathways to Less Commonly Taught Languages Sharing

Angelika Kraemer and Danielle Steider

Abstract

This chapter sets out to give readers confidence that course sharing is not as hard as it may look and that obstacles can be opportunities. It describes four practical aspects that course share programs should consider and revisit regularly, which are referred to as the 4Cs: Collaboration, Communication, Curriculum, and Community of Practice. After describing the affordances and challenges of collaboration more broadly (see Girons & Swinehart, 2020, and Gabriel-Petit, 2017, respectively), the chapter discusses aspects related to communication that help pave the path to success. This includes defining institutional needs for less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) and resources that can be shared with potential partners. On both fronts, thinking outside the box can allow for greater versatility and success. It also includes logistical considerations such as establishing a memorandum of understanding and a strategy for publicizing new LCTL offerings. Refining the curriculum and providing ongoing training and development for faculty and students alike form the next step on the pathway to success. Combined, these elements help lead to a collaborative and cohesive community of practice among all stakeholders (King, 2019).

Keywords: community of practice, collaboration, communication

Considering ways to share less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) can be a daunting and overwhelming endeavor. How do you find partners? How do you articulate your own needs and resources? What does effective collaboration look like? How can logistical barriers be overcome? How do you design an effective curriculum that fits the needs of all stakeholders? What are the best ways to train instructors and students to make LCTL sharing a success? And who foots the bill?

The goal of this chapter is to serve as a thought-provoking impulse for those new to course sharing, offering a practical blueprint for important considerations every step of the way. It can also serve as an opportunity for seasoned LCTL course share programs to revisit and strengthen their existing collaborations. The chapter describes four practical aspects that course share

programs should consider and revisit regularly, which we refer to as the 4Cs: Collaboration, Communication, Curriculum, and Community of Practice. Each of these pillars contributes to a cohesive and successful course sharing foundation that grows stronger with each iteration.

Collaboration

As the previous chapters in this volume have shown, LCTL course sharing journeys are grounded in collaboration. While the affordances of such collaborative ventures have been well illustrated in many previous chapters, we briefly want to zoom out and highlight the affordances and challenges of collaboration more broadly. Keeping favorable and unfavorable factors in mind from the beginning will help prevent complications on the pathway to success.

Most readers will be familiar with SMART goals in education. Originating in management, Doran's (1981) SMART goals can and should also be applied to collaboration. SMART collaborations are

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Timely.

SMART goals provide a clear and structured approach for setting and achieving shared objectives throughout the collaborative effort. Setting SMART goals can help language educators collaborate more effectively by ensuring shared understanding, increasing accountability, encouraging communication, fostering teamwork, and promoting continuous improvement. Outlining specific goals and objectives starts the course sharing process and helps focus on areas of improvement as the collaboration unfolds. Progress toward achieving these goals should be measured on an ongoing basis. It is crucial to maintain a realistic scope for collaborations, considering aspects such as institutional contexts, access to technology, and composition of students in a class. Similarly, collaborative goals should speak to the needs and interests of each stakeholder and should be time-bound. A SMART collaboration helps language educators stay motivated, focused, and accountable as they jointly work toward achieving their objectives.

Affordances of Collaboration

Girons and Swinehart (2020) articulated many of the advantages of forming partnerships for course sharing in LCTLs in their practical guide, *Teaching Languages in Blended Synchronous Learning Classrooms*. Collaborating with other institutions can ensure efficient use of limited resources within individual institutions of higher education, which can range from the number of students interested in a particular language, to faculty who can teach specific

LCTLs, to the ability to offer a sustained sequence of levels in a particular language, to name a few. Collaborations can amplify the strengths that each partner brings to the table, fill in gaps in return, and strengthen offerings across the board. Another big advantage of collaborating is that individual language faculty can work together on curriculum development, even across languages (e.g., Chapter 5). The dearth of readily available, published materials in many LCTLs has long been a challenge (Johnston & Janus, 2007), and single instructors of one language can benefit from collaborating with their peers who teach the same language and also with colleagues from other languages.

Challenges of Collaboration

While effective collaboration works toward achieving a common purpose or goal through close engagement with partners, common organizational, cultural, and interpersonal barriers to collaboration include the following, according to Gabriel-Petit (2017):

- A lack of respect and trust
- Different mindsets
- Poor listening skills
- Knowledge deficits
- A lack of alignment around goals
- Organizational silos
- Physical separation.

Keeping such challenges that can prevent successful collaboration in mind is important as partnerships are formed and sustained. Some of these obstacles will be referred to in more detail in the next sections, which also lay out specific, practical suggestions for making the most of your collaborations.

Before we continue, we would like to stress that the community of language educators, especially LCTL teachers, already sets itself apart by being flexible and open to collaboration (see, for example, the AAUSC 2016 volume *The Interconnected Language Curriculum: Critical Transitions and Interfaces in Articulated K–16 Contexts*, Urlaub & Watzinger-Tharp, 2016). The scarcity of teaching materials in LCTLs and the fact that many LCTL programs often only have one or just a handful of instructors results in having to think outside the box, for example, creating materials from scratch and reaching out to colleagues for support. Many LCTL instructors are eager to collaborate and share resources and experiences within and beyond their language and do so regularly and effectively.

Communication

Communication at all stages of the course sharing journey is key to successful collaborations. The first step of communication is with your own stakeholders.

What are your program's true needs considering languages and levels? Do you need a primarily language-based course or a higher-level language- and content-based course? Will this match both the faculty's and the students' goals? Next, look at what your program is able *and willing* to share with another institution. The key component here is buy-in from all faculty and administrators for the partnership to succeed. What you share could be another course in the same language, another language entirely, or possibly even relevant professional development opportunities for graduate students and language faculty. For example, Michigan State University (MSU) sends first- and second-year Vietnamese to the University of Minnesota (and other universities), but it receives primarily first-year Swedish and Norwegian. Ideally, most communication goes through one person, a coordinator or director of the course sharing program; this should be an administrator, not a language teacher whose focus needs to be on the classroom. This role is very important, as the development and administration of the program has many moving parts and can be time-intensive. Having articulated your needs will facilitate identifying potential course sharing partners. Natural partners would be other universities or colleges, but do not forget to think about K–12 schools (see Chapter 7), community colleges, or even community organizations or businesses. Setting up different sharing models could also work very well, for example, a language course in exchange for a lecture series, some workshops, or even an internship.

Once you have identified a partner or partners, it is time for communicating more specific, logistical details. If course sharing is between two educational institutions, do you share the same academic calendar and class start dates? Are you both on a semester system? Are your courses worth the same number of credits that will work for both the partnering university systems and also for student tuition and schedules? What will the course mode be? If the modality is mixed, with home students face-to-face and remote students via videoconferencing, what measures will be implemented to handle exams, classroom procedures, and a cohesive classroom community that includes all students? How many students can the host institution accept? All such details need to be communicated and discussed in order for the collaboration to be effective. Remember that while mismatches to these questions may seem like obstacles, they do not need to be. For example, if you have different start dates, you could have the remote students join early, or you could condense the course and have the home students start a week late while still getting the same instructional hours. MSU has modified its Vietnamese course to fit into 13 weeks instead of the normal 15 weeks due to sharing with three to four other universities. Similarly, the Shared Course Initiative (SCI; see Chapter 3) follows the academic calendar of the sharing institution and gives receiving students the option of joining remotely even before their own semester officially begins. Such flexibility makes it easier to allow for different start times. Accommodating different spring/fall breaks can be done by setting up two units that span the break periods of all partner institutions; students complete their unit when they are in session and go on break during their own

university's schedule. If there is a difference in credits, a possible workaround could be for one institution to make the shared course equivalent to a course plus an independent study. With appropriate planning and ongoing communication, any of these perceived obstacles can be overcome.

Preparing a short brief is a good way to communicate with all the administrators who will be involved in helping create a successful course sharing program. The key elements of this brief are to describe what course sharing is, why it is important to both the students and the faculty, what benefits it brings to the program/department/college/institution, and what support this entails from administrators (see Appendix A for an outline). This short document can be shared with chairs, deans, and the registrar's office, who will have to be involved early on to help establish how to enroll students and how to add additional sections needed for graduate students taking an undergraduate language course, for example. These administrators will be the ones to help work out the details of the budget structure and establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Both can be very frustrating processes, as there are usually many time-intensive, bureaucratic layers, but they can be worked out with patience and persistence. Most universities have established protocols for MOUs, but at their core, MOUs are agreements between partners that set policy guidelines and list details related to purpose, background, mutual goals, roles and responsibilities, budgets, and the term (see Girons & Swinehart, 2020, Chapters 4 and 16, and Appendix B for samples).

As the MOU and budgeting pieces are being worked out, the next vital step of the communication strategy is to advertise and market the shared courses. Creating a website with information about course sharing is very useful and can prevent frustration among students (and faculty). A page describing the program and listing key information such as what learning management system the students will use, how they will enroll, the fact that their grades may be delayed due to different reporting dates, etc. can alleviate stress and improve the experience for all program participants (see Appendix C for examples). Using printed and digital flyers as well as social media are other effective means to spread the word about these offerings. Identify your champions, which include students, faculty, and alumni. Hearing participant stories is an impactful way to celebrate the program and recruit new students. Area studies centers, language centers, and student organizations and clubs can also help advertise.

As the course sharing progresses, especially in the first trials, getting feedback from all involved throughout the process is invaluable for improving the system for future semesters. Students will definitely have a lot to say about which logistics worked for them; such feedback is easy to gather in quick mid-semester and final surveys. Inviting feedback from the registrar's office and other administrators can be more complicated, as the work is often assigned to different people, and finding the right person to answer a survey or have a short interview with may be challenging. Sometimes a videoconference with a

professor, registrars from all partner institutions, and any other coordinators/administrators is a good way to gather information. It can also clarify what is happening in the different roles, and solutions can arise that might not have otherwise.

Curriculum

Once the logistical pieces are in place, refining the curriculum and providing ongoing training and development for faculty and students alike form the next important steps on the pathway to success. When sharing courses, it is even more crucial that curricular goals and expectations are in place and clearly communicated than in non-shared courses. What course materials are used? How will students at all locations have access to these materials? How can the sending institution ensure that the course meets the academic standards of the receiving institution? How can pair and group work be facilitated across sites? How will students be evaluated? Are there specific considerations if graduate and undergraduate students are in the same course? Do the courses speak to the needs and interests of the students? Clear communication and flexibility are once again crucial as curricula are aligned across institutions.

Assessment strategies are often based on ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012) and utilize Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2017). Many programs effectively use the latter to assist with placement and for students' formative assessment throughout a course. Shared curricula and assessments can be built around student projects, for example, which can help differentiate learning for all students (especially when having a mix of learners including heritage speakers and also undergraduate and graduate students in one course). The Duke–UVA–Vanderbilt Consortium described in Chapter 4 effectively implements a variety of student projects throughout the shared curriculum.

Although specific curricular models will be in place at each institution, it is important to consider the modality of how the curriculum will be implemented. Will students join in a distributed format (e.g., on Zoom), or are all students in a classroom at their university? What are the affordances and challenges of these different modalities? Some universities may not allow fully online courses, while others will have fewer restrictions regarding how students can join the remote classroom. Regardless of the modality, the addition of remote students necessitates pedagogical adjustments in order to effectively engage all students and create a classroom community in which all students can thrive. Instructors need to be trained in this regard. It would be irresponsible and potentially detrimental to a partnership to simply throw language faculty into the course sharing classroom without adequate preparation. Understanding the uniqueness of course sharing and the potential for growing enrollments are important aspects for achieving buy-in from instructors (and from administrators). With this understanding comes the need for flexibility; pedagogical strategies need to be adjusted to include all students.

Aligning curricula and materials across sites will ensure smooth transitions for students from a course at one institution to another level at a different institution. The Five College Consortium model, for example, highlights the flexibility and success of their programs when curricula and resources are shared and when professional development and training build the foundation of collaboration (White, 2022). One of the most vital aspects of effective curricular planning and successful course sharing is training for both faculty and students. Articulating expectations to students has been discussed in the section on communication (see also Appendix C). Developing LCTL teachers' specific pedagogical strategies and techniques to successfully navigate the shared classroom is of utmost importance. Helpful resources for teacher training are Hampel and Stickler's *Transforming Teaching: New Skills for Online Language Learning Spaces* (2015) and Meskill and Anthony's *Teaching Languages Online* (2015). In addition to pedagogical and assessment skills, the shared classroom also requires an expanded set of technological skills (Compton, 2009; Van Gorp et al., 2019). Sharing professional development and training across sites will broaden the connection between all participants; each instructor brings their own strengths, and learning from and with one another will strengthen pedagogical practices for all. This important step also helps build trust among the instructors and establishes an effective community of practice.

Community of Practice

Course sharing between institutions can bring several logistical and bureaucratic hurdles that can seem insurmountable when first starting out. However, as this chapter shows, a SMART approach to collaboration combined with an articulated communication strategy that includes all stakeholders throughout the process and a thoughtful and inclusive curriculum that is of benefit to all participants can help overcome these hurdles with relative ease. Other skills that can help all those involved are compassion, patience, and flexibility. For example, often the syncing of rosters between schools is done by one person, who may be taking this on as an additional responsibility. Communicating in advance can prepare everyone, but patience and compassion are still needed, for example, when a student is anxious that their grade won't be submitted in time or an instructor cannot see all the remote students on their class list on the first day of the course.

Focusing on the benefits of course sharing can help each participant get through such obstacles. By offering a LCTL that students otherwise would not have access to, they may now be able to reconnect with relatives, get one of the many language-based scholarships, or be accepted into a new program or job because they have proficiency in a new language. These courses can actually change the trajectory of students' lives. For faculty, course sharing can mean that a course isn't canceled due to low enrollment, thanks to the additional remote students. Or they have students who are excited about their language, so they continue and want to do research with the faculty member. For the LCTLs themselves, course sharing will allow the instruction of these

languages to remain available to students even during economic downturns and budget cuts.

Fostering a collaborative and cohesive community of practice can also help overcome unforeseen disruptions. Van Deusen-Scholl (2020) described the resilience of an established community of practice during the recent pandemic and the additional benefits that emerged from course share collaborations. Integrating all stakeholders, especially faculty and students, in ongoing training supports community building and in turn provides a conducive ground for evaluating and improving the community of practice (King, 2019; see also Chapter 15).

Articulate your own goals and needs
☐ Faculty buy-in (are they truly on board with receiving and sharing courses?)
☐ Student needs and interests
☐ Administrator buy-in
Collaboration
☐ Find partners (other higher education institutions, K–12 institutions, businesses, organizations)
Communication
☐ Clear needs regarding sharing and receiving (languages, levels, curricula)
☐ Logistical considerations
　o Academic calendars (semester start dates, break/holiday dates)
　o Credits
　o Semesters vs. trimesters vs. quarters
　o Course modality (online asynchronous, online synchronous, distributed vs. classroom-based, etc.)
　o Enrollment cap
☐ Administrator's brief
　o Defining course sharing
　o Importance of the program to students/faculty/program/department/institution
　o Necessary support (coordination, registrar's office, scheduling, classrooms, technology)
　o Budget structure
　o Establishing an MOU
☐ Marketing/PR for the course
　o Websites, flyers, social media
　o Program champions (students, faculty, alumni)
　o Area studies centers, language centers, language programs, student organizations
　o Evaluating the course share program and improving the system
Curriculum
☐ Curricular alignment
☐ Assessment
☐ Modalities
☐ Teacher and student training
Communities of Practice
☐ Patience, compassion, focusing on the benefits
☐ Flexibility to adjust
☐ Community building
Revisit these points regularly

Figure 17.1 LCTL sharing pathways to success.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed important considerations for making course sharing successful and offered many questions that can help jumpstart initial conversations, the answers to which are unique to each partnership. Framed around the 4Cs—Collaboration, Communication, Curriculum, and Community of Practice—we hope the chapter provides a starting point and practical guide for those new to sharing and new impulses for seasoned practitioners.

Figure 17.1 provides a checklist of sorts to ensure a pathway to success in course sharing. As we described throughout this chapter, the various elements interweave, and the process is iterative rather than strictly linear.

Course sharing entails increased communication among stakeholders and shared work on curricula. The many successful, collaborative ventures that have been described in this volume have improved the educational landscape across the United States and continue to grow a strong community of practice in LCTLs.

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Appendix A

Outline of Brief to Administrators About Course Sharing

- What is course sharing and why is it beneficial?
  - Articulate the benefits to your students, your faculty, your program/department, and the institution. This can include that instruction in certain LCTLs is not available at your institution but there is student interest.
  - Without course sharing, students could enroll for a particular course at another university and transfer the credits back to their home university. The tuition goes solely to the university offering the course and the primary labor burden is placed on the student. Credits do not always transfer exactly, and the student also usually misses out on opportunities to use financial aid. With course sharing, the student is able to enroll through their own home institution, pay at their own institution, and have the course and grade appear on their home institution's transcripts. This gives students opportunities to use any financial aid packages they may have.
- Stakeholders involved
  - This generally includes a course share coordinator or director (the person who can manage the multiple moving parts of the program) and buy-in from program chairs, deans, and the registrar's office.
- Proposed course sharing program
  - Describe your plans at their current stage.
  - This can also include details related to course rosters, enrolling students, learning management systems, grades, etc.
  - Ideally, the registrar's offices of each partner will work together to sync rosters between the institutions. Usually, the receiving institution creates a blank course that their students can enroll in that matches the sending institution, so students receive course credits at their home institution. The sending institution needs to add remote students as non-degree students or visiting students without any fees or tuition requirements. (In most cases, if any tuition reimbursement for course sharing is part of the agreement, it would be handled between universities.) However, the remote students will need access to the learning management system used by the sending institution. At the end of the

semester, grades need to be exchanged so students can receive credit at their home institution. Creating some automation is ideal, but currently, most systems still involve some manual data transfer.
- ○ Sometimes, different sections are created for graduate vs. undergraduate students to account for differing degree requirements (e.g., graduate students may not receive credit when enrolled in undergraduate-level courses).
- Specific asks
  - ○ Who approves the budget (both within your institution and between partners for shared costs, if any)?
  - ○ Who reviews, approves, and signs the MOU?

Appendix B

MOUs: Sample Materials

MOUs are very specific to the partners involved, their contexts, and their goals. Often, these documents are confidential. Each university will have established procedures for the final approval process, which will require additional time before an MOU can take effect. Below is a sample that can be adapted to fit specific circumstances.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to describe the mutual goals and responsibilities with regard to a collaborative agreement between [Academic Unit] at X University and [Academic Unit] at Y University to share instruction in less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), as further described below.

II. Background

Give a description of the program here. This should also include details on course listings, address credit hours, and details on enrollment.

III. Mutual Goal

Both University X and University Y desire to enter into a collaborative partnership in order to share courses in LCTLs, to meet the missions of University X and University Y. In furtherance of these goals, both universities agree to make every reasonable effort to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in section IV.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

This should include agreed-upon courses/languages that each university contributes, along with details on instructional modality, standards of scholarly and academic conduct, resource/cost sharing, and procedures for grades and course evaluations.

V. Voluntary Dissociation

This MOU is a nonbinding agreement that both universities have entered into in good faith. Either partner may disassociate from the effort without penalty or liability by notifying the other in writing. Written notice shall be sent XX days prior to the disassociation. (This could also include a clause about the intention to continue instruction to allow receiving students to complete language requirements they already started.)

VI. Term, Renewal, and Amendment

This Memorandum shall be in effect for the period of XXX year(s) beginning [Date]. Both universities reserve the right to renegotiate this Memorandum upon the mutual consent of the other partner. At the conclusion of the XXX-year period, this Memorandum may be extended by common written consent of both partners. (This section could also include wording about an annual review of the partnership.) This Memorandum represents the entire understanding of both universities with respect to this partnership. Any modification of this Memorandum must be in writing and signed by both partners.

VII. Confidentiality

This Memorandum is confidential among the universities, and it is expected that the universities will take reasonable measures to maintain that confidentiality in respect of third parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF duly authorized representatives of the universities have agreed to the understanding of responsibilities set forth above.

SIGNED: *SIGNED:*

Name and Title   *Name and Title*
University X   *University Y*
Date   *Date*

Various universities have specific MOUs and/or templates of agreements available online that may provide additional suggestions.

- The University of Alaska Southeast has various MOUs available online: https://uas.alaska.edu/admin/mous-moas.html

- ○ Of particular interest is the Memorandum of Agreement between the University, Sealaska Heritage Institute, and the Institute of American Indian Arts regarding a collaboration for Alaska students: https://uas.alaska.edu/admin/docs/mous/2019_01_09_sealaska_iaia_and_uas_revised.pdf
- Arkansas Division of Higher Education MOU template: https://adhe.edu/File/MOU_Template_(University_and_Community_College)_1.pdf
- California State University San Marcos MOU: https://www.csusm.edu/el/about/mou-docs/el-mou-agreement-2021-final-08.21-signed.pdf
- Michigan State University Consortium and Articulation Agreements: https://reg.msu.edu/Read/UCC/Articulation%20and%20consor-tium%20directions.pdf

Appendix C

Samples of Course Share Expectations for Students (and Faculty)

Big Ten Academic Alliance

Michigan State University: https://sites.google.com/msu.edu/btaa-courseshare-msu/home

This website for students contains details on the following aspects:

- What is The Big Ten Academic Alliance
- Host vs. Home
- Start dates/scheduling/exam dates
- Modes of instruction
- Commitment
- Patience
- Late adds
- Course management systems
- Student to-do list

University of Minnesota: https://cla.umn.edu/language-center/programs/courseshare/courseshare-faq-students

This FAQ page for students contains details on the following aspects:

- About The Big Ten Academic Alliance
- Available languages
- Eligibility
- Language requirement
- Funding
- Placement
- Scheduling
- How to get started
- Resources

Shared Course Initiative

(Columbia University, Cornell University, and Yale University): https://sharedcourseinitiative.lrc.columbia.edu/handbook/

The SCI handbook for students and faculty contains details on the following aspects of course sharing:

- The shared classroom: Policies and procedures
- Get to know the technology
- Academic calendars
- Your course site
- Homework submission
- University policies
- How to operate the equipment in your classroom
- Reach out for help when you need it
- Information for faculty

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