

Cultivating Learner Autonomy in Extended Teaching and Learning Spaces

by

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Abstract

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This project describes my exploration of various Internet and Web 2.0 tools as a means of cultivating greater learner autonomy amongst high school language learners. The curation tool, Pinterest, was selected as a platform for gathering relevant resources, both for and by learners. In addition, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the self-directed learning cycle were used to increase learner awareness of and engagement in the language learning process. Although the project implementation differed significantly from the plan, many of the ideas explored in this project have underpinned my approach to teaching languages at *The Pacific School of Innovation and Inquiry* (PSII), and have contributed to the process of adapting to a teaching and learning environment in which students have much more choice and control over their learning. Classroom and curricular implications of Web 2.0 tools for learner autonomy are explored.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my friends and family. To my husband, Mark, for putting up with me and for keeping us all well fed, and surrounded with love and music. Do *nae* worry, love, it will soon be over and we can have a ‘normal’ life again.... To Nicky, Alex and Julia, our three children - I am sorry that my studies have taken me away from you at times. You inspire me every day to try to be a better person. To my parents, siblings, extended family and friends, for being there, and for accompanying me on this journey as well. It is now time to move on to lighter pastimes, like book groups and felting parties.

Introduction

Changing Paradigms

While taking a class with Dr. David Blades on emerging trends and topics in education two and a half years ago, I began to ponder our root metaphors, the teacher-student power dynamic, and educational paradigms. As a result of this course, I was inspired to pay attention to the voices of educational theorists such as William Pinar, Ted Aoki and William Doll, all of whom had an impact on my thinking. The concept of a hidden and lived curriculum has had me thinking about education in a much broader sense. I also began to question the technocratic, factory approach to education, and wish that schools could be a place where students had a greater voice, and more control over what they learn. I started to believe that giving more space to student voice would increase engagement and learning. When questioning the hierarchical structures within schools, I concluded that a shift was necessary, and that it could not be done without significant changes to the way we look at curriculum and assessment. Try to imagine my excitement at getting a job at a new high school where we would be working within a student-centered model of education that would attempt to do all of the above.

I must confess that I have always been the kind of person who continually questions things, and finds it difficult to approach big ideas with certainty, as there is always another perspective to consider, and subjectivity is a reality in our day-to-day and professional lives. Although I know that these are qualities, it can be awkward and challenging when you are looking for answers. While being in a state of questioning and uncertainty can keep you open to new possibilities, it can also undermine your confidence when putting ideas into practice. In the teaching profession, when dealing with real people, this can be frightening. It takes courage to

turn your world upside down and implement change, as well as a lot of hard work. I am introducing this project with these thoughts because it helps to contextualize my learning over the past year and a half at *The Pacific School of Innovation and Inquiry* (PSII), an independent high school in Victoria that emphasizes inquiry-based learning in its learner-centered approach to curriculum and instruction, and throughout my graduate program, including the implementation of project. I do not have all of the answers. I am still evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a more uniform and structured approach to learning versus a highly personalized and passion-fuelled curriculum. How we teach and what we teach has an impact on the sort of societies we become. The weight of this responsibility is heavy. I feel it, and wish the best for all of us, including my own children.

Context

I am interested in helping students develop their autonomous learning abilities so that they are well-equipped (linguistically and metacognitively) to thrive in a multi-age, inquiry-based classroom setting. I teach mainly French at PSII. In 2013-2014, the school's first year, I taught 7 students French. Two students were beginners taking Core French 9, two were registered in Core French 11, and three were French immersion students (grades 9, 11 and 12). I grouped them according to level, and we scheduled two regular lessons for each group or individual per week (one on Tuesday and another on Thursday). I also met with students individually for check-ins and assessment meetings outside of these times.

On the whole, I do not use course books or textbooks, although I do dip into them from time to time, when the material helps us to reach a clearly articulated goal. This is a new, independent school and as a result we are wary of spending a lot of money on resources that will only be minimally used. It is therefore a huge asset having the Internet at our fingertips. My resources for

teaching French are largely my own, collected and developed over time, and include a number of textbooks, task-based learning ideas and resources, worksheets made by me and by other teachers, novels, DVDs, CDs and MP3s, as well as websites and activity ideas that I have curated myself on the Internet. I also borrow resources from friends and the library, and regularly add to my personal collection of books and DVDs for teaching French. Without the use of course books to pre-plan scope and sequence, I base my planning of grammar and foundational vocabulary on a typical high school learner's scope and sequence, based on my 10 years' experience in teaching French, and contextualize learning within a range of typical scenarios that provide opportunities for students to develop their communicative ability.

In November 2013, I facilitated a group inquiry with students in my classroom based on Francophone culture in British Columbia. Each of the students learning French participated, which created a multi-age group of learners working together on the same overall project, the product of which was a highly annotated GoogleMap that highlighted Francophone communities and infrastructure that supports Francophone culture within the province of B.C. The larger group dynamic was very welcome after working with such small groups. So much so that I decided to group students learning French differently in the school's second year.

From September 2014, French classes would be multi-age and multi-grade, and the two weekly 'core' classes would be scheduled on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. On Tuesdays, the lesson focus would be the development of reading and/or listening skills. The lessons were to alternate in their focus of either reading or listening, but the two would be integrated wherever possible. Vocabulary development was to take place around these skills lessons. On Thursdays, the lesson would alternate every other week between a grammar and a speaking focus. Each of these lessons would require planning for multiple levels of ability and interest. I hoped to engage

volunteer student teachers for the speaking classes wherever possible, to increase diversity and opportunities for interaction in the target language (TL).

On Wednesday mornings, students of French would take part in one more class, which would be dedicated to developing a personalized online learning environment to support their learning of French, as well as a broader focus on their inquiries. Students would learn to use Pinterest, an online curation tool to group and categorize their ‘found’ resources, and they would be encouraged to conduct research in French, retrieving resources for themselves and each other, that would help them develop their inquiries. This time would also be used to help learners self-assess, select appropriate learning goals and resources, and discuss learning strategies. In creating a space for reflection, I hoped to cultivate learner autonomy. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) would be central to the discussions, as would the critical evaluation of Internet resources. My goal was to nudge students along the path to greater learner autonomy, thus enabling them to thrive as language learners in this learner-centered environment that aims to harness the potential of Web 2.0 technology.

Theoretical Framework

A model for e-education. The conceptual framework that informs my thinking on using Web 2.0 tools and the CEFR in an additional languages classroom is a model for e-education, proposed by Jung and Latchem (2011), building on the current reality of extended learning and teaching spaces afforded by technology and the Internet, which can lead to the provision of more learner-centered environments. The model they put forward is an attempt at developing a theory of e-education, which accommodates and highlights the many ways in which the ever-extending knowledge base and social platforms available on the Internet can contribute to personalization, socialization and knowledge construction.

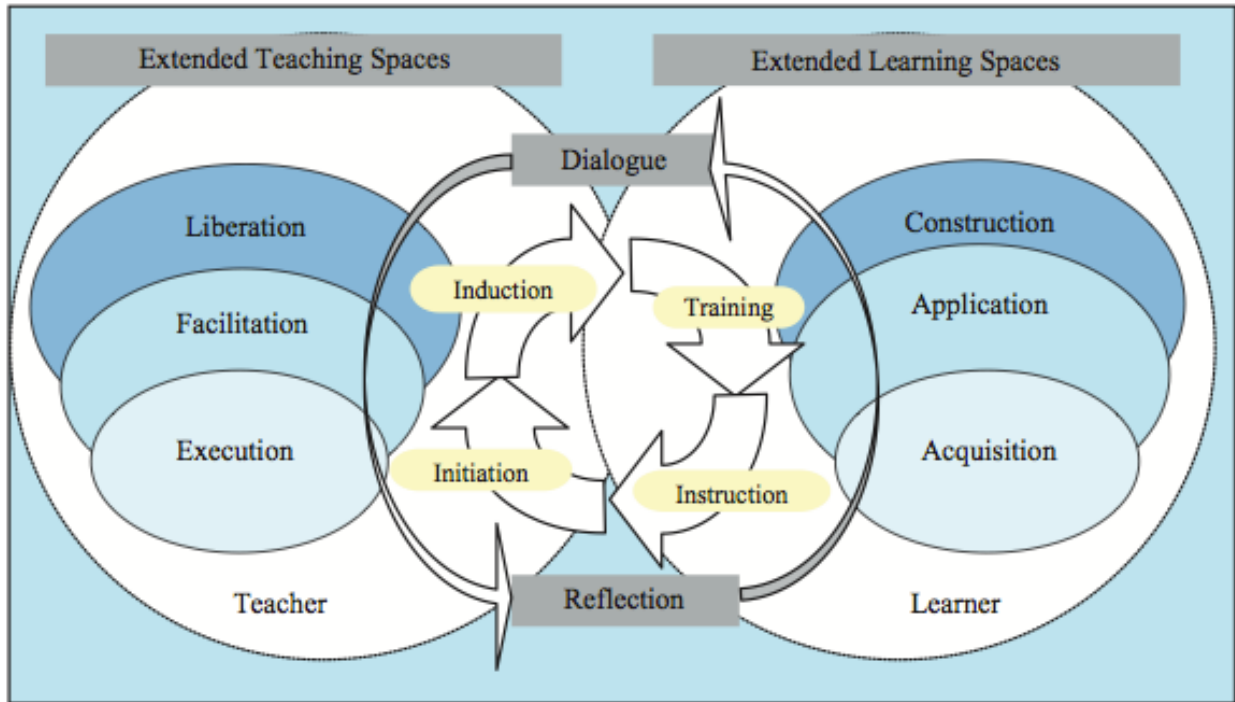


Figure 1: Jung & Latchem's model for e-education, from Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 11

The model builds on the four functions of education as described by Stenhouse (as cited in Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 9): training, instruction, initiation and induction, around which teaching and learning take place. It aims to reconcile conflicting schools of thought (progressive vs. back to basics), by ensuring that it is broad enough to accommodate different philosophies (didactic, constructivist, discovery-based). These four functions are at the heart of the model, and are cemented by dialogue and reflection, which are also enhanced by the use of technology. Each of these features is described in more detail in the literature review.

Extended teaching and learning spaces lay to either side of the central motif. Within the teaching spaces, three possible approaches are described: execution, facilitation and liberation (as defined by Fenstermacher & Soltis, as cited in Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 11), and the extended learning spaces identify three essential learning activities: acquisition, application and construction. In their paper, Jung and Latchem (2011) describe how technology can enhance

learning within each of these activities. For example, students can acquire new language through the “vast repository of multimedia resources available on the Web and elsewhere and through face-to-face or online interaction and collaboration with others” (p. 13). In application, students “carry out research, manage projects and solve problems” (p. 14). These activities can be individual or collaborative, and working online with other students can help students acquire skills associated with digital citizenship. In construction, students not only create original ideas, products and processes, but also learning communities (p. 14). Technology and extended learning spaces support a more learner-centered environment, in which students can take greater control of their learning.

Access to online teaching materials lessens student dependence on the teacher, and this changes the student-teacher relationship. The teacher is no longer the sole dispenser of knowledge or skills development. Making use of online tools can free the teacher up to engage more in facilitation, to help learners engage in real world problems, and create original products or ideas. The activities described in the extended learning spaces (acquisition, application and construction) in this model indicate a progression from more teacher-led and teacher controlled learning activities to more creative and collaborative activities undertaken by learners. Extended teaching and learning spaces facilitate all kinds of dialogue, not only between the students and teacher in a class (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 16), but the wider community through online connections. This, too, indicates a lessening dependence on the teacher.

As stated, this model emphasizes a range of approaches, and suggests that teachers can let go of complete control, thanks in part to the many opportunities afforded by technology. Teachers have many more options available to them, including resources and other forms of support “to help them in liberating their learners’ minds and stimulating knowledge construction” (Jung &

Latchem, 2011, p. 13). Maintaining a focus on training and instruction in language teaching, when learning objectives are specified, is key. In induction, students become more independent, and drive their learning through connections, discussion, reflection and questioning. In my view, each role is important, and the precise balance between them will vary according to the needs of the students and subject matter. Addressing the four functions of education (training, instruction, initiation and induction) reflects the complex and varied goals of education, and the diversity of approaches required in order to educate a person, and help them develop as learners.

As education takes on these extended spaces, teaching and learning should leverage technology to allow for students to become more engaged in the learning process, and teachers should think about the way they enact their teaching roles depending on the learning focus.

Using the CEFR to support the development of learner autonomy. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is a set of guidelines that was published in 1991 by the Council of Europe in an attempt to unify language learning and teaching across Europe. It has been adopted outside of Europe in a number of countries, and was even nearly adopted in B.C. when it became a major part of the 2011 Draft Curriculum for Additional Languages (Wernicke & Bournot-Trikes, 2011), and may yet become a pillar of our additional language curriculum documents at some point in the future.

The framework is a comprehensive guide for language learners and teachers, which aims to help make students more aware of the options available to them, and more educated in the choices they make. It is unfortunate that “relatively few learners learn proactively” (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 141), and therefore these tools represent a potentially useful toolkit to help guide both teachers and learners, bearing in mind that learning has to be autonomous once teaching stops.

Two of the stated intentions of the CEFR are as a curricular planning tool for teachers as well as a guide for self-directed learning (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 6). In its more explicit description of ways in which learners might use it, the document states that it could be used in goal setting, materials selection and self-assessment (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 6). The tools are intended to provide a framework, and to enable curriculum planning to occur in a more detailed and personalized way, depending on student requirements: “by basing language teaching and learning on the needs, motivations, characteristics, and resources of learners” (Council of Europe, 2011, p. 3). A learner-centered approach is embedded within the very design of this document. The common reference levels, self-assessment grids (Chapter 3), and illustrative scales (Chapter 4) and are written in clear, learner friendly language, and therefore represent a useful framework for co-constructing learning paths.

Whereas most language courses have outlines and syllabi that clearly state achievement indicators for a given course, the CEFR describes proficiency levels, which relate to real world ability. These levels and indicators have the potential to enhance a learner’s capacity for autonomy by providing the basis for reflection on key stages in the self-directed learning process: goal setting, materials selection, learning strategies selection and self-assessment. According to Morgan (2012), raising awareness is central to the process of cultivating learner autonomy. He explains that learner autonomy cannot be reduced to a catalogue of learnable skills, but relates rather to cultivating dispositions (Morgan, 2012, p. 169). Furthermore, he emphasizes recent research that highlights the importance of having autonomous teachers, guiding the process. Sharing and discussing the CEFR levels, self-assessment grids and illustrative examples with students could therefore provide a basis for raising student awareness of the language learning process, thus contributing to greater learner autonomy.

Pedagogical implications of using the CEFR. The CEFR framework maps onto the Jung and Latchem (2011) model by promoting goal setting and self-assessment, which informs the self-directed learning process, and gradual empowerment and liberation of the learner. Moreover, according to this model, familiarizing learners with academic norms is a key component of the initiation function of education (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 10). In a learner-centered pedagogy, self-assessment plays a key role (Little, 2005, p. 321). Involving learners in curricular planning demands that they have a capacity for self-assessment (Little, 2005, p. 322). Accurate self-assessment implies an understanding of levels and stages of progression. Without an accurate idea of what they can already do, students' decisions with regard to activities and materials will be "random, and even worthless" (Little, 2005, p. 322). It is therefore of primary importance to help students understand what a learning path can look like within an additional languages curriculum, and where they stand in their actual abilities. Being able to accurately self-assess will enable them to see where they are on this path, and help them to become more engaged in the process of goal setting and materials selection. Using the language of the CEFR as part of discussions around curation and participatory online culture may help to provide scaffolding towards greater autonomy by providing clear language on proficiency levels, and guidance with regard to materials selection and goal setting.

Lessening teacher dependence and cultivating learner autonomy go hand in hand. The more autonomous the learner, the more capable he or she will be of harnessing the incredible potential of extended teaching and learning spaces. Greater learner autonomy increases opportunities for students to take the knowledge and skills they have acquired and then to apply and construct, moving towards more creative and collaborative learning processes. The Jung and Latchem (2011) model provides a structure for thinking about the different roles and responsibilities of the

teacher and the learner as they engage in a variety of learning activities. As education takes on these extended spaces, teachers should explore ways to help students to become more engaged in the learning process, and they should think about the way they enact their teaching roles depending on the learning focus. The CEFR provides many useful tools for supporting languages teachers and learners towards the goal of greater learner autonomy, particularly with regard to goal setting and assessment. In a learner-centered environment, students are actively engaged in the learning process. The cultivation of learner autonomy needs to be a clearly articulated goal, and one towards which teachers and learners strive.

Literature Review

Web 2.0 and Participatory Online Culture

Introduction. Web 2.0 technologies that enhance creativity, sharing and collaboration present massive opportunities in education, and are already having an impact on learning environments, pedagogy and to a degree, curriculum. The literature and research around computer assisted language learning (CALL) has long focused on the opportunities, possibilities and challenges presented by the digital age (Ware & Hellmich, 2014). New technologies are already transforming language learning environments, particularly with the advent of Web 2.0 (Thomas & Peterson, 2014; Wang & Vasquez, 2012). The case for including Web 2.0 technologies in education is becoming more and more powerful, and yet our understanding of their effectiveness for learning, collaboration and motivation is not yet clear. (Thomas & Peterson, 2014).

Web 2.0 is a distinct field within the domain of CALL. Social media is occasionally used as a substitute term for Web 2.0, and therefore these terms require further examination and clarification (Thomas & Peterson, 2014). According to Wikipedia¹ (a platform supported by Web 2.0 technology), "Examples of Web 2.0 include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, folksonomies, video sharing sites, hosted services, Web applications, and mashups." ("Web 2.0", n.d., para. 2). Thus, social media can be seen as one aspect of Web 2.0 technologies, and not a substitute term. Findings from a meta-study by Wang & Vasquez (2012) indicate that research into Web 2.0 technology has been limited, and that blogs and wikis are the most commonly investigated, but that countless tools and platforms exist that would benefit further investigation

¹According to Wang and Vasquez (2012), when attempting to define Web 2.0 technologies, "most researchers and scholars prefer to cite definitions offered by Wikipedia, a platform which itself is supported by Web 2.0 technology" (p.413).

(p. 416). Stevenson and Liu (2010) underscore a need for further research on how to evaluate the use of these types of tools for language learning purposes (p. 235).

Because of the diversity of Web 2.0 tools, there are no studies to date that address the use of curation tools in the languages classroom. Therefore, the articles I will review for this project relate more generally to Web 2.0, and I have only found one study situated within a Canadian high school context. I have discovered more promissory and theoretical articles on participatory online culture, as well as meta-analyses. Key words I have used in my searches are: Web 2.0, social media, participatory online culture, curation, Pinterest, high school, secondary, French, and additional language learning.

M-learning or mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is another facet of CALL that “originally focused on the use of mobile technologies to facilitate learning” (Ducate & Lomika, 2013, p. 446). More recently, this area of research has focused on the mobility of the learner (Ducate & Lomika, 2013, p. 446). Although mobile devices and the increased access to the Internet they provide is related to participatory culture, I have chosen not to get too drawn into this area of research because of the wider area of focus. I will, however, comment on a couple of MALL studies, as they relate to participatory online culture and beyond the class learning.

Affordances and limitations. Social media and the participatory culture it engenders hold an established and prominent place in our lives today (Kessler, 2013). Many additional languages teachers and CALL researchers are curious about the affordances of Web 2.0 tools and how they can be put to use in language teaching and learning (Zourou, 2012). There is a particular interest at present in social media platforms, which can take on the role of virtual learning community, allowing learners to become immersed in the target language, while also giving them opportunities for increased interaction in the target language (TL). Although the research is in its

infancy, there is evidence to support the claim that Web 2.0 enhances collaboration-oriented learning environments. Moreover, collaboration is an important skill in society, not only the classroom (Kessler, 2013). The emphasis on the potential to collaborate and interact virtually online has caused the paradigm of language teaching and learning to shift from a cognitive orientation to a social one (Wang & Vasquez, 2012), and these changes are reflected in recent attention to second language acquisition theories and CALL. Thorne and Smith's (2011) report on second language development theories within technology-mediated language learning highlight a number of learning theories that have been increasingly applied to CALL research. Sociocultural approaches and an interaction approach are two such examples. This is not to say that there is no longer an interest in a cognitive orientation; simply that the social aspect of learning has been more greatly emphasized within recent Web 2.0 literature.

A good number of arguments have been put forward for engaging in online participatory culture. One of the most commonly cited reasons has to do with building relationships and communities. Lomika and Lord (2011) write about American and French university students who tweeted over the course of several weeks as part of their language class. The stated goals were to build a community of learners and to extend their learning outside of the classroom. In this descriptive study, the researchers found that the learners did indeed, establish a collaborative community, which is certainly a foundational piece to a positive group dynamic. Barrs (2012), in his study of participants' use of online chatting between semesters found that by and large, students enjoyed the experience of connecting virtually with classmates outside of the classroom. He posits that "the disconnect between inside and outside the classroom and the importance of the promotion and development of group dynamics is being addressed with the proliferation of interactive, communicative and collaborative platforms" (Barrs, 2012, p. 11). The fundamental

importance of fostering a sense of community is highlighted by Dörnyei and Murphy (as cited in Barrs, 2012) when they state that the group dynamics can have an impact on learning (p. 12).

The emphasis in both of these studies is on the extension of the learning community, enabling participation beyond the classroom and between semesters. The use of mobile devices was seen to extend engagement beyond the confines of in-class instruction.

The arguments for engaging learners in participatory culture abound, and extend well beyond community building. Zourou (2012) argues that openness is another attractive element of online participatory culture, and that it motivates users to contribute and thus benefit from interactions (p. 7). Moreover, participatory online culture invites active learner participation, demanding that learners engage in the learning process in order to reap maximum benefit from these opportunities, thus encouraging them to develop their autonomous learning skills. According to Motteram and Sharma (2009), beyond the class learning that incorporates the use of the Internet has the additional benefit of being linked to ‘real world activity’ (p. 85), related to which Kessler (2013) highlights the possibility of external feedback. Language learners’ need for feedback and access to the foreign culture may well be addressed by the collaborative culture of Web 2.0 tools (Stevenson & Liu, 2010, p. 235). Finally, the participatory architecture of social media, and the way it allows users to “play” with content creates space for creativity (Zourou, 2012, p. 5). Creativity and collaboration have recently been highlighted in many places as key 21st century skills (Zhao, 2009; Trilling and Fadel, 2010). Despite the limitations and restraints, which I will discuss later, all these reasons for using social media are very compelling.

Perhaps the best argument for engaging in online participatory culture to language learning is increased access to language input (Krashen, 1985) as well as opportunities for language output (Swain, 1985), as social media platforms have the potential to foster additional language

interaction beyond the classroom (Barrs, 2011, p. 10; Morgan, 2012, p. 167). Furthermore, mobile capabilities mean that these interactions are no longer time and space dependent (Warschauer, as cited in Barrs, p. 11). Similarly, Ducate and Lomika (2013) state that “technology enables us to transcend the boundaries of the classroom” (p. 446). In L1 contexts, it is of utmost importance to maximize opportunities for target language use both in the classroom and beyond (Barrs, 2012). The extended learning space presented by the Internet and mobile learning has the potential to significantly increase language input and output, especially important for language learners with little access to L2 environments within their own communities.

While many studies have highlighted opportunities and possibilities linked to Web 2.0 and participatory online culture, research has also drawn our attention to a number of challenges and limitations. In a study by Stevenson and Liu (2010), the researchers analyzed the learning and social use of 3 popular language learning websites (Babbel, Livemocha and Palabea) by L2 adult learners. An online survey was conducted among current (at that time) users of the three websites, and five potential users completed usability tests. These tests included the completion of three different sorts of tasks under observation, followed by interviews. Learners encountered frustration with the lack of content, and overemphasis on the social aspect. Furthermore, although they were intrigued by the idea of user-generated content, they were anxious about the quality of the materials and preferred to have access to native speakers, preferably those with teaching experience. The students were “concerned about the answers they would receive if they interacted with users within the social network” (Stevenson & Liu, 2010, p. 249). Thus, the potential for interaction beyond the classroom needs to be balanced against the quality and nature of the interactions.

Languages teachers need to embrace the changes to their role that arise as a result of these technological advances. Kessler (2014) recognizes both the opportunity and the responsibility in contributing to participatory culture. He urges us to “play an active role in defining these cultures in ways that align with our unique needs and intentions of use” (Kessler, 2014, p. 311). Kern, Ware and Warschauer (2000) warn us against technocentrism, and underline the imperative to situate the use of technology within sound theory of online language use. Selection of tools is becoming increasingly challenging as technology-based language teaching becomes more and more commercialized, and therefore “educators need to become critical consumers, just as students need to evaluate online sources critically” (Ware & Warschauer, 2000, p. 288). The rapid development of new technologies necessitates ongoing critical reflection with regard to classroom implementation.

Safety and privacy concerns also need to be carefully considered before involving students in participatory online culture (Grosbeck & Holotescu, as cited in Lomicka & Lord, 2011, p. 49). Kessler (2013) highlights the abuse of the openness of the Internet, particularly in the form of trolls, who are “anonymous individuals who intentionally create discord through flaming, or posting inflammatory, hostile, and profane text” (Kessler, 2013, p. 312). Engaging in participatory online culture also poses a threat to our privacy. Because of these significant safety concerns, teachers need to consider the potential for harm, and make the online environment as secure as possible, especially when teaching minors. Kessler encourages teachers to guide their students towards “a meaningful and aware participatory culture” (p.312) and to help students protect their online identities, participate in safer online communities as well as learn to avoid common pitfalls. The rise of Internet use in education means that teachers need to embrace these responsibilities.

Zourou (2012) suggests that before looking at how social media can be harnessed in the service of learning, we must decide whether they are compatible with our current educational paradigm (p. 8). On a philosophical level, the openness and horizontal (flat) structure of social media is aligned with and reflected in the principles of democracy and of learner-centeredness, with its informal, more “bottom up and user-oriented features” (Zourou, 2012, p. 7). Although this aspect of the Internet has been criticized by some as a ‘dumbing down’ of society, in which anyone can be an expert (Carr, as cited in Kessler, p. 311), the potential for inclusiveness and for enhancing personalization weighs in its favor.

Learner and teacher preparation in the use of technology has also been identified as a potential challenge (Yang & Chen, 2007). The action research conducted by Barrs (2012) investigated the use of Moodle forums to create interactional opportunities in the TL between semesters. The participants were students at a private 4-year language university in Japan. This first cycle took place during term time. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from questionnaires at the end of the first four-week cycle, in order to inform the main intervention, which took place over the summer. It was suggested that the lack of Moodle specific technology skills added to general problems within the forum, a series of homework assignments were designed to increase learner familiarity with the platform before the second cycle (Barrs, 2012, p.17). The author concluded that training in the use of the technology is required for high levels of student participation.

Participatory online culture and learner autonomy. It is widely accepted in mainstream language teaching that the development of learner autonomy is an essential component of learner success (Reinders, 2011; Benson, 2011; Godwin-Jones, 2011; Morgan, 2012). Furthermore, autonomy has been associated with augmenting motivation and self-direction (Kessler, 2013, p.

315). The proliferation of available materials and tools on the Internet alongside a pedagogical shift in language learning that places a greater emphasis on self-assessment and self-direction, brought on in part by the widespread adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), are two explanations for the recent emphasis on learner autonomy in both classrooms and research circles (Little; 2005; Morgan, 2011). Much has been written about the relationship between CALL and learner autonomy. Reinders describes autonomous language learning as “an act of learning whereby motivated learners consciously make informed decisions about that learning” (2011, p. 48). Both Reinders and Godwin-Jones stress the need for students to develop certain skills and mindset in order to benefit from opportunities for self-directed language learning. Thus, the development of these skills and dispositions emerge as a priority in technology-mediated language learning environments.

Godwin-Jones (2011) highlights the social aspect of autonomous language learning, and he states that effective peer network is a critical component. He makes reference to studies that have shown that scaffolding provided by peers can be helpful in guiding language learners towards not only greater autonomy, but greater confidence. Morgan (2011) and Reinders (2011) write about the importance of learner reflection in the iterative stages of autonomous learner development, and Godwin-Jones discusses the role of learner diaries in this process. These days, reflection can take place online, within communities, thus increasing the potential to share, respond and continue the dialogue. Edith Esch suggests that teachers and researchers need to make the choice between emphasizing “individual personal autonomy” and “autonomy as the capacity to exercise critical thinking about learning as a participant in a social milieu” (as cited in Godwin-Jones, 2011, p. 6). A great deal of emphasis is placed on the potential for scaffolding and peer support in building learner autonomy within virtual learning communities in the literature.

Warschauer (2005) reports that sociocultural theory emphasizes the role that tools play in human development. Thus, the tools that we use can alter the way that we learn. In a sense the power we have been given through easy access to learning comes at a price – the imperative for greater learner autonomy. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) present an electronic literacy approach to language teaching (as an alternative to network-based language teaching) that calls attention to the importance of teaching students to make effective use of information technology. Effective language teaching now means making effective use of these tools and empowering students to use them beyond the classroom. According to Chapelle, “this empowerment is as much about language-learning strategies as it is about procedural ICT knowledge” (as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 167). Hence, the relationship between learner autonomy and participatory online culture is as much about using Web 2.0 tools to foster collaborative, reflective communities as it is about learning to use the tools effectively.

Finally, it is interesting to note that strategies and mechanisms for developing learner autonomy work best when separate from formal educational contexts (Godwin-Jones, 2011, p. 4). Linked to this is the concept of student ownership, and the potential for learners to continue benefiting from the activity beyond school.

According to Morgan (2011), “web 2.0 tools give power to the user” (p. 167), and are characterized by the user’s ability to add, edit or simply rehash content. Web 2.0 encourages user participation, and has the potential to lead to increased opportunities for informal learning, requiring some degree of learner autonomy. The use of Web 2.0 tools beyond the classroom to enhance language acquisition requires greater learning autonomy. However, the degree to which engaging in participatory online culture fosters learner autonomy is not yet clear.

Motivation and online participatory culture. The ubiquity of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter suggest that many adolescents, worldwide, interact virtually in their free time. Kessler (2013) states that these participatory environments are dependent on users who find this participation both meaningful and rewarding (p. 307). Similarly, Wang and Vasquez (2012) emphasize the thrill of instant self-publishing and the stimulation felt by users during their dynamic interactions online (p. 412). At the same time, people are increasingly turning to the Internet for independent language learning (Morgan, 2012, p. 167). There are a number of clues as to what motivates students to engage in participatory online culture for the purpose of language learning. The first and most obvious is that it mimics the kinds of activities that learners engage in outside of class for pleasure (Kessler, 2013, p. 317). Kessler also suggests that the informal aspect of social networks may also promote user participation. Motivation is complex and can be impure. Kessler makes reference to a study conducted by Tamir and Mitchell (2012) in the field of psychology, which observed intrinsic rewards associated with the kind of self-disclosure that social media use is well known for. This was inferred by increased brain activity due to dopamine release (Kessler, 2013, p. 314). They also reported that participation in social games has been shown to activate areas of the brain associated with reward and addiction. Developing a sense of membership in a community can also play a key role in motivating learners (Mills, 2011, as cited in Kessler, 2013, p. 315), in addition to establishing a positive online L2 learner identity (Godwin-Jones, 2011, p.7). These powerful motivators are some of the reasons why many teachers and researchers are so interested in engaging learners in online participatory culture.

Lai's (2013) study that set out to better understand factors affecting student use of technology for self-directed learning uncovered a complex relationship between various psychological and

sociocultural factors (p. 108). The study revealed that the two main predictors of technology use were language learning motivation and perceived usefulness. This study highlights the primary importance of language learning motivation to begin with, and suggests that learners might willingly extend their language learning into the realm of social media, but only if they see the activity as useful. Although the participants were L2 learners at a Hong Kong university, these findings may well be more generally applicable.

Student control is another factor that appears to have a positive effect on student motivation. Kessler (2013) maintains that involving students in the design of the learning environment and activities can help them feel more involved and committed to the class (p. 317). Barrs (2012), in his study of participants' use of online chatting between semesters, found that overall, multiple replies were not frequent, especially in the first cycle. Results from qualitative data collected from questionnaires after the first cycle highlighting a lack of interest in the discussion topics informed the intervening action, which consisted of involving students in topic selection. In general, online conversations tended to be brief, although in the second cycle of the action research, the conversations were a bit longer, implying that students found online chatting more motivating when they have control over the topics (Barrs, 2012, p. 22). An additional reason stated by participants in the Barrs study for engaging in online conversations with classmates between semesters was the opportunity to stay in touch with friends and classmates was also mentioned. Socializing and maintaining personal connections was a motivating factor.

Attitudes and beliefs are intricately tied to motivation. Yang and Chen (2007) report on their study of Taiwanese high school learners' opinions and attitudes towards learning English via the Internet. The students enjoyed the experience of learning via the Internet, particularly when used in combination with more traditional methods of teaching, and that the project "enabled them to

experience new technologies, feel the pleasure of learning and increase their learning opportunities” (Yang & Chen, 2007, p. 876). Moreover, the students improved not only their language abilities, but also their knowledge of computers and other fields. However, students differed in their opinions as to the benefit of the approach. The authors noted a significant difference between the opinions of active and passive learners. The passive learners enjoyed the approach much less (and found it less useful) than the more active learners. Thus, we can surmise that a student’s passivity may well have an adverse effect on motivation to engage in online participatory activities.

Teaching in (and around) these informal learning environments. To address this question, I will look at both the role of the teacher in preparing and supporting students in their use of Web 2.0 technologies for language learning, as well as how the teacher might support the development of learner autonomy, as the two are intimately connected.

Helping students gain confidence in using the technology, as well as making them aware of the benefits of using it, are of primary importance. Providing learners with a list of recommended tools and services is one of the main ways that teachers can help support to encourage learner autonomy (Godwin-Jones, 2011, p. 6). In addition, teachers can demonstrate how specific online tools can best be used. Morgan’s (2012) study of university level German language learners and their autonomous use of Web 2.0 technologies highlights the importance of self-reflection in helping students develop independent learning skills. He urges teachers to help students reflect on the educational value of Web 2.0 tools and to make the links between Web 2.0 and learning explicit (Morgan, 2012, p. 172). In a similar vein, Godwin-Jones points out that helping students to be self-reflective in their use of language in computer mediated communication (CMC) is a key component of support for learners in using the tools for the purpose of improving language

skills. Helping students use the technology in a way that supports language development is a crucial role for languages teachers, emphasizing the need for teachers to gain confidence themselves with Web 2.0 technologies and their affordances, as well as the language learning potential on the Internet in general. Lending even more support to this argument, Morgan's study indicated that by and large, students possess the skills and knowledge necessary to perform the tasks associated with Web 2.0, and that it is in reflecting on the educational potential that students need assistance.

Once an online space has been established, teachers will want to ask themselves if and how they will participate. Barrs (2012) suggests that teacher participation within a participatory online culture may be an excellent addition to the communication, although teachers should think about the ways in which they might choose to do so (p. 21). Teachers might also want to promote positive group dynamics and "support learner initiatives to amplify learner confidence and motivation to participate" (Yang & Chen, 2007, p. 877). In this way, we might think about the teacher as having several roles, the facilitator being but one of them.

The concept of 'public pedagogy' challenges the exclusive role of teachers with regard to teaching. The role of teaching in informal learning is described by Giroux (as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 10) as 'public pedagogy', which refers to the sense that learners are being 'taught' while accessing French materials on the Internet or watching a film in a foreign language. On the Internet, while engaging in participatory culture and using Web 2.0 tools, learners may be 'taught' by countless sources. The teacher is no longer the primary source, accounting for a loss of control. The balance between teacher control and student autonomy is a delicate one, and shifting it more in the direction of the learner is bound to unsettle things. Kessler (2013) advises us to prepare for this uncertainty, for the loss of teacher control. To accommodate for the

uncertainty, teachers need to adopt a more flexible approach, and be prepared to make ongoing adjustments (Kessler, 2013, pp.319-320).

Gruba and Clark (2013) highlight the messiness of assessment practices in social networking sites for language learning (p. 177). They identify three dominant metaphors of language learning and assessment: language learning as instruction; language learning as acquisition; and language learning as socialization. An examination of pedagogical goals and assessment practices around these three paradigms illustrates the enormous differences between them, and suggests opportunities for developing innovative assessment practices within the third paradigm.

	Language learning as 'instruction'	Language learning as 'acquisition'	Language learning as 'socialization'
Pedagogical goals	Accuracy and fluency	Skills and strategies	Performance and interaction
Pedagogical success	Native-like productions	Global proficiencies	Local accomplishments
Assessment focus	Error correction (demonstration of accurate use of target-language features)	Proficiency appraisal (demonstration of individual use of skill-specific strategies)	Performance outcomes (social participation to foster growth in a language community)
Focal units of assessments	Products and structures of a language	Competencies and processes in the use of language	Artefacts and outcomes made through the use of language
Example assessments	Drills and multiple-choice quizzes	Self-assessment of portfolios	Multi-stage, multimodal team projects

Figure 2: Dominant metaphors of language learning and assessment, from Gruba & Clark, 2013, p. 181.

According to Gruba and Clark (2013), measuring proficiency is embedded in a ‘language learning as acquisition’ metaphor, whereas performance may be a better measure of student achievement within language learning that takes place in social, online spaces. Development of

an L2 online learner identity that emphasizes interactions within the community may provide a focus for formative assessment in social networking sites.

Pedagogical implications of engaging learners in participatory online culture. To conclude this section of my literature review, I will focus more directly on the roles of the learner and the teacher, which brings me back to Jung and Latchem's (2011) model for e-education. This framework seeks to provide a structure for educators wanting to incorporate the extensive body of resources available to us via technology and the Internet, in order to create curriculum that is learner-centered, knowledge centered, community centered and assessment centered (p. 10). As frameworks provide structure to our thinking and points of reference to pause and consider, it is no accident that this model incorporates changing teacher roles and learner experiences into its main body. It acknowledges that extended teaching and learning spaces bring changes to how teachers teach, and learners learn. Because it bases itself in teacher responsibilities as well as learning activities, this model provides a strong model for curriculum and instruction. I will link my conclusions to the main constructs of this model, adding a few thoughts on how this model might be interpreted and applied in an additional languages classroom.

In a traditional classroom, the teacher's role depends largely on execution, which relates specifically to the teacher's responsibility for providing knowledge and skills, as well as defining outcomes and tasks (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 10). In an extended teaching space, training and instruction may also be provided by online tools. The teacher remains responsible for these processes, but is no longer the sole occupant of the teaching space, and the role of the teacher broadens to include that of mediator; helping students to select and use online tools effectively in their learning. Thus, the teacher is not replaced by the technology. The responsibility for

developing curricular paths, resource creation and curation, teaching, facilitating and assessing still lies with the teacher, although there is much more flexibility and room for personalization through the use of technology and the vast array of resources on the Internet. It would oversimplify the roles and functions to suggest that execution is solely related to training and instruction. Teachers can play the part of facilitator when engaged in training and instruction when they help students with “interpreting the needs, understanding instructions and criteria, and mastering the new material and methods” (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 12). Despite the changes initiated by e-education, teachers remain in charge of execution, and they maintain the responsibilities it entails.

Facilitation involves helping students become more intellectually, socially and affectively engaged in the learning process (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 12). While this can be accomplished in a face-to-face setting, online capabilities increase the means through which teachers can achieve these goals. Facilitating learner reflection, positive group dynamics, creating opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction, helping students use technology for learning, clarifying the assessment process, involving learners in goal setting based on both needs and interests, providing opportunities for self-assessment are all aspects of the facilitator role. As demonstrated in a number of studies described in this literature review, participatory online culture has the potential to contribute positively to group dynamics, and increase opportunities for interaction (Barrs, 2012; Lomika & Lord, 2011). Another important facet of the facilitator role, highlighted by Morgan (2012) involves making the link between the use of online tools and resources and learning explicit to learners. Finally, being a good facilitator involves an understanding of learner motivation, and the potential for technology to contribute both positively and negatively. The facilitator role involves many different responsibilities, which have evolved significantly within

extended teaching spaces, and demand that teachers develop their own understanding of CALL affordances.

The role of facilitator is even more critical when engaging in the more open-ended educational goals of initiation. In this sphere, teacher dependence lessens. According to this model, initiation involves “familiarizing students with social values and norms” (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 9). This process is particularly relevant to additional language learners, who are not only learning a language, but also developing their intercultural understanding. The teacher’s role in facilitating discussion and reflection around culture is an important one, and access to a vast array of online resources (including native speakers) can contribute to this process, particularly for learners in an L1 environment.

The third ring on the model (see Figure 1) describing changes to teaching brought about by technology and extended teaching spaces is that of liberation, and involves inviting learners into “the ever-extending knowledge base” (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 12). Jung and Latchem relate liberation to induction, which refers to introducing students to “ways of knowledge” and helping them to arrive at “personal relationships and judgments” (2011, p. 9). Fulfilling this role involves helping students liberate their minds and inspire active construction of knowledge. In short, liberation can be compared to the cultivation of learner autonomy. Helping students gain an understanding of what kinds of resources are available to them, teaching them how to use them and encouraging them to critically evaluate their currency, authenticity and usefulness are key aspects of liberation, just as they are key components of developing learner autonomy. As these aspects of education are unpredictable and open to interpretation, they are not measurable by behavioral outcomes, and thus reflection and self-assessment are more likely tools for engaging learners in this process.

Jung and Rha (as cited in Jung & Latchem, 2011) identified three key learning activities requiring extended learning space within a model for e-education: acquisition, application, and construction (p. 13). The means through which learners acquire knowledge and information and skills proliferate with access to online media and communities. Acquiring information in an environment that embraces the sheer variety of resources available online generates the thrill of discovery, and has the added potential to enhance motivation, engagement, as well as develop research and information fluency (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 13). The electronic literacy approach described by Shetzer & Warschauer (2000) is congruent with this reasoning, as is the idea that empowering students to use Web 2.0 tools in language learning “is as much about language-learning strategies as it is about procedural ICT knowledge” (Chapelle, as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 167). The scope for learning transferable skills beyond those strictly related to language development within extended learning spaces is great. Languages teachers must carefully consider when to intentionally teach these skills, and if and how they will measure and assess, and report them. The goals and objectives addressed in the “extended” languages classroom go beyond the additional languages curriculum. Finally, teachers must accept that they are no longer the only source of learning, and be prepared to guide students, remembering that structuring the learning remains the teacher’s responsibility (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 13).

The next activity, application, relates to planning, carrying out research, managing projects, and problem solving, either individually or collaboratively, using digital tools and resources (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 14). This process has the potential for being highly social, and could take place in a blended environment (both face-to-face and online). The authors group together a number of educational goals that fall under this learning activity, including applying ideas to new areas, critically evaluating sources, making judgments, developing digital citizenship, exercising

initiative, handling disagreements and accepting leadership. These goals are very much aligned with task-based and project-based learning, and have the added potential to increase interaction in the TL. Involving students in the design process, and giving them choice may lead to increased motivation and engagement. Given the many potential goals related to project-based learning activities (application), maintaining a focus on a reasonable number of measurable learning objectives will help to focus student learning. Well-defined tasks and goals are essential in order to help anchor students in their learning. The teacher is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the task enables students to meet curricular objectives.

The final learning activity described by Jung and Latchem (2011) is construction, which refers to the construction of learning communities as well as the creation of new ideas, products and processes (p. 14). Autonomous learners may enact this stage with minimal teacher guidance, whereas others may require it. If these creative products and processes are to be evaluated, clear objectives and criteria will have to be developed beforehand, for the same reasons stated above (focusing student learning and ensuring tasks help students meet curricular objectives). Teachers must be prepared to oversee these learning activities, offering guidance as necessary.

Dialogue and reflection are key components of this model, and are woven throughout. Extended teaching and learning spaces magnify the potential for both. As discussed earlier, reflection is necessary to help students harness Web 2.0 capabilities effectively for language learning, and can help students to engage in critical evaluation of materials for online language learning. As suggested by Godwin-Jones (2011), scaffolding by peers can contribute to the reflective process. Thus, creating meaningful opportunities, both individual and social, for students to reflect on the uses of Web 2.0 and participatory online culture is necessary in extended teaching and learning spaces. Teachers will want to think about how to best to facilitate

this process. Questions to ask oneself include: What will be the focus of the reflection? Will learners reflect in the TL or in L1? Online or face-to-face, or perhaps a combination of the two? When will reflection be a private activity, and when will it be social? What prompts, frameworks, and criteria will be used to guide learner reflections?

This is a good point at which to remind ourselves of the lessons learnt from Lai's (2013) framework for developing self-directed technology use for language learning, which maps factors and interactions that determine self-directed technology use. Attitudinal factors play a dominant role, and the author suggests that these factors deserve greater attention. For example, perceived usefulness of technology and perceived compatibility between technology and learning played a key role in this study (Lai, 2013, p. 102). Teacher and peer support, and improved confidence in selection of tools strengthened student perceptions, and greatly impacted self-directed technology use. Bearing the importance of these motivational factors in mind while planning should encourage teachers to consider ways of making the usefulness of the task clear, in addition to the role of technology in helping learners to achieve the task.

Curation

What is curation? Curation is the process of gathering data from various (online) locations and putting them into collections. Content curation websites “allow their users to categorize and organize collections of content created by others that they find online” (Zhong et al., 2012, p. 659). It is a trend that has emerged as a result of the overabundance of content available on the Internet. An additional feature of curation tools is the commenting function, which can add focus and meaning to the collection, and contributes to the social dimension. Typically, curators belong to a community, which enhances the curators' ability to both borrow from others and share with a wider audience. The faculty most interested in curation in high schools is typically the teacher-

librarian. Valenza (2012) suggests that librarians are best qualified to curate as they are “used to critically evaluating, and sharing content and tools for learning” (p. 20). Critical evaluation of content and tools can be seen as a key component of content curation, be it librarians, subject specialists or learners who engage in the process.

A plethora of online curation tools exist. Some popular sites are Bag the Web, Scoop.it, Paper.li, Pearltrees and Storify. Teacher librarians are using them in many different ways. For example, Valenza (2011) discusses using curation to gather together resources for student projects. She emphasizes how difficult it would be to do this for each and every one of her students. However, because of the vast number of online curators and the openness of these resources, the possibility of borrowing from others exists. Other ways that curation tools are being harnessed for education include: creating pathfinders; collecting and disseminating the best web tools for different tasks or learners; providing resources for a flipped classroom; and teaching students to curate for their own learning projects (Curation Tools, n.d.). Curation tools are being used by teachers and learners for a variety of reasons, to support a number of different, but complimentary aims, and is enabled by the openness of the Internet.

As the value of using curation tools in the languages classroom has not been fully explored, this section will extrapolate on what is known about Web 2.0 language learning, content curation and learner autonomy, as they relate to this topic. As stated earlier, curation tools have been used by teachers for some time to curate and organize content for students and to facilitate sharing resources with other teachers. My interest extends to student curation and the opportunities for social interaction that may take place within the social curation platform, as well as teacher-mediated interaction within the classroom that encourages the development of learner autonomy.

Zhong et al. (2013) strove to find insight into the motivations for content curation. They found that curation highlights different items compared to traditional searches (p. 662), and that curation provides personal value to the curator (p. 659). It is this potential for learners to create a meaningful, personalized collection of online Internet resources, going beyond a traditional Google search, that interests me. Google uses crawling, indexing, algorithms and ranking to try and make searches as relevant as possible. However, Google has no way of predicting the usefulness of a website for language learners. Nor are its methods foolproof. Hence, the necessity for students to develop their ability to critically evaluate websites, as well as develop some way of predicting or measuring their usefulness for language learning.

What is Pinterest? A recent article in the online magazine Forbes ranks Pinterest among the top four social networking sites in terms of valuation, but among the top three in terms of number of users (Bercovici, June 24, 2014). Pinterest is the most popular online curation tool for sharing pictures and videos (Zhong et al, 2013, p. 659) and its Web 2.0 capabilities are characterized by users' ability to *remash* content, add their own editorial spin, publish and share (Wang and Vasquez, 2012). Not only is it a tool for organizing content, it serves the purpose of an online community as well. Images on Pinterest are referred to as *pins*. A pin can be created by *repinning* from an existing Pinterest user, or importing a Webaddress from outside Pinterest. Pins are organized on pinboards (boards), which can be grouped into one of 32 overarching categories. Zhong et al. identified two sorts of curation: structured and unstructured. They found that most users preferred structured curation, and that structured curation attracted more followers (p. 667). This suggests that users find grouping and categorizing content meaningful and useful. In addition to *pinning*, users can *like* or *comment* on a pin. Likes express an interest without adding it to the user's collections. Furthermore, users can follow other users, effectively

creating their own social network within the wider community. Users can have a maximum of 3 secret boards, thus allowing users the option of keeping their collections private. Others are not be able to follow secret boards, but users can get around this by inviting other, trusted users. These functions are easy to learn how to use, and are similar to those found on Facebook, with which most teenagers are already familiar.

Developing learner autonomy with curation. The iterative stages of the self-directed learning cycle, as outlined by Reinders (2011) could provide a basic foundation for discussions around autonomous use of Web 2.0 tools, as this could help students gain insight into the learning process. This framework maps onto the liberation stage of the Jung and Latchem (2011) model by providing a clearer outline of this process.



Figure 3: The iterative self-directed learning cycle, from Reinders, 2011, p. 184

Using curation tools might contribute to the development of learner autonomy and the development of digital literacy, as the two are inextricably bound. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) elaborate on an electronic literacy approach to language teaching, in which they identify

searching and navigating online sources and critically evaluating them as central to reading (p. 177). Improving language learners' ability to critically evaluate websites, and to filter resources according to perceived usefulness for language learning is an essential stage in the development of learner autonomy in an extended learning and teaching space. Reinders (2011) outlines the iterative stages of autonomous learning, one of which is selecting materials. As he points out, "part of the development towards autonomy involves learners having the awareness and ability to locate the right resources for their learning needs" (Reinders, 2011, p. 180). This could be challenging without signposts to direct students to appropriate resources, particularly on the Internet. Therefore, learners will have to develop their ability to identify resources that enhance language development for various purposes. Equally important is the ability to select resources that are appropriate to their level of proficiency. Many freely available tools for helping students evaluate websites online exist. In general, they offer guidance in helping students reflect on the authority, currency and objectivity of the resource. What is missing from these tools are prompts that encourage students to think about how the resource might be particularly helpful in their own language learning, including a reflection on whether or not the resource is at a level that they might benefit from. These considerations may well increase the amount of comprehensible input within the resources that students engage with online because learners may improve their ability to self-select materials. It may also help students to focus their browsing and searching towards resources that relate to topics and themes identified in their learning plans, areas of weakness that require additional practice, and materials that are at an appropriate level.

Morgan (2012), Reinders (2011) and Jung and Latchem (2011) all identify dialogue and reflection as an essential, binding component in the development of learner autonomy. Curation by learners that is combined with discussion and reflection that focus on the development of self-

directed learning skills could well support Web 2.0 language learning. Kessler (2013) highlights the reflective discussion that many social media contexts promote, calling it a “meta-discussion that is co-constructed in coordination with surface level content” (p. 310). Teachers and learners will enter a dialogue on self-directed learning. Classroom discussions mediated by a teacher could help to extend these student initiated discussions around the content, and guide learners in their selection of resources and learning strategies. Sometimes the very act of articulation is a highly effective tool to develop learner autonomy (Morgan, 2012, p. 174).

Finally, curation as a focal activity may help with developing learning autonomy by fostering a mindset, or a disposition for autonomous language learning. By helping students develop their ability to evaluate themselves as language learners, better understand their needs, evaluate the usefulness of online resources, and by creating a space in which autonomous language learning is valued, students may well be more motivated to seek beyond the class learning experiences. Lai’s (2013) study indicates that attitudinal factors are dominant in predicting self-directed technology use. Making the link between curation and learning explicit, thus helping students to recognize the usefulness of the task, and to see the link between the activity and overall self-directed technology use, and their ability as language learners that can be transposed beyond school, will be important guiding principles.

A community of curators: The social value of curation. Curation tools have the potential for increased access to language input, as learners explore and gather together online resources (videos, blogs, podcasts, cartoons, reference tools including dictionaries and editing applications, pedagogically assisted authentic resources, music, Web 2.0 learning communities and more). There are opportunities for language output as well, both within the virtual environment, in the

commenting section, as well as in the classroom, in discussions around selection, use and evaluation of resources.

Curation within a community facilitates sharing and creates potential for social interaction. According to Clay Shirky's theories, the "job of curation is to synchronize a community so that when they're all talking about the same thing at the same time, they can have a richer conversation than if everybody reads everything they like in a completely unsynchronized or uncoordinated way" (as cited in Zhong et al., 2013, p. 660). Despite the potential for rich dialogue, the study by Zhong et al. discovered that only a minority of users placed a high value on the social aspect of Pinterest. The fact that some users articulated enjoying socializing with people they already knew is promising because it suggests that high school language learners might find the social aspect of curation motivating amongst their peers. A few users valued the ability to talk with others who have similar tastes, while others valued being able to pin things from strangers, and the fact that social interaction was not a requirement. Another user valued the serendipity of discovering things that they liked through other users' boards (p. 663). As can be seen from these results, the community aspect of Pinterest is valued for a variety of reasons, not all of them social. While Zhong et al. studied current Pinterest users, and not high school language learners, it is hopeful that high school learners will be motivated by the social aspect of Pinterest, added to which similarities to sites such as Facebook (liking, sharing and following, for example) may engage learners and motivate them to participate beyond the classroom.

Differentiating and personalizing instruction with curation tools. According to Kristmanson (2013), personalization and choice "promote a positive affective climate in the languages classroom and contribute to a differentiated environment" (p. 481). Technology is making it easier to personalize and differentiate in a languages classroom than ever before, and

curation tools have the potential to enhance and facilitate differentiation in a languages classroom by making it easier to provide access to content via multiple pathways, and to offer student choice. Researchers have found that providing access to resources in multiple forms benefit all learners, by creating a more inclusive classroom (Pellerin, 2011).

E-inclusion, a term that is gaining popularity, is an approach to technology use in order to differentiate and personalize curriculum. It was used as a theoretical framework by Pellerin (2012) in her collaborative action research (CAR) project that explored how digital technologies could be used to differentiate in the early French immersion classroom. French Immersion programs have been blamed for the development of a two-tiered education system in some provinces, which highlights the need to “revisit the philosophy and application of these programs to align with 21st century global education” (Pellerin, 2009, p. 1). French immersion is open to all students, and yet the reality states otherwise. It has evolved into an elitist program, and most students with learning disabilities end up in Core French (p. 1). Pellerin highlights the need to adopt more inclusive practices within French immersion programs, as the supports and interventions that are regularly provided for first language learners can be equally effective with additional language learners (Pellerin, 2009, p. 2). The beliefs around inclusion within what has traditionally been perceived to be a more ‘academic’ stream need to change. There is much progress to be made with regard to inclusive practices in the additional languages classroom.

Although Jung and Latchem’s (2011) model acknowledges the potential of technology in helping teachers to address a variety of learner needs (p. 6), it does little to elaborate on this crucial affordance. Within the context of a multi-grade language class, leveraging technology to facilitate differentiation will be essential. E-inclusion will therefore provide an additional lens to inform my classroom planning.

Cautions and limitations. In a recent descriptive study of Canadian high school language learners' experiences and perceptions of autonomy, Kristmanson, Lafargue & Culligan (2013) found that learners valued increased exposure to authentic language through access to online materials, but that they did not see these experiences as a substitute for real world communication. The authors challenged teachers to make the link between these learning activities and communication beyond the walls of the classroom explicit, and to help students to set goals for taking language learning in the classroom and using it in the "real world" (Kristmanson et al., 2013, p. 481). The authors also made reference to a Turkish study that highlighted the possibility of learners becoming anxious or stressed as a result of increased responsibility and independence, highlighting the need to pay attention to students' readiness for autonomy, and to adapt expectations accordingly. Finally, the authors found that some learners in the study perceived goal setting to be an imposition (Kristmanson et al., 2013, p. 477), and did not see the value in directing their own learning. The relevance of this study has strong implications for this project.

Pedagogical implications of using curation tools. In order to reap the full potential for curation tools in the classroom, guidance and explicit teaching of strategies to support autonomous language learning will be necessary, as self-access (to databases of materials or the Internet) is of "no value to them if they are not able to make selective judgments about what to use" (Laurillard, as cited in Reinders, 2011, p. 186). Making the learning process more transparent to learners through raising awareness of the self-directed learning process is essential. As already stated, self-assessment, goal setting and materials evaluation and selection are all part of this process, and will form the basis of the strategic instruction and reflection activities. Website evaluation tools will be adapted so that it meets the needs of language

learners. Evaluation of learner's progress towards greater learner autonomy will be based on teacher observation and student self-reflection, and linked to the "way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts" (Little, as cited in Kristmanson et al., 2013, p. 464).

It is anticipated that using Pinterest to cultivate learner autonomy will build familiarity with the tool, so that when the platform is used to differentiate within more "traditional" lessons, learners will feel more confident in their ability to use the tool for educational purposes, and in making appropriate choices based on their individual needs.

Depending on the level of proficiency of the learner, self-reflection may or may not be possible in L2 at all times. It is expected that there will be some shifting from L1 to L2 throughout the group discussions, particularly in a multi-age, multi-level context. Thus, comments and discussions will likely have a dual function as language output and reflection relating to self-directed learning. The teacher will have to facilitate these discussions with care in order to maximize both reflection and opportunities for language output.

Problem Statement

Both participatory online culture and social curation have the potential to contribute to the development of learner autonomy, given adequate guidance and support. This literature review has identified three different types of scaffolding that may enhance the development of learner autonomy in a high school French class. They are: The CEFR (level descriptors and "Can Do" statements), the iterative self-directed learning cycle (as per Reinders, 2011) and tools that promote the critical evaluation of Web resources. Jung and Latchem's (2011) framework gives us an overview of the teaching and learning process in extended learning spaces, and the three different teaching modes (execution, facilitation and liberation) provide us with a clear sense of

direction, adding weight and legitimacy to the goal of cultivating learner autonomy. Lai's (2013) framework lends support to teachers wanting to positively impact attitudinal factors.

Over the course of eight to ten weeks, students will explore these tools while maintaining a focus on curation for the purpose of gathering online resources for language learning, including resources that link to their inquiries. The following questions form the basis of this project, and will help me to decide whether or not progress has been made at the end of the study period:

1. Will engaging in curation activities and participatory online culture motivate learners to participate in autonomous language learning activities?
2. Will students feel empowered to independently seek learning opportunities in extended learning and teaching spaces by the end of the 8-week period?
3. Will learners feel confident in their ability to select and leverage online resources for their own language learning needs?

Curriculum Plan and Outcomes

Introduction

When thinking about curriculum, an essay that I keep coming back to is William Doll's, "The Four R's – An Alternative to the Tyler Rationale". A play on the three R's of the late nineteenth century (reading, writing and arithmetic), Doll proposes richness, recursion, relations and rigor as criteria for a transformative, post-modern curriculum (1993, p. 268). Doll's definition of richness is contrasted with a modernist, pre-determined curriculum which he describes using negative terms like *indeterminacy*, *anomaly*, *inefficiency*, *chaos*, and *disequilibrium*, and are framed using negative terms to capture the disruptive character of post-modernist curriculum. The postmodernist framework describes curriculum that is continually negotiated, and has 'disturbing qualities'. These qualities, states Doll, "form the problematics of life itself, and the essence of a rich and transformative curriculum" (p. 268). I believe that when teaching in a way that relies heavily on pre-determined outcomes, one loses the richness that is ripe for the picking, and that this richness is obtainable when goals are negotiated, and there is room for spontaneity and more responsive teaching. This does not mean that a plan is not important or helpful. However, an inflexible plan can be damaging, especially to overly conscientious classroom teachers who feel that the ultimate goal is to cover each and every learning objective in the curriculum documents. The Government of British Columbia has concluded from its consultations that "the Province needs a more flexible curriculum that prescribes less and enables more, for both teachers and students," (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 2), which they clarify by adding that "an education system redesigned with 21st century priorities in mind must remove the barriers that limit teachers' ability to innovate and personalize learning based on students' needs and the community context" (p. 2). I am very excited by BC's

Education Plan and the new K-9 curriculum documents that are less prescriptive overall, and have identified essential concepts and content, thus allowing for greater flexibility and providing greater opportunities for deeper learning.

My project idea was born of a desire to engage our learners in self-selected language learning activities through curation of resources from the Internet. My work represents an attempt to include more student-driven learning within the languages program at PSII, while also promoting engagement in the learning process. Students learning French attend regular classes in which I teach grammar and vocabulary in a structured way, following a scope and sequence that would be comparable to most French language programs. They also have personalized assignments and regular assessments that ensure output. Students practice the four skills from CEFR (reading, listening, speaking and writing) as they would in any language class. The project work was intended to be supplementary to the program, not a replacement. In brief, I have found that my project idea to be only somewhat successful. However, many of the principles behind the project idea have provided a foundation for a personalized approach to my French program. I will provide a more detailed account of the implementation of the plan, and how it has differed from the original plan, in the following pages.

Curriculum Plan

I planned on meeting with the students I work with on French language development on Wednesday mornings for a third class, in which we would focus on goal setting, linking goal setting and assessment to the CEFR for languages, developing Pinterest pages in French to build community and gather resources for inquiry learning. I envisaged (and planned) a series of workshops that I thought would enable students to engage fully in the language learning process. For instance, I planned to have a workshop on using Pinterest, followed by a workshop in which

students would explore the different CEFR levels, figure out where they fit in, and start identifying some key goals for the year based on the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) “Can Do” statements, broken down into speaking, writing, reading and listening. After that I had planned to help students with evaluating online materials, to sharpen their critical evaluation of resources, to improve their ability to self-select materials from the wealth of freely available online language learning resources. I also wanted to make the self-directed learning cycle more explicit to learners, to enable those who are closer to graduation as well as those who are able to work in a more self directed manner, more aware of the key stages in the learning cycle, and thus more capable learners. I had also planned to have a workshop on creating a positive digital footprint and online identity. Eventually, I had hoped that students would develop Pinterest pages around their inquiries (not only for French) and that students would support each other in materials selection, and by showing a genuine interest in what others are working on, hoping that this would reinforce a sense of community by establishing a link between face-to-face and online practices. Ultimately, I hoped that students would become better online curators of French language materials, and that they would all end up with online immersion environments that would encourage them to engage in beyond the class learning, a dream that I equated with stepping beyond course outlines and assignments into learning for the sake of learning. I anticipated that these initial workshops would take place over the course of approximately 6-8 weeks. Although I knew it would be quite a lot to focus on early in the year, I had hoped that it would act as a spring board to helping learners engage more fully in the learning process, and taking an active role in the co-constructed learning model that we aspire to at our school.

Implementation of the Plan

Inquiry-based learning. As might have been predicted, things have not turned out exactly as I had planned. For a start, although I began the year with scheduled Wednesday morning sessions, this rapidly expanded to embrace research skills help among the larger student population, which has also included helping a small number of learners set up Pinterest pages for their inquiries. I had been spending half the morning in the collaborative workspace that is designed to accommodate approximately 50 students at large tables and the other half in a regular classroom doing my project work with students learning French. However, within two weeks, I felt that I would have to be more flexible with my approach to my planned project work with our students, in order to free me up spend more time with a larger group of learners. In addition, it has also been challenging to create a schedule without conflicts, and requiring learners to attend a third class has not been practical or successful. In retrospect, I believe it would have been better to make my objectives part of the regular language class, but over a longer period of time.

Because I felt my role in helping students with the critical research stage of developing their questions, a broad understanding of their topics, and learning activities to follow was required, Pinterest use seemed somewhat secondary in terms of importance, and my energy was redirected. Some of this time was spent helping students develop their research skills, including their ability to critically evaluate websites. Although understanding of inquiry-based learning (IBL) is variable, especially across disciplines, most agree that it involves learners' "active investigation and analysis of data, and pursuit of probing questions" (Levy, Thomas, Drago & Rex, 2013, p. 388). Current standards worldwide emphasize the development of skills associated with IBL, including engaging in scientific processes, evaluating and interpreting sources, detecting bias, and inquiring into authentic problems (Levy et al., 2013, p. 387). As previously

stated, one of the outcomes of this project has been the recognition of an opportunity to help students develop their research skills. To this end, throughout September and October, I made several presentations in my ‘whole school’ weekly time slot from 9:30-10:00am on Wednesdays on the topic of research skills. These have included: how to use Pinterest for online curation, how to use Boolean logic to maximize your key word searches, how to use EBSCO Host and the Greater Victoria Public Library online, how to get the most out of search engines, and evaluating and interpreting online sources. I have included a quiz (see Appendix B) that I used to challenge their knowledge of online research as well as a framework for evaluating websites (see Appendix C) that was meant to introduce them to questions (about authority, currency, objectivity and content) they can ask to help them read online texts with greater critical awareness. The quiz is adapted from the two quizzes (basic and expert) on the *Classzone* “Web Research Guide” (McDougal Littell, n.d.). In the greater context of IBL, I have found that developing a range of research skills to be crucial, and it is one of the reasons I have not been able to find the time to focus more on Pinterest and curation. Seeing it as part of a spectrum of strategies and tools has made more sense to me, and our learners.

Our school promotes and supports interdisciplinary inquiry and project-based learning. There has never been any suggestion that the French language curriculum should be wholly integrated into students’ larger cross-curricular inquiries. Nonetheless, I encourage and support interdisciplinary connections wherever possible. Teaching in a small school is an advantage, because I know what students’ interests and inquiries are, and so I can help them to make connections. For the advanced group, I encourage them to select their own readings and listening materials from French magazines like *Actualité*, Internet resources, French films and books from our library. For group activities, I am able to select reading and listening materials based on

student interest. This is less easily achieved with the beginner group, as they are still working on foundational grammar and vocabulary. My interest in promoting inquiry in our school has inspired me to make cultural inquiry an essential component of language learning plans this year. This year, I have assigned one cultural inquiry per term (see Appendix A). These inquiries represent 20-25% of their coursework, and lower CEFR levels work in both English and French. My general expectations for the cultural inquiry are as follows:

- a) There will be a research component to this assignment
- b) One major learning artifact per term (and several learning activities)
- c) Work produced must go through an editing process
- d) Assessment must be pre-planned and co-constructed
- e) It must be shared in some way

One of the learning activities that I suggest is creating a Pinterest page of curated resources during the initial research stage. I have decided not to make this part of my general expectations as I do not want to force students to do something that is not essential to the learning process. Although students have not taken to using Pinterest to enhance autonomous, beyond the class language learning as hoped, a small number of students have been using it to gather materials for their cultural inquiries. Others feel it is an imposition, and we negotiate another way for them to collect and share their resources with me. This project-oriented approach to developing cultural understanding works very well in our school, and Pinterest is an interesting and useful collection point for some students.

In retrospect, it might have been more useful to have conducted a literature search of IBL and teaching culture as opposed to Web 2.0 and participatory online environments, as this would have tied in better with the way my plan was eventually implemented. Be that as it may, the

outcome of my project work has caused me to question my assumptions about Web 2.0 and motivation in a high school languages class. This experience will help me to plan more meaningful use of social media and Web 2.0 in future.

I have also found it interesting how some of the goals that I had identified for students learning French were more widely applicable to developing research skills, evaluating sources, engaging students in the learning process, and planning how learning will be demonstrated (product/output), which are all part of an inquiry process. I believe the ideas behind this project demonstrate how much I have tried to adapt language learning into the greater context our inquiry-based school.

Teacher and learner. A primary objective embedded in my curriculum plan was to enable students to take more ownership of their language learning. Through exploration of Internet resources, I had hoped that students would engage with self-selected materials autonomously some of the time. This plan assumed movement from execution and facilitation towards liberation, according to the Jung and Latchem (2011) model (see page 5).

In my first session on Pinterest use with the French language learners, I shared these objectives with them. I then showed them a page I had started for beginners, and another page I had begun for more advanced learners. I also gave them a list of curated sites that I always share with students at the beginning of the year. I suggested that they start by visiting the sites on the list, and pinning the ones that they thought looked interesting. I also recommended that they look at other Pinterest pages on the topic of learning French and French culture, and to pin anything that they liked or thought might be useful. The activity gave a purpose to exploring the sites I have collected over the years, and I was pleased that most students visited the sites early in the year and were becoming familiar with some of the resources I recommend to learners.

My other objectives related to the development of learner autonomy were to increase learner awareness of the learning cycle through clarification of learning objectives and involving learners in goal setting and assessment (making the learning process more transparent and accessible to learners). The facilitator approach in the Jung and Latchem (2011) model embodies these objectives. In this approach, “the lesson content is valued less for its own sake and more for the contribution it makes to the development of understanding in the learners” (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 5). Training and instruction, which must be prioritized over facilitation and liberation to ensure that the primary objective of language acquisition is met. I decided that a separate class for ongoing dialogue and reflection on the learning process was not necessary. Whereas my plan was to involve learners in goal setting, materials selection and self-assessment, I found myself stepping quickly back into the role of the executor, and managing their learning for them. I based this decision on student readiness, and the need to focus on language input and output. Be that as it may, there are always opportunities for engaging students in the learning process, and my priority has shifted to doing this where it makes sense. The decision to have students complete one project per term on an aspect of French culture has also created a more structured opportunity to engage students in goal setting, materials selection, and self-assessment.

In order to involve students in more self-assessment, and to facilitate finding materials, I shared the CEFR levels with students in the second Wednesday morning session. The students were able to assess their level of proficiency with very little difficulty, and have since been using this level to help direct them to appropriate listening resources on sites such as *Le Point du FLE*, where these levels are used to group resources. This has been very helpful, even though there remains a lot of variation between the levels of difficulty of resources within each level. Not

every site uses the CEFR levels, of course, but now students know what it is and are finding it helpful when it is used as a benchmark to sort and categorize materials. It has also helped learners figure out where they are on the continuum of language proficiency scales and what is yet to come.

Personalization and differentiation. After working with learners individually or in pairs last year, I was keen to create bigger groups for language learning. I optimistically started the year with a multilevel group of about 14 students. I quickly realized that the classrooms were too small, and that it was logistically beyond my capabilities. Within a week, I had divided the larger group into two, and this has been working much better, as I can focus better on the needs of each group. The beginners are grade 9s, with two grade 10s that are benefiting from revising the basics. The advanced group consists of students who have had an immersion background. Two of them are working towards credit in Core French, and the others are enrolled in French Immersion. Part of my rationale for creating multilevel groups involved creating space for interaction between the higher and lower CEFR levels. I have not let go of this aim, despite the change of plan, and invite learners to attend classes where it is possible to plan activities that engage both groups meaningfully. For example, advanced students recently gave a mini-lesson on a topic of their choice, which the beginners attended. The advanced students had prepared an introduction to their talk that included vocabulary that the beginners had been learning (greetings, age, dates, nationalities, numbers). The beginners filled in a worksheet while listening to their talks, and I was able to assess their listening in this authentic context. The beginners enjoyed listening to and learning from their peers, and were excited to see how much they could understand.

One of PSII's aims is to empower students to drive their own learning. We work with the students to co-construct learning paths and activities, linking their inquiries to the BC curriculum. Often, the students go beyond the BC curriculum, and we assess goals that are articulated by the students, as well as those that link to the curriculum. On the other hand, sometimes their inquiries and learning activities do not address all of the outcomes in a course, and so we come up with ways for students to address the missing pieces, in order to gain full credit for a course. Creating individual learning plans also means that there is less rigidity and consistency regarding student output, which depends on interdisciplinary, cross-curricular connections and depth of learning. In short, there is no straightforward recipe. Within a school like ours, there are many opportunities for learners to make interdisciplinary connections between their French language studies and other subjects. The following paragraph gives an example of a group activity that lead to cross-curricular outcomes.

Although the focus of my curriculum plan was on student use of Pinterest, I have found it to be very useful from a teaching perspective, and have used it successfully as a collection point for listening and reading around a particular topic. For example, my advanced group of students said that they would like to discuss current events in their weekly speaking class. We decided to look at the Scottish referendum, and use this as an opportunity to learn about the Quebec referendum in 1995, Quebec separatism and federalism at the same time. I curated a number of resources (listening, reading and viewing material), which I shared with the students ahead of time. During the Tuesday class, students spent time exploring the resources, looking up words, asking questions, and learning about the two separate but related events. On the Thursday of that week, students were prepared to discuss the similarities and differences between the two countries, regionalism and federalism. The more focused use of Pinterest for a specific activity was more

successful than my asking them to curate without any specific purpose. In this particular case, students were able to address outcomes from *Social Studies/Sciences Humaines 11* as well as French, which is a good example of how one can promote interdisciplinary connections in a language course. Students enrolled in both French and *Social Studies/Sciences Humaines 11* were asked to write a comparison between the two events, incorporating a variety of lexical and grammatical structures for making comparisons. The students' cultural inquiries also represent opportunities for making interdisciplinary connections. An example of this is a student who is investigating French cuisine and colonial rule. She wants to understand how and if French cuisine influenced or was influenced by the colonized country's eating habits. Her learning links to outcomes in *Français Langue 11* as well as *Aliments et Nutrition 10*.

Creating community. A group of 14 learners signed up for Pinterest when I first introduced the project idea to them, and two students already had an account. I have not restricted their use, and many of them have pins and pages for recreational purposes as well as their French language page. I do not see this as a problem, as whether they are curating for entertainment or for educational purposes, they are learning to categorize and keep track of found resources. I encouraged learners to come up with a username that was recognizable within the school community, but did not use their legal first and last names, so that their pinning would not necessarily become part of their online identity. This then limited the impact of their Pinterest use on their online identity, while maintaining a degree of privacy. I showed them how they could keep their pages secret and invite only other members of the school community, but nobody wanted to be 'invisible'.

A group of approximately 10 students have been enthusiastic about using Pinterest, and they have, as should have been expected, found their own uses and reasons for using (or not using) it

as a platform for curating resources. My idealistic plan in which students would create an extensive, online language immersion environment for themselves was far-fetched, I now realize. Why should they? Unless they love the French language and culture, as well as social media, and it is their dream to be immersed in French language resources every moment of the day, this is not going to happen.

My hope was that by creating an online space, we would cement and extend our sense of community. I based my prediction on studies where an online community was fostered through the use of social media platforms and online chat spaces. The main argument put forward by the various authors to support these kinds of initiatives was their capacity to extend the learning community, enabling participation beyond the confines of in-class instruction. For example, Lomika and Lord (2013) found that learners established a collaborative community through Twitter use. The Barrs (2012) study, which consisted of online chatting between semesters, emphasized the importance of developing a positive group dynamic, and the positive impact this can have on learning. These studies, which were conducted within the context of higher education, suggested that the use of online social media platforms would enhance learning. However, there are some significant differences between the learning environments within higher education and the high school in which I teach.

The goal of the Barrs (2012) study was to try and minimize the disconnect between inside and outside the classroom. Within the context of higher education, students might not necessarily interact outside of the classroom. If there are fewer opportunities to create social bonds outside of class time, this rationale makes good sense. I totally overlooked a major difference between our small school and a university campus, which is that our students are socializing and interacting throughout the day; thus there is much less of a need to extend the learning

community virtually. In fact, many of our students have been homeschooled, and some of them have had difficulty attending school in the past for a variety of reasons. Attending our school has made for a lively community with a lot of social interaction. Students are much more keen on face-to-face interactions than on creating an online community. I have observed that the “here and now” is far more important to them than extending their learning in virtual spaces. Of particular value to the students is the opportunity to work in groups beyond their immediate social connections, as this extends connections within the community. Moreover, they use technology a lot, and it is helpful for them to have activities that enable them to take a break from the screen. Furthermore, our timetable allows for groups of students to work on French activities together outside of class time, which they take advantage of from time to time. Writing dialogues together, practicing vocabulary and helping each other edit paragraphs and compositions are some of the activities that I have observed our learners working on together outside of class time. There is not such a great need for extended learning spaces.

In fact, I am beginning to wonder if my own positive experiences of blended learning in higher education have made me overly keen to apply the approach to a high school setting. I still believe that a sense of community is extremely important, and that positive group dynamics have a definite impact on learning. A group of students who know each other well, care about each other and treat each other with kindness and respect will undoubtedly enjoy learning in each other’s company.

Using Pinterest to collect beyond the class learning resources was not essential to the course, and as such, students made a choice regarding their participation. The activity was optional, and fairly unstructured. Although the activity had a lot of scope for personalization, it was not linked to specific language learning objectives, unless learners were later proactively selecting from

their curated resources for skills development. I have found learners to be less interested in self-selecting materials, and this surprised me. My prediction was that they would pounce on the opportunity to make more choices themselves. The result of this experiment is that I am more relaxed and confident about making the majority of the choices for them, or coming up with a selection of options for them to choose from, thus limiting the choice and providing some low stress language learning. I have found the process of encouraging learner autonomy to be a lot slower than I anticipated. The cultural inquiries that I have implemented represent a part of the course where we can work together towards greater learner autonomy. The expectations are clearer, and it allows students to concentrate on language acquisition the rest of the time.

Motivation. Little (2005) and Morgan (2011) suggest that the pedagogical shift in language learning that places a greater emphasis on self-direction has been brought about in part by the proliferation of language learning resources on the Internet. This project idea stemmed partly from the perennial experience of students finding resources on the Internet and wanting to share their finds with me and the other students. My students have introduced me to some fantastic resources over the years. These finds have provided me with insight into what motivates them as individuals. Recently, a student who is very keen on gaming introduced me to *Influent*, a fun and interactive language learning game in which the player interacts with the world around him. This makes vocabulary learning situated, and much easier to remember. It is available in different languages and is not very expensive. I am planning to introduce it to the students for independent vocabulary study this year. I use this as an example of how students can greatly contribute to the selection of learning resources. Finding materials and demonstrating how resources can contribute to language development is a sign of developing learner autonomy, which has been associated with augmenting motivation and self-direction (Kessler, 2013). Being open and

receptive to student suggestions motivates students to become more engaged in the learning process. Using Pinterest (and even the idea of using Pinterest) has certainly encouraged learners to be alert to found resources, and created a space where students can share. My students know that I am interested in their found resources and open to adapting learning activities to include their finds. Being open and flexible has had a positive impact on student motivation to learn French.

Inviting students to take a more active role in materials selection is an enjoyable way of engaging students in the learning process, and include conversations about how the resource might be used, the goals that are addressed and how learning might be assessed. I have shared the iterative self-directed learning cycle with learners so that they have a visual image of the stages, and to make my goal more explicit to them. Although learners are not ready to be fully autonomous, they are motivated to be more involved, which is a huge step towards becoming more autonomous. In this sense, personalization is an approach that encourages greater learner autonomy, and is motivating provided the degree of autonomy expected is not greater than that which the student is ready for.

I have learned through this experiment that encouraging students to explore and share online language learning resources can increase motivation. However, I am not sold on the idea of necessarily using online curation tools. The hope that creating an online Pinterest community would enhance autonomous language learning relied somewhat on the assumption that users would “find this participation meaningful and rewarding” (Kessler, 2013, p. 307). I have found that only a limited number of students have enjoyed using Pinterest, and in retrospect, it would have made more sense to consult the students before making a choice. Many students already engage in beyond the class learning through exploring online text, cartoons and videos.

However, students at our school tend to prefer the social networking sites Tumblr and Reddit to Pinterest.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

The huge amount of freely and easily available material online has created a need to engage students in materials selection. Tools play a major role in human development (Warschauer, 2005). Thus, the way we learn can be transformed by the tools we use. It is imperative that we actively engage learners in the self-directed learning process, and towards greater learner autonomy, while seeking to better understand the impact that technology has had on teaching and learning.

Personalization is an approach that gradually gives more autonomy to the learner, by engaging them in the learning process, while ensuring that learning is meaningful and relevant. Documents like British Columbia's Education Plan (n.d.) give a very strong indication that personalization in education is not a passing fad. The Council of Europe's CEFR (2001) clearly emphasizes the importance of the development of learner autonomy among language learners, which then allows for greater personalization of learning.

Based on my experiences, I would emphasize that this process is more gradual when learning an additional language than in disciplines that fall within the Humanities for example, and I would reassure teachers, like me, working within a more personalized setting not to expect too much, too soon. As a languages teacher, you are the expert. Train and instruct, because that will help the students learn to communicate in an additional language. Facilitation will naturally occur as you help students acquire new language, and engage them in the learning process. Continue to acknowledge the small steps that you and your students make towards greater learner autonomy. Because students have been trained out of their natural way of learning,

weaning them of this dependence takes years, not weeks, and this lessening can be measured in terms of steps, rather than leaps.

The theoretical model proposed by Jung and Latchem (2011), which I introduced at the beginning of this paper describes teaching and learning in extended spaces. The authors discuss three distinct teaching roles: execution, facilitation and liberation (see page 5). According to them, the learning process can also be broken down into three distinct processes: acquisition, application and construction, which can be seen as a simplified version of Bloom's taxonomy. These distinctions appealed to me greatly when I fell upon it just over six months ago, and it represented a useful jumping off point to my ongoing reflection about the role of the languages teacher.

I now understand that my role as a languages teacher at PSII is different from my other role, that of interdisciplinary high school teacher working with students in the Humanities. I have observed that on the whole, high school students, especially those in grades 9 and 10, seem to benefit from more teacher-directed learning situations, and that having a regular languages class in which teachers "execute" and learners "acquire" allows students to relax into learning, and that this helps to round out their learning experiences within the context of our school. At PSII, we put a lot of energy into encouraging students to initiate learning activities, and helping them find ways to "construct" their learning. We are educating them to be learners and I would describe a lot of what we do in terms of "liberating ... learners' minds and stimulating knowledge construction" (Jung & Latchem, 2011, p. 13). The model proposed by the authors represents a synthesis of teaching styles and learning philosophies, which is how I would ideally like to see my own work at PSII.

Language teaching, particularly in the earlier stages, requires mainly skills-based education and instruction (learning grammar rules, for example), and therefore falls mainly within the ‘executive’ approach. Fenstermacher and Soltis (as cited in Jung & Latchem, 2011) describe the role of the executor as that of the course manager, responsible for “managing the complexities of the teaching and learning, and (helping) to bring about desired outcomes” (p. 10). It is natural for teacher dependence to be higher in a languages classroom. The complex process of language acquisition is best managed by a teacher who understands how to build on the students’ current understanding and ability and extend their learning within their zone of proximal development.

I am satisfied with the modifications that I made along the way to my curriculum plan. I maintained an emphasis on engaging students in the self-directed learning cycle, and used the CEFR descriptors for self-assessment and materials selection, and I was able to recognize elements of liberation in many of the tasks that students are working on already. I observed that students were less interested in curating materials for beyond the class learning, although they continued to find French language resources on the Internet that interested them, and share their discoveries with me and each other. Lessening teacher dependence through their exploration of a topic related to cultural understanding and helping students select materials for their inquiries worked well for this group of learners. In retrospect, I have felt caught between the different roles, and lacking confidence in my choice of approach because of the emphasis on facilitation and liberation within the greater context of the school. It has been difficult for me not to judge my work with the students against the same criteria as less skills-based topics. Having greater confidence in the importance of training and instruction in languages teaching and learning, as there is a natural scope and sequence to learning a language that language teachers use to scaffold learning, and not feeling guilty or incompetent for approaching learning and teaching

this way is one of the most positive outcomes of this project. I have come out the other side with a better understanding of my role as a languages teacher, and a much better appreciation of how training and instruction contributes to teaching and learning at our school.

The CEFR is a very useful toolkit for languages teachers. Although I did not use it as much as I had hoped this term, the students became familiar with the proficiency levels, and used them to gain a clearer sense of their next steps. It was also very helpful in terms of materials selection, as there are many sites that organize resources by CEFR levels. It is the best tool I have found for engaging students in the language learning process so far, and I would very much like to report out using the CEFR proficiency levels rather than letter grades, as they are much more meaningful and easier to interpret.

I have also reflected a lot on how to select Web 2.0 tools for classroom use. Many of the studies I referred to were conducted within a higher education context, and I expected many of the findings to be transferable. I feel I was swept away by the promise of Web 2.0. Living in such a technology rich world, we need to look at ways in which we can balance our technological interactions with real ones. The majority of high school students enjoy face-to-face interactions when learning a language, and have a practical approach to technology use. I have identified some ways in which Web 2.0 might be more successfully integrated into language programs (connecting classrooms, for example), and look forward to future experimentation. As for Pinterest, I will continue to encourage students to try it along with other curation tools, as it is a helpful way of keeping track of and organizing Web resources. I will also continue to use it in order to create choice boards and organize some of my resources, as many languages teachers already do.

The potential of Web 2.0 and participatory online culture to increase language input and TL interaction remains huge. The challenge is in motivating learners to use them. I had assumed that Pinterest was a broad enough platform to accommodate a wide variety of interests, and would therefore be interesting to most learners. This was not the case, and so the next question is, are there other ways in which Web 2.0 tools might be used that learners would find more motivating? I will continue to ask myself these questions, as I still believe that there is much to be gained from using them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are for languages teachers, particularly those who are considering moving towards a more personalized approach to teaching and learning, with the support of the Internet and Web 2.0 tools.

Web 2.0 and online communities. Before assuming that learners will want to extend their community involvement beyond the classroom, it is important to ask whether the need can be addressed within the school. Because I have found our students to be more actively engaged in the here-and-now, I would caution teachers not to rely too heavily on interactions in online spaces, unless there is a strong rationale. I would also recommend asking learners first whether this is something they are interested in doing, and if so, which platforms they might consider using. Despite the growing number of people using social media, it is not a universal preference.

Two scenarios where online participation in social media would make greater sense are if two classes in different schools are working together to practice their language skills. In fact, this is something that I would like to experiment with. Another group of learners that would likely benefit from online interactions are distance learners. As the number of students taking online language courses is increasing, this is something that online teachers may wish to explore.

If you want to encourage students to explore the many freely available online resources, I would recommend that teachers invite students to share one resource that they have found, and to talk about why they like it and how they think it could help them develop as language learners. Students could take turns to present during a weekly timeslot. A small, specific task like this is a lot less intense than what I proposed to my students, but would essentially meet the same goals. For learners who do not know where to start, a list of reliable sites is helpful, such as the one I have provided in Appendix D.

Personalization and differentiation. Despite the growing popularity of these two terms, they both have many varying interpretations, and they are applied in vastly different ways depending on the context. I will attempt to clarify their meanings now, after which I will make some recommendations.

Personalization, a large part of 21st century discourse, is about making learning relevant and meaningful to learners. It's about recognizing the learner's unique learning style, gifts, future goals and interests. The teacher provides "multiple pathways to learning" and maintains a flexible approach that takes into account many things: level of thinking skills requires, types of intelligence, creating a learning environment that is "brain-friendly", knowing the curriculum you are teaching well enough to identify the big ideas (MOE Alberta, 2010, p. 4-9).

Differentiated instruction is part of a number of frameworks that teachers can use to personalize student learning, including UDL (Universal Design to Learning), project inquiry learning, RTI (Response to Intervention) and self regulated learning. While working with students on French language development, I use a differentiated approach, and their cultural inquiries (projects) are another form of personalization.

Differentiated Instruction is a philosophy of teaching that permeates every action a teacher does. The best approach to differentiated instruction is to think about the students first, then let that affect the delivery of content, process and product. Some questions that can help a teacher differentiate their lessons are the following:

- How are they going to show what they know?
- How are they going to take in the information?
- What are the students going to learn?

When asking oneself these questions, be sure to think about the students as both individuals and as a group. Consider how your lessons and activities are flexible enough to allow students to personalize and reflect upon their learning. Allow for students to engage with the content through different mediums, personalize their activities in a way that capitalizes on their interests, and allow students to demonstrate their learning in a way that best works for them. This shifts part of the responsibility of learning onto the student in a real tangible way and allows for them to get involved in the process, and increases student agency.

Shifting part of the responsibility onto the learner is an important part of the process of redefining student-teacher relationships, and addressing the unequal power imbalance in the classroom. It is respectful teaching that acknowledges differences, while making sure all students have access to core content. Personalization and differentiation is a skill that teachers can develop. In the end, it can increase engagement and reduce challenging behavior in the class. Knowing your students well makes it much easier to put into practice. Working with smaller groups of students at PSII has made it relatively easy for me to find effective ways of differentiating and personalizing within a group, and the students have come to expect it as part

of our everyday practice. There are a couple of recommendations that I would emphasize based on my experience in a highly personalized environment.

First of all, if students are constantly being asked to make choices, and they are too open-ended, many of them will experience cognitive overload and feel stressed and anxious about whether or not they have made the ‘right’ choice. Too much choice can be overwhelming. Many of the students learning French find it reassuring to take a languages course where most of the learning objectives are mapped out in advance, as opposed to working backwards from inquiries. They feel relaxed, knowing that the teacher is managing the learning for them. It is a more familiar style of learning for most, and balances out the other areas where more initiative is expected of them. Languages are not the only area which is more teacher directed; math, for example, which is also skills-based, is also taught in a regular class, although the emphasis is on application as much as possible. Developing learner autonomy remains an important, long term goal, but this too must be personalized, and is a gradual process whereby students are invited to actively participate in the learning process with the teacher, through goal setting, self-assessment, selection of materials and activities and peer teaching.

Highlight what is essential, and what is supplementary whenever you are planning. It is also very important to recognize the unique context you are in, and to identify the key features, imagining ways that this might influence the implementation of your planning ideas. It is important to clearly communicate this to students, especially in an environment where they have and expect a lot of choice. Be unambiguous about what is optional, and decisive when something is not one of the choices. Students may interpret your ambiguity in surprising ways. Finally, do not be surprised or disappointed if learners do not take you up on the non-essential or optional work; they may not be as enthusiastic as you are.

Conclusions

I have learned a great deal over the past few years, in my graduate studies and in my teaching roles, especially with relationship to personalized learning, and the many forms it can take. I have been attracted to exploring how technology can be used for language learning and teaching to facilitate a more self-directed, personalized approach. Within this project, I have pushed the boundaries what self-direction and learner autonomy might look like within the context of high school language learning, and this process has provided me with the opportunity to examine the evolving and multifaceted roles of teacher and learner within a learner-centered paradigm.

Casting aside the unequal power dynamic between the learner and the teacher throws motivation and output into debate. Traditionally, students learn and produce work because they are interested in the external reward of a grade and in order to comply with the teacher's demands. This paradigm tends to be very product oriented. In the new paradigm, the learner engages in activities that will help him or her learn based on intrinsic desire and reward, and although creativity and products are still important, the emphasis is more on the process than the product.

This has placed me in an unusual and slightly awkward position as a languages teacher, where I have found students require a more teacher-directed approach. My role embodies elements of both a teacher-centered and a learner-centered paradigm, and in order for me to feel good about my teaching role at PSII, I have had to come to terms with this. In my previous teaching posts in the public and the private system, I was wholly responsible for setting assignments designed for all of the students in the class, assessing learning, and determining the weight of each learning objective within the framework of a course. The students had relatively little control over their learning, relying on the teacher to structure everything for them. There were comparatively few

opportunities for students to take the initiative. In my view, this approach is a fairly reliable way of preparing students to follow orders, but one that depends heavily on external expectations. However, a teacher-centered approach does not take into consideration a student's unique set of motivators, goals and interests, and can have detrimental effects, including killing creativity and stunting initiative.

Moving to PSII and a learner-centered paradigm has had an impact on my language teaching. Rather than designing tasks for a group of learners based on my pre-defined assessment goals, I make much more of an effort to personalize assignments and adapt my expectations to individual ability and the students' learning goals. Being flexible has helped to engage learners who would have struggled to keep up in a more traditional course, and would have probably ended up dropping their language course. I am proud of making language learning more accessible to our students. However, I regularly question my expectations regarding student output, and experiment with ways in which we might motivate learners to increase their output in order to maximize their learning opportunities, without taking over and slipping back into a top down model in which the teacher makes all of the decisions. Lately, I have questioned whether students having so much choice of what they choose to work on works in their favor, and now believe that we need to strive for balance between the two approaches.

In his article entitled *The Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies*, William Pinar (1978) describes the three predominant groups of curriculum theorists: the traditionalists; the conceptual-empiricists; and the reconceptualists. He makes the argument for the need for synthesis in the field, stating that each perspective is "reliant on the other" in order to maintain a healthy and vibrant education system (p. 174). I see our highly personalized approach to curriculum at PSII within the context of a healthy education system. Although not everyone

would necessarily agree with our approach to learning and teaching, it is healthy to be challenging the current mainstream models, and demonstrating alternative approaches, which may, in time, be incorporated in some way into the mainstream.

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Appendix A: Cultural inquiry planning sheet and assessment rubric

The planning stage:

1. How will you conduct your research? What kinds of sources will you consult?

2. What activities are connected to your inquiry? What will you do with your findings?

3. How will you demonstrate what you have learned? What kind of an artifact will you create?

4. What do you need?

General expectations:

- This represents a significant amount of your French course – 20-25%
- There is a significant research component to this inquiry.
- There will be one major artifact of your learning per term (one before Christmas, and another 2 between January and June)
- The artifact will be shared in some way.

Rubric for Cultural Inquiry

	Emerging	Developing	Fluent	Proficient
Research questions	Wrote questions which were not entirely relevant to the chosen topic.	Wrote questions which were slightly lacking in focus.	Wrote well-worded specific questions that were relevant to chosen topic.	Wrote thoughtful, creative, well-worded specific questions that were relevant to the chosen topic.
Selection of sources	Identified no appropriate sources in any format.	Identified a few appropriate sources but made little attempt to balance format types.	Identified mostly appropriate sources in a variety of formats (books, journals, electronic sources)	Identified highly appropriate sources in a variety of formats (books, journals, electronic sources). Demonstrated an ability to critically evaluate sources.
Note taking	Extracted mostly irrelevant information.	Extracted a lot of information that was not relevant.	Extracted mostly relevant information.	Extracted relevant information.
	Wrote notes which included a majority of facts which did not answer the research questions. Most or all notes were copied word-for-word from the original source.	Wrote notes which included irrelevant facts which did not answer the research questions. Some notes were copied directly from the original source.	Wrote notes which included facts that answered most of the research questions and were written in the student's own words.	Wrote notes including succinct key facts which directly answered all of the research questions and were written in the student's own words.
Organization and Synthesis	Presented content which was unfocused, poorly organized, showed little thought or effort and lacked supporting evidence.	Presented content which failed to maintain a consistent focus, showed minimal organization & effort, & lacked an adequate amount of supporting evidence.	Presented most of the content with a logical progression of ideas and supporting evidence.	Presented content clearly and concisely with a logical progression of ideas and effective supporting evidence.
	Did not select an appropriate format to communicate research findings.	Needed to select a more effective format to structure and communicate research findings.	Selected an appropriate format to structure and communicate research findings.	Selected an appropriate and effective format to creatively communicate research findings.
Citations and Documentation	Created citations which were incomplete or inaccurate, and provided no way to check the validity of the information gathered.	Cited most sources of information improperly and provided little or no supporting documentation to check accuracy.	Cited most sources of information in proper format and documented sources to enable accuracy checking.	Cited all sources of information accurately to demonstrate the credibility and authority of the information presented.

Appendix B: Online research quiz

1. Which of the following is an example of effective online searching:
 - a) Do a random keyword search on a search engine of your choice. Then, quickly browse through all of the results listed and find the ones you think have the most useful information.
 - b) Formulate research questions, list possible sources of information, identify keywords, and begin your search.
 - c) Visit chat rooms and see what others are saying about your topic.
 - d) Post a question about your topic on a message board and read all of the replies.

2. Critically evaluating content on the Web is important because
 - a) Web authors are always less professional
 - b) Web authors are always biased
 - c) Anyone can publish on the Web. There's no guarantee that what you're reading is objective and has gone through standard fact-checking and editorial review.
 - d) Printed information is always more accurate than information found on the Web.

3. What is a URL?
 - a) A computer software program
 - b) A type of UFO
 - c) The address of a document or "page" on the World Wide Web.
 - d) An acronym for Unlimited Resources for Learning.

4. Which one of the following is NOT an example of an extension in a URL?
 - a) .gov
 - b) .edu
 - c) .npr
 - d) .com

5. What does this URL tell you about the source? <http://vis.ucsb.edu>
 - a) It is associated with an educational institution.
 - b) It is an English teacher's personal home page.
 - c) It is an article from a magazine.
 - d) It is from a directory.

6. What are the three main search expressions, or operators, recognized by Boolean logic:
 - a) FROM, TO, WHOM
 - b) AND, OR, NOT
 - c) SEARCH, KEYWORD, TEXT
 - d) AND, OR, BUT

7. Which of the following statements about search engines and directories is true?
 - a) A search engine does not discriminate between good and bad sites.
 - b) A search engine displays all Web pages that contain your keywords and may list thousands of unordered results.
 - c) A directory is someone's attempt to categorize the best sites available for a given subject or topic.
 - d) All of the above.

8. You can optimize your search results on the Web by
 - a) Using several different search engines.
 - b) Sticking to your topic and resisting distractions.
 - c) Becoming familiar with and using reliable Web resources such as EBSCOhost.
 - d) All of the above.

9. Which of the following is the best indicator that a Web site is reliable?
 - a) The author of the site tells you the information is reliable.
 - b) The author of the site provides contact information and his or her credentials.
 - c) The author links to her or her favorite Web sites.
 - d) The author states in bold letters that the site was proofread by a librarian.

10. Which is the best search tool for finding Web sites that have been handpicked and recommended by someone else?
 - a) Subject directories.
 - b) Search engines.
 - c) Meta-search engines.
 - d) Discussion groups.

11. Which of the following is a TRUE statement:
 - a) You are free to copy information you find on the Web and include it in your work.
 - b) You do not have to cite the Web sources you use in your work.
 - c) You should never consult Web sources when you are doing research.
 - d) Just like print sources, Web sources must be cited in your bibliography. You are not free to plagiarize information you find on the Web.

Adapted from the two quizzes (basic and expert) on the *Classzone* "Web Research Guide" (McDougal Littell, n.d.).

Appendix C: Evaluating a Web Site (A framework)

Name of site: _____

URL: _____

Questions	My notes
<p>AUTHORITY:</p> <p>Who wrote/published the information on the site? Is the name of the author easily located?</p> <p>Does the author provide contact information?</p> <p>If you search the author of the information on this page, do you find information to indicate that he or she is an expert in this subject area?</p> <p>Has the site been created or sponsored by a reputable organization?</p>	
<p>CURRENCY</p> <p>Is there a date on the page to tell you when it was last updated? Is the date recent?</p> <p>Is this a topic where up to date information matters?</p>	
<p>OBJECTIVITY AND CONTENT</p> <p>What is the site's purpose: to persuade, inform or entertain?</p> <p>Is the site easy to navigate?</p> <p>Does the site provide thorough coverage of the topic?</p> <p>Is the information well-written? Are there grammatical errors or misspellings? Does the site provide a works cited page?</p> <p>Is the creator of the page affiliated with any</p>	

Appendix D: French language learning resources online

A very useful online grammar checker:

<http://bonpatron.com/en/>

A popular and useful online dictionary:

<http://www.wordreference.com/>

An online verb conjugator:

<http://www.verb2verbe.com>

One of my favourite contextualized (corpus) French dictionaries:

<http://www.linguee.fr/>

Pronunciation Guide:

<http://www.forvo.com/languages/fr/>

Beginners and elementary learners:

1. Check out the GVPL library e-resources. You will need a library card and you will also need to know your password. Once you have logged in, you will be able to access language learning resources for many languages, including French.

<http://www.gvpl.ca/digital-content/eresources-by-subject/language-learning/>

2. The University of Texas has made their French course freely available. It is very comprehensive.

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/fi/>

Listening to the following **podcasts** would also be very beneficial:

Learn French with Alexa

Coffee Break French

FrenchPod101

Other good sites for skill development :

Online exercises and activities that go with the course, Discovering French – Blanc:

http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/french_2/book_home.htm?state=WA

Online games: good for practicing vocabulary and grammar:

www.quia.com

TV5 has some great resources for students around current events:

<http://www.tv5.org/index.php>

<http://enseigner.tv5monde.com/collection/7-jours-sur-la-planete>

Interesting video clips – short and varied:

<http://www.dailymotion.com/be-fr>

The BBC has some useful, graded listening activities:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/french/listeningf/>

A blog created by a teacher with lots of online reading and listening activities:

<http://www.lafrancebis.com/>

This site has TONS of videos with short quizzes:

http://www.flevideo.com/quiz_begin.php?id=2997&pagenum=1

This site is very well known by French teachers. You can find songs, texts, videos, grammar help and more:

http://www.lepointdufle.net/ressources_fle/exercices_de_francais.htm

Cool site offering online video immersion – you can access many of them for free:

<http://french.yabla.com/>

List of most common verbs (ER, IR, RE) with translation:

http://www.dudziak.com/french_verbs_without_highlight.pdf

Good site for French expressions:

<http://www.globule.org/~gpierre/french.php>

Excellent site where you can practice your verbs and vocabulary:

<http://www.golearn.net/>

Animal sounds in different languages (for fun!)

<http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2013/07/what-different-languages-think-different-animals-sound-like/>