

Connections: Exploring Charles Moravia's *Le fils du tapissier: épisode de la vie de Molière* in the Introductory French Language Classroom

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Abstract

This paper describes one approach to focusing on Connections, one of the five Cs from the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, as a means of exposing introductory language students to culturally diverse authentic texts through drama-based pedagogy. Our approach focuses on an instructor working within an established departmental curriculum for introductory language courses. Despite these constraints, the instructor was able to create a two-day instructional sequence that allowed students to interact with each other through their engagement with the work of the Francophone playwright Charles Moravia (1875-1938). The activity sequence was embedded in the grammar and vocabulary presented in the assigned textbook chapter, aligned with the communicative goals for the unit, and also integrated the graduate student instructor's own doctoral research interests in a way that was energizing for instructor and students alike. The authors demonstrate the viability of expanding a given syllabus to offer novice language students a more culturally diverse range of authentic texts, including a range of genres, all while consistently serving the needs of a proficiency-based classroom.

Keywords: *proficiency, drama-based pedagogy, Francophone, authentic texts, novice learners*

Instructors who teach coordinated multi-section courses face a number of complex dynamics in their classrooms while often having little say in determining the curriculum or the syllabus. Day-to-day instructional decisions are typically guided by the needs of standardized assessments rather than the interests and expertise of the instructor or the students. We are especially conscious of the challenges faced by graduate student instructors, who are likely to be new to the classroom, engaged in highly specialized study within their field, and also developing signature pedagogies and techniques that they will carry with them into future faculty positions.

In this article, we argue that instructors teaching under such constraints can effectively integrate their own literary and cultural interests into their teaching, expand the syllabus to include diverse representation, and scaffold the types of immersive and community-engaged practices that are the hallmark of upper-level lan-

guage study. All this can be done while also teaching for proficiency and meeting the goals of the coordinated syllabus. As Lord and Lomicka (2018) pointed out, language departments generally are slow to move toward integrated approaches, despite the forward momentum of specific individuals within their ranks. The practices we recommend fall under several of the standards from the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (National Collaborative Board, 2015), notably the “Connections” standard which requires language learners at all levels to “...build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively” (p. 1 in the summary) as well as to “... access and evaluate information and diverse perspectives that are available through the language and its cultures.”

This article lays out a pedagogical example designed by Jacob Abell, co-author of this article and graduate student instructor of a second semester French course. Abell’s two-day sequence of instructional activities centered on the Haitian play “Le fils du tapissier: épisode de la vie de Molière” [The Upholsterer’s Son: Episode from the Life of Molière] (Moravia, 1923), integrated his own professional interest in theater, and enlivened a required textbook-based unit on the theme of labor and work. Students engaged with a comprehensible excerpt of the text, experiencing in the process a Haitian introduction to Molière as well as an underrepresented voice in Francophone drama.

Historical Consciousness and L2 Community Engagement

In the MLA’s 2007 report on the state of foreign language education, the profession was charged with the mission of creating new structures and approaches for developing students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes that represent the highest ideals of humanities education:

In the course of acquiring functional language abilities, students are taught critical language awareness, interpretation and translation, historical and political consciousness, social sensibility, and aesthetic perception. They acquire a basic knowledge of the history, geography, culture, and literature of the society or societies whose language they are learning. (para. 10)

In order to meet these ambitious objectives in language education, the MLA notes that departments must “systematically incorporate transcultural content and translingual reflection at every level” (para 13). Yet, just as language instruction must be scaffolded to correspond to the growing competences and capabilities of a student group, the type of community engagement and immersive experiences that lead to transcultural competence must also be scaffolded to gradually increase in complexity and to require more authentic engagement from students. First year students may not have the intercultural or communicative skills to be able to engage effectively in service learning, for example. However, by scaffolding service activities, students can, over time in the program, develop the range of skills necessary for communicating with respect in the L2 community.

This principle also applies with other immersive experiences. We broadly define immersive experience as any language learning experience in which students use language for authentic purposes rather than solely as an academic endeavor. As

an example, consider Granda's course which she described in her 2019 article. Her students explored the Way of St. James's pilgrimage route without actually walking it themselves. Recreating or reenacting the experience at a distance becomes an immersive, performative, interpersonal, and communicative experience that is highly educative without providing the fully immersed experience of physically traveling the Way. This sort of scaffolding is required at all levels if we as a profession plan to meet the ambitious goals laid out in the MLA report (2007). Through immersive learning, instructors can prepare students to read different genres from a variety of time periods and geographical locations by starting at the earliest levels with developmentally appropriate texts and building over time.

Drama-based Pedagogy

One type of immersive experience that is practical and potentially immersive at the lower levels of language learning is drama-based pedagogy (DBP). Lee et al. (2015) have explored the benefits of DBP for student learning across different subjects and disciplines. Broadly construed as "a collection of drama-based teaching and learning strategies to engage students in learning," (p. 4) drama-based pedagogy aims to offer students an "embodied process-oriented approach to learning." As such, DBP can describe a range of learning activities, from interactive engagement with a dramatic text in the classroom to fully realizing a dramatic performance for a public. While more research is needed to establish the consistent benefits of DBP in different learning environments, Lee et al. (2015) summarize several studies over the last thirty years that have shown some demonstrable benefits in both learning outcomes and other positive social outcomes among learners. For instance, DBP "may be effective because it reflects an environment in which basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported" (p. 5). Furthermore, studies have shown that DBP is correlated with positive outcomes in academic achievement across curricula in the sciences, mathematics, and foreign language instruction. While more research seems required to supply a clearer picture of these achievement gains, studies already suggest that DBP can lead to "positive effects on oral and written language outcomes" (p. 7) in language arts contexts.

In the advanced French-language classroom, Mangerson (2019) and Virtue (2013) have both introduced fully realized dramatic performance into their curricula. Mangerson (2019) forged a partnership between her upper-level French drama course and the Francophone Youth Theater Festival. Founded in Chicago, the festival "was created in 2016 to propose a new pedagogical practice of the French language through the staging of plays, and to encourage American students to speak French with pleasure and confidence through performance" (p. 50). The festival largely consisted of high school student groups who analyzed the text of a French language play as part of their academic coursework. Eventually, they staged these plays as fully realized performances for the public. Mangerson's (2019) upper-level university students were the exclusive university-level participants, staging scenes from several plays ordered around a common theme. As a result, "a survey course in French drama was transformed into an experiential learning opportunity" (p. 46).

Virtue (2013) described a similar project in which her upper-level medieval French literature course performed the Old French play, "Le jeu d'Adam" [The Play of

Adam]. Virtue's (2013) students analyzed the play as dramatic literature, conducted scholarly research on the text, and even adapted the material into modern French. Like Mangerson's (2019) project, Virtue's (2013) work with students culminated in a public performance for a variety of French language learners, including high school students from area schools. In reflecting on the benefits of the process, Virtue (2013) notes that dramatic performance can help students to overcome what Savoia has called the "great divide" (as cited in Virtue, p. 883), the gap in skills required for students to succeed in the relatively straightforward content of introductory language classes versus the more complex, intellectually rigorous, and conceptually challenging aspects of advanced courses. Willis Allen (2009) has discussed a similar division, one that emphasizes a gap in curriculum rather than student learning. This "language-literature split" (p. 88) describes the way in which introductory language curricula often emphasize grammar and language acquisition whereas literary and cultural topics tend to be reserved for advanced classes. Despite an awareness of this broad curricular split between language and literature, "little has changed in how foreign language teachers and students grapple with the consequent discontinuities of the curriculum" (p. 88). Willis Allen's observation amplifies Savoia's (2010) argument that upper-level students often find themselves underprepared for the sorts of activities (such as dramatic performance) that advanced courses demand. Clearly, introductory language students need more opportunities to prepare the skills required for advanced coursework while also having occasions to explore literature and culture before upper-level courses.

In order to lessen the difficulty of the student transition into advanced courses, Savoia (2010) created "The Italian Theatrical Workshop" for third-year students. The curriculum carefully scaffolded a semester-long process of building skills in text analysis, communication, L2 pronunciation, and collaboration in order to support more robust forms of theatrical performance in the target language. Similarly, Virtue (2013) asserted the value of dramatic performance to close the gap posed by the "great divide," promoting "communicative skills and language proficiency" (p. 883) in a way that eases the difficult passage from introductory to advanced courses.

The success of DBP in the classroom, however, may depend upon the right forms of academic preparation. Specifically, Lee et al. (2015) have suggested that the effectiveness of DBP is at least partially contingent on a student group's prior experience with interactive forms of learning: "Even students who are readily active in learning may need practice in how to participate in theatre games or role-playing in an educational setting" (p. 10). Crucially, the activities ordered around dramatic literature described in Savoia (2010), Mangerson (2019), and Virtue (2013) all occurred in upper-level courses. In this article, we describe one instance of a classroom activity that can help prepare students with basic level-appropriate skills in communication, text analysis, and low stakes performance--all skills that can be introduced through activities that harmonize with standardized departmental curricula.

Diverse Representations and ACTFL Standards at all Levels

As established above, there is a gap in practice in theater-based pedagogy between lower and upper level classrooms. In addition, students who move onto the upper levels of French at the university level will also be expected to engage in textual analysis of literature and will be exposed to a variety of language sources, particularly

literature written by people of diverse origins and perspectives or with identities that are underrepresented in the canonical tradition.

Furthermore, many students in introductory language courses do not continue to take courses once their general education requirement has been fulfilled. As Garrett-Rucks (2016) has noted, statistics featured in the 2010 MLA enrollment report “showed that only 9% of students at the college/university level study a foreign language, and at the advanced level, the percentage is 1.6% (Zimmer-Loew, 2008, p. 625).” (p.10) The gap in these percentages suggests just how few students opt to continue their study of foreign languages at the advanced level. This effectively means that most students who come through a language department on a college campus will not have the opportunity to develop the range of skills we aspire to impart through language study at the college level. Therefore, waiting until the upper levels of language study will not be an effective strategy for developing the historical consciousness, social sensibility, or understanding of diverse L2 communities as described in the MLA’s white paper on the future of the profession. With respect to historical consciousness, the need for early exposure in introductory courses may be especially critical; before initiating the lesson that we recount below, many students in the described introductory French language course had little or no awareness of Haitian history, French colonialism, or the fact that Francophone writers had reimagined canonical French figures through drama. Our activity was the first opportunity for some students to gain even a cursory experience of entire literary and cultural traditions that they had not substantively encountered through their high school classes in language, history, and literature.

In language instruction at all levels, ACTFL’s world readiness standards propel the proficiency movement by asking teachers to focus on the “Five Cs” of Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities rather than presenting language as a collection of static lexical items and grammatical rules. Teaching students to make sense of authentic resources, meaning literary texts, artifacts from everyday use, pop culture, and other examples of community-generated texts used for authentic communicative purposes, is at the center of language instruction and particularly of critical approaches to language instruction (Conlon Perugini et al., 2019). ACTFL has long promoted interactive reading and listening comprehension tasks to be designed and carried out using “authentic cultural texts of various kinds with appropriate scaffolding and follow-up tasks that promote interpretation” (ACTFL, n.d.). Barnes-Karol and Broner (n.d.) recommend curating a collection of diverse authentic resources including images, literary texts, and other comprehensible resources to use as anchor texts within any given unit. For instructors teaching lower-level language courses at the college level, these authentic texts provide necessary L2 input for our students and also prepare students for the more advanced community engagement and textual analysis to come.

Teaching Authentic Texts in a Communicative Framework

If communication in the target language is the goal of the course, then we should start with a communicative basis for our pedagogy. Communication is essentially the successful sending and receiving of messages, but that is not as simple as it may seem on the surface.

Even the exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context; it depends on the ability to decenter and take up the perspective of the listener or reader. But successful 'communication' is not judged solely in terms of the efficiency of information exchange. It is focused on establishing and maintaining relationships. (Byram, 1997, p. 3)

Our framework for a communicative pedagogy, in particular at the lower levels of instruction which is the focus of our teaching and of this article, has four elements:

- Start with rich sources of comprehensible language to provide meaningful and culturally authentic input for students to process.
- Provide low-stakes, low-production opportunities to communicate that build confidence and increase in difficulty over time (scaffolding).
- Ask students to produce language using the building blocks presented in the input.
- Provide feedback in a way that increases student confidence/risk-taking and promotes further communication.

Derived from principles set down by Scott (2010), our approach to meaningful communicative activities emphasizes the importance of students communicating with one another, the use of authentic texts, comprehensible instructor input, and the avoidance of "repetitive or noncreative" (p. 125) student activity. With this framework as a guide for all instruction, the following lesson represents a communicative approach to incorporating theater, historical consciousness, and diverse representations into a lower-level course that followed a departmentally standardized syllabus.

Example from a Second-Semester French Classroom

In 2017, I (Abell, first author and instructor of record for the course) planned a lesson in consultation with my co-author (Johnson) which I later developed and executed. This lesson introduced aspects of my own research on Francophone drama into my introductory language classroom curriculum. During that semester of my graduate work, I was translating into English and staging a production of the French-language play, "Le fils du tapissier: épisode de la vie de Molière" written by the Haitian playwright Charles Moravia (1875-1938). The play imagines the seventeenth-century playwright Molière, the titular son of the king's upholsterer, as he passionately declares his desire to become a dramatist to his disapproving father. In the course of rehearsing the play with the English-speaking cast, I realized that the French text of Moravia's play signaled a rich opportunity to develop several of the ACTFL goals described above. On the one hand, Moravia's play could serve as an introduction to the figure of Molière, whose plays form a crucial component of advanced literature and drama courses in many undergraduate French language programs. "Le fils du tapissier" also provided a way to introduce this crucial literary figure through the voice and perspective of a Caribbean writer, one whose cultural context as a Haitian artist lent a complex and enriching context for discussing colonial and post-colonial themes in the context of French history.

I had first been introduced to Moravia's plays by my colleague, Nathan Dize (2017). Dize also voiced the importance of incorporating texts, ideas, and traditions from the francophone Caribbean in order to diversify representations of French-language speakers and cultures throughout French language curricula. Acting on this crucial suggestion, I developed a brief lecture on the Haitian Revolution for use in my introductory French course. Students were particularly receptive to this addition to the course curriculum and approached me after class with enthusiastic questions; it was clear that the complex political, racial, and cultural dynamics of Haitian history had piqued their curiosity even after a modest introduction.

Building on the demonstrable interest of these introductory language learners, I created a series of classroom activities based on the reading, discussion, and performance of a brief key passage from the emotional climax of Charles Moravia's play. Following the communicative model described previously, this activity had four parts spanning two days. On the first day, I presented an overview and background information; on the second day, students worked with a selection from the play itself.

With this two-day sequence, I hoped that students would emerge with an introductory exposure to a Haitian playwright, a historical awareness of Francophone drama from beyond France, and a deepened capacity to recognize the course's vocabulary and grammar in an authentic text. I had several criteria in mind when selecting an exchange of dialogue from the larger work. The passage should have relatively comprehensible vocabulary. Students should feel empowered by their nascent language abilities. Finally, the selection from the play should correspond to the material of the pre-established course curriculum. The dramatic text was written in verse, but I selected a passage whose vocabulary and grammar were appropriately matched to the beginning proficiency of novice students and could correspond to the material of the current thematic unit on the arts, labor, and work. In the brief scene extracted from "Le fils du tapissier" (see fig. 1), the vocabulary--dialogue between two characters--was highly focused around the fine arts and labor. Grievously disappointed in his son's decision to pursue a life in the theater, Molière's father asks, "*Mais que vas-tu faire en attendant?*" [But what will you do in the meantime?] In the resulting exchange, Molière triumphantly shows the contract that he has already signed with the *Illustre Théâtre*.

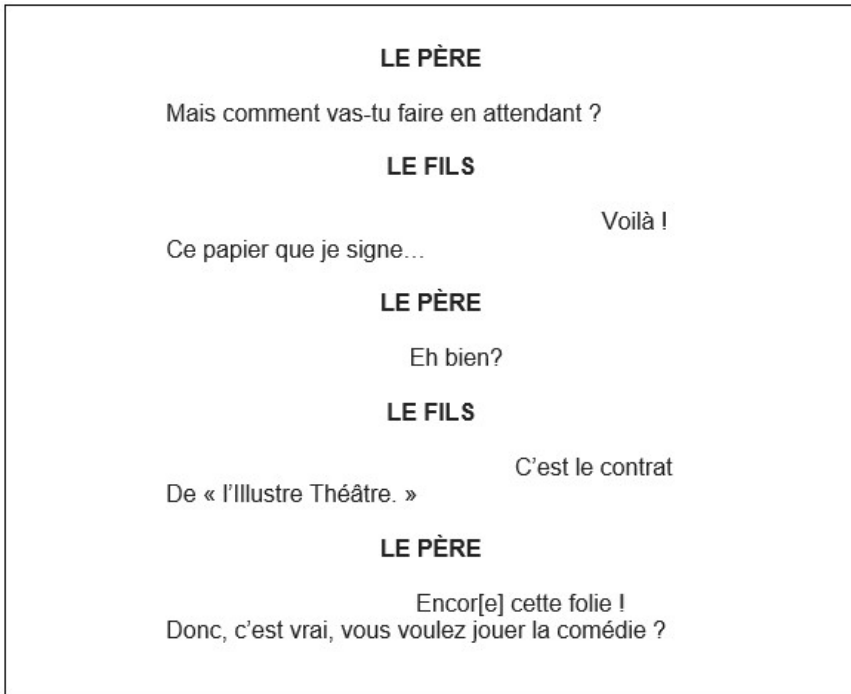


Figure 1. Excerpt from Charles Moravia's *Le fils du tapissier: épisode de la vie de Molière*

These brief exchanges highlight terms like *contrat*, *comédie*, *théâtre* [contract, comedy, theater] and associated verbs such as *jouer*, *signer*, *faire* [to play, to sign, to do]; this lexical field was all imminently related to the students' chapter vocabulary related to occupations, work, and professions.

To prepare students to engage this comprehensible selection from the play, I composed a short lecture in comprehensible French (fig. 2) that covered a basic historical overview of Charles Moravia, the plot of his play prior to the scene to be explored in class, and the figure of Molière. During the first class of the two-day sequence, I delivered this brief lecture/historical overview in comprehensible French to establish background knowledge and teach basic vocabulary relevant to the selected passage from the play before jumping into the authentic text the next day. To ensure student comprehension, I distributed a handout that included key summary points corresponding to my oral remarks. This handout allowed students to follow the logical flow of my brief lecture as I spoke, while also giving students a reference sheet containing essential knowledge they needed to approach the authentic text the next day. Because students had not yet learned the *passé composé* [past tense], the lecture summary notes were written entirely in the present tense.

I. Le Contexte
<u>Le fils du tapissier</u> est une <u>pièce de théâtre</u> .
<u>Le dramaturge</u> est Charles Moravia.
Charles Moravia est né en 1875.
Charles Moravia est haïtien. Il parle français.
La pièce a deux personnages : un père et un fils.
Le père s'appelle Jean-Baptiste Poquelin. Le fils s'appelle aussi Jean-Baptiste Poquelin.
Le père travaille pour le roi français.
Le fils aime le théâtre ; il veut travailler au théâtre.

Figure 2. *Excerpt from Student Handout*

As part of this initial lecture, I also distributed a historical photo of the original Haitian cast of the play. The selection from the play, the comprehensible teacher-delivered background information, and the photo provided the necessary input for students to effectively engage the material.

On the second day of the two-day sequence, I distributed a small packet that featured a photo of the original Haitian cast of “Le fils du tapissier”. Using that image, students were asked to write responses to printed questions that made use of vocabulary that they had learned in preceding chapters. For example, the prepared worksheet asked students to identify what articles of clothing the actors were wearing (« *Regarde le vieil homme sur la photo; qu'est-ce qu'il met?* ») [Look at the old man in the photograph; what is he wearing?] I then called on individual students to share their answers, which led to comparing and contrasting different student responses out loud. This also gave students the opportunity to vocalize answers that they had first prepared in writing. For novice learners, such an approach allowed students to more confidently compare their recorded responses out loud rather than engaging in a spontaneous, unstructured exchange across the whole classroom. By exploring questions of costuming and clothing in this way, the activity not only engaged material from the current textbook chapter, but also served as a cumulative activity that allowed students critical opportunities to use previous learning from the semester in their engagement with the authentic text.

With these simple activities, I had hoped to allow students to reflect on the cultural complexities of a Haitian representation of a cultural figure (Molière) so valorized in the literary canon of Haiti's former colonial oppressors. Nevertheless, these

novice level students lacked the L2 skills necessary to express many of the necessarily complex ideas that such a reflection would inevitably require. In order to allow for some degree of reflection on this pivotal cultural question, I asked each student to reflect on the following question as a class: « À ton avis, c'est une pièce de théâtre *française*? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas? » [In your opinion, is this a French play? Why or why not?] At a superficial level, the students were merely asked to defend a yes or no answer to a simple question: Is this a French play or not? However, as the students quickly surmised, the difficulty of answering the question derived from the challenge of identifying the extent to which the language of the play signaled the play's identity. Ultimately, several students shared comprehensible responses that largely expressed a similar conclusion: While the play was written in French and focused the plot on a French figure, it should not be considered a "French play" since the playwright, his cast, and the play's initial audiences were all Haitian. I then asked follow-up questions that led students to more complex considerations of the play's use of French. Even with their novice level skills, students were able to understand and discuss basic concerns related to the impact of colonialism on the creation and reception of this Haitian play written in French.

While this brief exchange was structured as a conversation around a single question supplied by the instructor, the nature of the question and subsequent answers arguably helped to introduce students to the most basic intercultural skills that would be required for eventual, more complex forms of interaction with L2 populations and the authentic texts issuing from L2 communities. The combination of a variety of authentic resources, comprehensible teacher talk, and intellectually stimulating follow-up questions aligns with current conceptions of how to emphasize critical thinking in introductory language courses (Barnes-Karol & Broner, n.d.; Scott, 2010).

The activity then invited students to immerse themselves in the play by taking on roles. Students formed pairs in which each student read aloud the text of the dramatic passage by playing the role of Molière or his father. This final activity allowed the students to practice reciting dramatic text in character without the pressure of performance in front of the entire class. Instead, the pairing model allowed students to enter into the imaginative world of the text in a communicative activity whose brevity and small-scale helped to lower the emotional stakes of the exercise. To conclude this highly structured mini-performance, I divided the class into a group of "fathers" and a group of "sons." The entire class then performed the scene out loud with all the "fathers" reading the lines of le père and all the "sons" performing the text of le fils. This extension of the performative component encouraged students to step beyond their comfort zones through group work, while still benefiting from the support of several classmates who were all playing the same role simultaneously.

Finally, the packet invited students to imagine what each character might say after the conclusion of the brief selected passage (fig. 3).

À l'écrit. Ajoutons au texte dramatique.

Imaginez que vous êtes des dramaturges. Vous avez un fragment d'une pièce de théâtre, mais vous n'avez pas tout le texte. Comment est-ce que vous allez continuer le dialogue du père et son fils ? Avec un partenaire, écrivez une nouvelle phrase pour chaque personnage:

LE PÈRE

Encore cette folie !
Donc, c'est vrai, vous voulez jouer la comédie ?

LE FILS

LE PÈRE

Figure 3. *Excerpt from Student Activity Worksheet*

Since the dialogue between the two characters was characterized by short bursts of intensely emotional questions, students were able to imagine a hypothetical extension of the scene by writing down an additional pair of questions and answers between the father and the son. Responses ranged dramatically: Some students affirmed Molière's ardent desire to become a playwright before dramatizing the father's ongoing reluctance. Other students decided that Molière would have a sudden change of heart, as if his father's conservatism had persuaded the young aspiring artist to abandon his pretensions to a life in theater.

This last portion of the lesson plan was motivated by a desire to allow students to participate in the text through contributing their own imaginative projections of the story's plot. As Scott (2010) has argued, meaningful communication activities should deemphasize a "focus on accuracy" while also encouraging "students to express their own meaning" (p. 125). These two principles presume a shared concern for allowing students the necessary freedom to generate spoken and written communication without the fear of penalties associated with imperfect language use.

The two-day activity concluded with the instructor calling on partners to share their imagined continuations of the scene. Students visibly enjoyed this portion of the activity. Whereas their performance opportunities had been limited to partner work and choral recitation of the prepared text, this final activity saw students taking pleasure in sharing their own original construals of Moravia's characters. Throughout the remainder of the textbook chapter, I often referred back to this concluding portion of the Moravia unit in order to ground the unit's vocabulary in the original content that students had produced in their interactions with "Le fils du pâtissier."

Structures for Success

This approach presumed a few crucial structural features that were necessary for success. First, as a graduate student, the instructor was teaching in a department that encouraged graduate students to integrate innovative interventions into a standardized curriculum. Under the leadership of the department teaching coordinator, graduate student instructors were required to teach courses based on a common textbook and syllabus. However, instructors were always welcome to incorporate authentic text exercises that complimented the content of the textbook. This structure gave early career teachers the opportunity to rely on the structure of a standardized curriculum while also allowing them to develop their own voices as teachers through integrating texts and resources that had shaped their own experience of Francophone cultures. For an instructor who is also a scholar in the field, this flexibility in the curriculum provides essential opportunities for sharing one's passion for the discipline with students even in first-year courses.

This kind of flexibility is certainly crucial to replicating the sorts of activities described here. Graduate student teachers, early career instructors, and other professors teaching introductory courses do not always have the professional support that allows for curricular innovation, particularly when the focus is on a syllabus designed to cover large ground in grammar. Nevertheless, the experience described here shows how even a modest amount of curricular flexibility can be sufficient for a lower-level language teacher to incorporate authentic text exercises that prepare their students for more advanced forms of drama-based pedagogy, textual analysis, and engagement with diverse communities.

Second, we suggest that this kind of curricular intervention is most effective when the lesson content is integrated with the existing vocabulary and themes of the established curriculum unit. As described above, the introduction of Moravia's play built upon the textbook chapter that introduced related vocabulary and thematic content. Yet it is no less important that this curricular fit need not be comprehensive or perfect. In fact, we believe that instructors should not feel that they must wait to find a perfect fit between textbook and curriculum intervention for this approach to be effective. The goal is to situate the lesson such that the surrounding curriculum builds students' essential competencies in preparation for future language study.

Third, the integration of an instructor's research and professional passions can help students to meet the World-Readiness Connections standard, as well as enliven an instructor's practice in ways that impassion both the instructor and students. The benefit of this practice presumes a necessary connection between excellent teaching and the investment of the instructor in teaching the course material. Since it can be difficult to infuse that kind of vitality into teaching a prescribed curriculum from a pre-selected, pre-packaged text, anything an instructor can do to increase their investment in their teaching is intrinsically beneficial. Furthermore, the activity discussed here models an approach whereby complex literature can be integrated into the introductory language classroom. Many instructors will be most comfortable incorporating simple authentic texts, such as tweets or film trailers; however, our experience suggests the viability of incorporating culturally embedded literary sources into novice learning provided that the literary sources are properly scaffolded to reflect the competencies of the student group.

Conclusion

This activity does not offer a universal model for introducing authentic texts in an introductory language classroom, nor do we intend to suggest a single model for scaffolding the necessary stages to prepare students for more realized forms of DBP in advanced courses. Nevertheless, this classroom project demonstrates principles and practices that can serve introductory language teachers in their work.

The successful integration of dramatic literature in a novice learning environment combats the belief that literature is simply too challenging for introductory language students. As Savoia (2010) has argued:

There appears to be wide consensus at the present on the belief that doing away with the study of literature altogether severely hampers the acquisition of real cultural and critical literacy, and the exclusion of literature from the early stages of language learning is unnecessary, unwise, and in fact harmful to the effective articulation of language curricula (p. 116).

The approach described in this article offers a substantiating example in support of this growing consensus about the positive role of literature in the lower-level language classroom.

At the level of curriculum design, the example reported here also demonstrates the viability of expanding a given syllabus to offer French language students a more culturally diverse range of authentic texts. This goal can be achieved while consistently serving the needs of a proficiency-based classroom. As such, we argue that the overarching aim of linguistic proficiency can be attained while promoting crucial exposure to Francophone traditions outside France and preparing students for more robust forms of DBP. It is our hope that foreign language teachers will proliferate their own models of bridging the “great divide” while also propagating underrepresented voices in the languages that they teach.

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