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PENNSYLVANIA LANGUAGE FORUM

Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association

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ABOUT

Pennsylvania Language Forum (*PLF*) is the semiannual online publication of *the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association*. It features articles on teaching strategies, lesson plans, project ideas, and research by and for world language teachers in Pennsylvania.

PSMLA Members will receive an invitation to view the journal online through the publications section of our website. A digital archive of previous issues is also available online. Visit https://psmla.org/pennsylvania-language-forum to access *PLF* online.

SUBMISSIONS

Article submissions are accepted on a rolling basis but must be received by February 15 to be considered for publication in the Spring issue of *PLF* or by August 15 for the Fall issue.

Contributors have the option of submitting their article for peer review. To learn more about that process, please see page XX for further details. All other submissions should follow the guidelines outlined below.

Submission Guidelines

- PSMLA members may submit titled articles related to teaching and language education.
- All submissions must be written in English, though examples of lessons or student work may be in the target language.
- All articles must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document or a Google Doc, formatted using Times New Roman 12-point font and be double-spaced. PDF article submissions will not be considered for publication.
- Scanned documents and photographs that accompany the article submission must be clearly identified and labeled. They must be submitted as a JPG or PNG.
- All documents of the submission must include the following information:
    - Name(s) of author(s)
    - Affiliation(s)
    - Language(s) taught
    - Intended levels, when relevant
    - Release Form(s) for any photographs (available at online)

Submissions must be submitted online using the submission link on the PSMLA website.

All authors and any co-authors must be current PSMLA members. PSMLA members whose work is chosen for publication will be notified via email and will receive a final copy of their submission for approval before publication.

Contact PLF

PSMLA is not currently accepting ads for the *Pennsylvania Language Forum.* Vendors wishing to advertise should consult the Advertising Manager's page on the PSMLA website (www.psmla.org). All other questions may be directed to Nathan Campbell or Christina Huhn, Co-Editors of PLF, at PALanguageForum@psmla.org.

Call for Submissions – Peer Reviewed Articles

Pennsylvania Language Forum: Peer Review Process

Aim and Scope: *Pennsylvania Language Forum* (*PLF*) is PSMLA's annual publication. The journal features a selection of original scholarly articles that are chosen by a peer review process.

The Editorial Board of *PLF* welcomes original scholarly, research-based articles that address issues directly related to world language teachers in Pennsylvania. Peer Reviewed articles should maintain a classroom relevance for world language educators at all levels in Pennsylvania. Dissertations should be refined and re-focused, as dissertations are too long and detailed for a published article. Research conducted in the K-12 classroom is highly encouraged.

Potential Topics may include:

- **Empirical research studies** and application of high-leverage practices in the World Language Classroom in the state of PA. Submissions of ***empirical research*** for the peer-reviewed section of the journal should generally include the following sections
  - ✓ Introduction
  - ✓ Literature Review
  - ✓ Methodology
  - ✓ Discussion or Results
  - ✓ Implications for the Classroom
  - ✓ Conclusion
  - ✓ Acknowledgements (optional)
  - ✓ Works Cited

- Literature reviews of published scholarship on ***Technology in World Language Education, including AI, classroom applications, etc.*** The reviews of literature should include research with a classroom focus, and focus on research completed within the last 10 years"
- Scholarly research focusing on ***language proficiency development***.
- Scholarly articles on **literary topics, cultural topics, or interdisciplinary topics** are welcome, provided the article is focused on classroom applications.
- Literature reviews or scholarship on ***World Language Advocacy.***
- Scholarship on ***unique learning contexts, such as content-based instruction, heritage language learners, special needs, or social-emotional learning, among others with a classroom connection to the PA World Language Classroom.***

All submissions should follow the general constructs of academic research and be applicable to the World Language Classroom in Pennsylvania.

Peer-Review Process: All manuscripts follow a blind review process and are first reviewed by the editor(s) of the journal and then sent for blind review by members of the Editorial Board. Manuscripts must follow the submission guidelines below.

Manuscript Preparation Guidelines

1. Submissions must be original work that has not been previously published or be presently under review by another journal.

2. Submissions must be written in standard academic English. Authors should follow APA guidelines consistently. Use https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html as a reference as needed.
3. All submissions are initially read by the Editor(s) (first review) and then if deemed appropriate and *all* guidelines were followed, sent out to a group of appropriate experts for blind review. Submissions should include a title page as a separate document that includes:
    a. Article Title
    b. Article abstract
    c. Name(s) of author(s)
    d. Affiliation(s)
    e. Language(s) taught
    f. Intended level(s), when relevant
    g. Release Form(s) for any images or materials (available at https://psmla.org/pennsylvania-language-forum)
4. The anonymity of the author(s) *must be ensured* by removing all identifiers from the manuscript. This can be done by referring to any identifying information as "Author X, University X, etc.)
5. All manuscripts must be submitted as .doc, docx, or rtf files. Use Times New Roman 12 point, double space.
6. All in-text quotes require page numbers or paragraph sources for nonpaginated sources. Use *italics* for emphasis; not quote marks.
7. Word limitations are as follows: Title [15 words]; Abstract [150 words]; Key Words [5]; full article, [approximately 5,000 words (roughly 15 pages)].
8. Submissions must be submitted online using the submission link on the PSMLA website.
9. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor(s) within 2 weeks of receipt.
10. Authors are responsible for completing Human Subjects and IRB requirements and securing publication rights when using images.

Rubric for peer-reviewed submissions:

	Exceeds	**Meets Expectations**	**Further Development Required**
Relevance	Article is very relevant and timely both to the Aim and Scope of the PLF and World Languages.	Article is relevant to Aim and Scope of PLF but some improvements should be considered by the editor(s).	Article topic not relevant to Aim and Scope of PLF.
Citations	Article is well cited, following APA citation guidelines as identified in the Author instructions.	Article is well cited, following APA citation guidelines, but there are a few errors that will require attention from the editors,	Article is missing citations or citations are largely inaccurate.
Mechanics	Article is very well-written, free of typographical or structural errors.	Article is well-written and free of typographical errors but may have a few sections that will require the editor(s) attention.	Article contains significant typographical errors or structural errors beyond what the editorial process can support.

Nathan Campbell & Christina Huhn
Co-Editors, *Pennsylvania Language Forum*
PSMLA

Dedicated educators in Pennsylvania are working hard to lead the way for a stronger, fully funded, and richer education for our students. As editors of this publication, we continue to be in awe of the work that our members are doing around the state to improve our profession, share best practices, and support each other. In this edition of the *Pennsylvania Language Forum,* we hope that you will draw inspiration from the reflections, opportunities, and ideas shared from our members and peers.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications, such as ChatGPT, have been making headlines. Seemingly, out of nowhere these applications have taken the country by storm, popping up in social media networks, as customer service assistants, and especially in educational settings. As educators, we know that we must learn to understand, challenge, and incorporate the novel; or it will distract from our learning objectives for our students. The current issue offers several articles on potential uses, applications, and caveats about the role AI can play in our classrooms. This topic was also a primary topic at the Fall 2023 conference.

First, an interview with the 2024 Teacher of the Year Jennifer McGonagle shares some of the thoughts and concerns teachers may have about the explosion of AI in the language education profession (p.35). Sarah Dutton (p.39) and Lennie Amores (p.43) continue this timely topic by offering sample ways and caveats for using AI.

Encouraging us to reduce our own blind spot in language instruction, Mike Bogdan focuses on the pedagogy of incorporating listening into the classroom (p.27). Mike offers strategies and practical ideas for increasing this often overlooked, but very important skill.

Advocacy continues to take front and center in our profession, as Jason Hank offers a first-hand perspective of the connections between our classrooms, students, and the future of our profession (p.19). PSMLA's latest Advocacy efforts include the formation of a Task Force, chaired by Cherie Garrett, of Dallastown High School. The task force is tackling issues such as the effects of the long-term lack of state-level standards, the absence of a content specific coordinator at the state level, and the creation of a statewide summit focusing on the workforce demand for language skills in Pennsylvania (p.17).

We hope you find this a thought-provoking and practical issue of our journal!

Megan Flinchbaugh
President
PSMLA

Greetings, world language educators and PSMLA members. It is an honor to serve as your President. I look forward to a year full of potential and growth–for our profession and for all of us as individuals.

Professional Development

Mark your calendar! This fall, we welcome ACTFL to Pennsylvania! ACTFL's annual convention will be held at the **Philadelphia Convention Center from November 22-24, 2024**. Join PSMLA members and colleagues at the convention to hear inspiring keynote speakers, participate in engaging and educational sessions, network, and get to know your PSMLA Executive Council by visiting us at our booth in the Exhibitors Hall. PSMLA members can register for the ACTFL convention at the member rate. We hope you will take advantage of this great opportunity.

PSMLA is also pleased to provide professional development throughout the year. From webinars to workshops, we are committed to providing you with quality, affordable opportunities to learn from and collaborate with colleagues. As a PSMLA member, you are the first to know about our professional development events, and you receive special pricing—discounted or free events—to support your professional growth. PSMLA is proud to offer both in-person workshops and virtual learning opportunites. Check our calendar for more information and upcoming events.

Getting involved

Your PSMLA Executive Council is hard at work advocating for world language teaching and learning. PSMLA supports Pennsylvania schools in implementing the Seal of Biliteracy, meets with government officials to advocate for a world language supervisor at the state level, participates in national advocacy conferences, and is launching a task force to address the most pressing issues facing world language education in Pennsylvania. You can join the efforts! Check the PSMLA weekly news blasts to learn about the next meeting date and find out how you can help support PSMLA's efforts.

You can also support world language teaching by participating in PSMLA's peer-mentoring program as a new teacher or mentor. This is a great way to connect with colleagues, share experiences and expertise, and strengthen the profession.

In 2024, we look ahead to many great opportunities to advocate for world language teaching and learning, engage in professional improvement and development, and grow new leaders. Visit our website to explore the possibilities and discover how you can be part of this important work.

Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association

INSPIRING MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

The mission of the Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA) is to enhance world language education throughout Pennsylvania by:

Promoting the teaching and learning of world languages and culture at all levels (Pre-K through university)

Providing opportunities for professional growth and networking

Recognizing excellence in the field

Collaborating with local, state, and national organizations

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NOVEMBER 22-24

Pennsylvania Convention Center

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Connect with 7,000 of your colleagues from around the globe!

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PSMLA Celebrates the Success of its 2023 Fall Conference at Seven Springs Resort and Fallingwater

Friends pose for a conference memory.

The PSMLA Fall Conference 2023, held at Seven Springs Resort on October 26th to 28th, 2023 embraced its promised theme of Reset – Recharge – Reconnect. The beautiful mountain setting supported a retreat feel and offered sessions on timely topics related to world language education, such as social emotional learning, communicative pedagogy, technology, etc. 228 attendees enjoyed the 80 conference sessions (including the very popular Tech Garden), with 35 attending a pre-conference workshop at Falling Water, and concluding with an International Night with food, music, and a surprise appearance by Globie!

Globie makes his debut appearance!

A picture is worth 1000 words – maybe more!
Here are several highlights from the conference.

Attendees learn about architecture at Fallingwater pre-conference workshop.

Conference attendees gather for lunch and a time of networking.

Several sponsors, vendors, and WL organizations participated in our Exhibitor Hall.

Future educators help distribute items from the Language Lotto.

Pitt-Greensburg Chorale & Chamber Singers grace conference attendees on Saturday with a special performance.

2022 PSMLA Teacher of the Year, Karen Senita, is recognized as a 2023 NECTFL finalist.

Mina Levenson recognizes Jennifer McGonagle as the 2023 PSMLA Teacher of the Year.

Friends and colleagues pose for group shot!

First-time Attendee Perspectives: a glimpse into the conference

**The editors of the PLF asked first-time conference attendees to share their experiences.*

Kelli Kovalick, a freshman, Spanish Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania:

"It was very relieving to see so many people who shared my same passion for teaching a language. As a college student who doesn't know many people in the same profession, or major, it was a relief to see others doing what I one day hope to do. …going to this conference and seeing so many Spanish teachers made me feel so welcomed and put my mind at ease. It showed me that I'm not alone in this profession, and that there is a light at the end of the tunnel; that there are other people who share my passion for teaching."

Mason Cymbor, a junior, Spanish Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania:

"The chance to be in a room full of people who feel as passionate about language as you do is an opportunity that does not come often enough. The conference itself was so much more than I was expecting. Between all the prizes, the tables of vendors, the awards, and the variety of events hosted, and presentations given, I was greatly impressed.

The importance of advocacy for your foreign language program is what resonated most with me. I recognize that it is extremely important to build and encourage a passion for foreign language early in a student's educational career. I am not quite sure exactly what language I will be teaching in the future – perhaps more than one – but I completely understand the importance of advocacy, no matter the subject. It is alarming when I hear about devastating cuts to foreign language programs around us, but after seeing the passion many of the attendees and presenters at the PSMLA conference have for their own foreign language programs, I feel much more confident in my future now, knowing that I, like many others, can advocate for my future foreign language program to ensure that it will be a success.

I made some great connections at my first PSMLA conference. I have found that to be one of my favorite aspects of attending all the conferences and foreign language events so far in my career. I love having the opportunity to make connections with educators from all around the state… It is always great to have colleagues, or even friends, in your profession from across Pennsylvania that you can talk to about your career and your own language program, and conferences like PSMLA create a perfect environment for that."

We hope to see you in 2024 at the fall joint conference with ACTFL, and then again in the fall of 2025 in Bethlehem, PA!

Co-conference Chairs, Silvina Orsatti and Natalie Puhala, pose for a group selfie.

Does your school have PEP?

What is PEP?

PEP (Pennsylvania Exemplary Program) is a PSMLA award program designed in 2005 by Dr. Thekla Fall, former Supervisor of World Languages for the Pittsburgh Public Schools, to recognize and showcase exemplary high school World Language programs.

What are the goals of the PEP Program?

- Provide outside validation for high-quality high school language programs.
- Enable schools to use the PEP rubric and discreet evidence as a blueprint to spur improvements that will have a meaningful and measurable effect on learning outcomes.
- Promote and propagate best practices in World Language programs.

To help PSMLA members better understand PEP, members of our PEP Committee reached out to two of the longest participating PSMLA PEP Award-winning schools.

Academy of Notre Dame de Namur (ND), est.1856, is a private school in Villanova, Pa.; and,

Pittsburgh Allderdice HS (PA), est. 1927, is a public high school in Pittsburgh, Pa

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The following quotes reflect the schools' perspectives on and responses to questions regarding the PEP Award and its influences on their World Language programs.

What is the most outstanding characteristic of your World Language Program and why?

Students, parents, counselors and administrators of both Notre Dame and Pittsburgh Allderdice recognize the dedication of the world language faculty in developing competencies and promoting the benefits of world language.

> "Both former and current teachers prioritize creating an environment where students not only learn the language but also deeply understand and appreciate the cultures associated with it. Our program integrates language instruction with cultural activities, authentic materials, and real-world experiences, allowing students to develop proficiency while gaining cultural competence. This approach fosters a deep and lasting connection to the language." (PA)

What is the key to retaining students at Levels 4, 5 & 6 at your school?

"… is to cultivate a relationship with the school counselors and college counselors. These mentors are able to help students make informed decisions about the benefits of maintaining a varied course of study throughout high school."(ND)

"…at levels 4, 5, and 6 in our school is a combination of personalized instruction, engaging curriculum, and meaningful incentives." (ND)

"Additionally, we recognize and celebrate students' achievements through awards, recognitions, and participation in language-related events, fostering a sense of pride and belonging within the language learning community." (PA)

What form of proficiency assessments does your school have and why?

"Our school's proficiency assessments…give students the opportunity to show what they know by presenting…their own thoughts, thereby consolidating their knowledge. Students are always surprised to see how much they really do know." (ND)

"Allderdice utilizes a variety of proficiency assessments, including…simulated oral proficiency interviews…that align with the ACTFL standards." and "By employing a range of assessment methods, we can capture the diverse strengths and abilities of our students, track their progress over time, and provide targeted feedback for improvement." (PA)

How has the PEP Award positively contributed to your outstanding World Language Program?

"Preparing to apply for the PEP award keeps us organized! … Faculty also share professional development opportunities as they become aware of them. Preparing for PEP is a shared task and we have grown more collegial as a result of our work on it." (ND)

"The PEP award provides external validation and recognition of our achievements as a department, past and present. It serves as a testament to the dedication and excellence of our faculty, students, and community partners who collaborate to create a vibrant language learning environment." (PA)

Why are professional development and professional membership critical?

"By maintaining memberships in professional organizations, faculty are made aware of new trends in the field. The learning opportunities presented by the various professional organizations are also extremely valuable." (ND)

"…professional membership in organizations such as PSMLA provides access to a supportive community of fellow educators, resources, conferences, and networking opportunities, fostering collaboration, idea exchange, and mentorship." (PA)

If you had one wish to improve your World Language Program, what would it be and why?

"I wish we were able to offer more opportunities for students to communicate with their peers in countries where the languages they study are spoken. Providing those opportunities would really give students a sense of how important it is to become proficient in at least one World Language." (ND)

"We would also love to provide more immersive experiences that would be accessible to all students - more opportunities for students to apply their language skills in authentic contexts, interact with native speakers, deepen their understanding of the culture associated with the language they are learning, and study abroad…Access to international travel opportunities would truly transform the World Languages program, empowering our students to become confident, culturally competent global citizens." (PA)

All high schools are encouraged to apply. To participate, high schools must submit documented evidence that they meet the rigorous criteria established by PSMLA. PEP criteria are detailed in the form of the 11 indicators and the PEP rubric (psmla.org/pep-awards).

This article was a collaboration between Isabel Espino de Valdivia and Mina Levenson

Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association

PEP Award

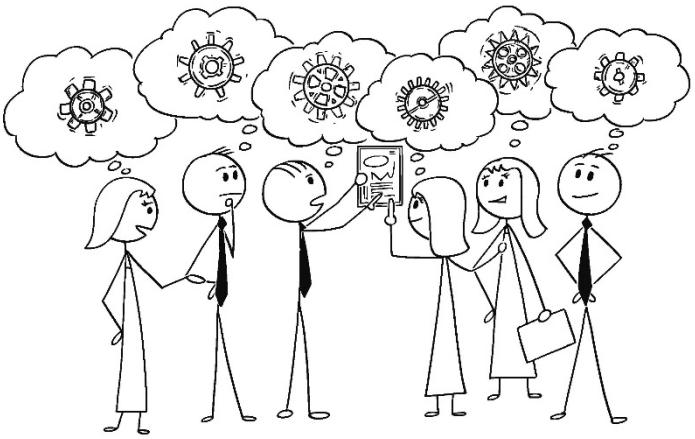
BE RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE

Your school may already qualify if you...

- ☑ Offer a variety of languages in a 4 year sequence
- ☑ Strive to maintain high enrollment
- ☑ Retain students until level 4 or higher
- ☑ Participate in AP, IB, or College in High School programs
- ☑ Schedule classes one level per period
- ☑ Encourage WL professional development & memberships in professional organizations
- ☑ Offer special learning opportunities & experiences
- ☑ Use the target language and engage in communicative activities
- ☑ Administer performance assessments

If you check most of these boxes, why not be recognized as a PSMLA Exemplary Program?

See psmla.org/pep-awards for more info



PSMLA Task Force Seeks Solutions to Existing Language Issues

Cherie Garrett
Dallastown Area School District

The PSMLA Task Force was created to improve the status of world language education in Pennsylvania. As has been well publicized, the certification rates for teachers over the past 10 years has declined at an alarming rate. As a result, there is a major shortage of world language teachers. In fact, world language teachers are the fourth most-needed educators in Pennsylvania due to problems of teacher retention, a decreased interest in teaching as a career, and the elimination of world language teacher preparation programs at several colleges and universities. Exacerbating the issue, there is no World Language Supervisor in the PA Department of Education (PDE) to lead in the development of statewide world language standards. The long-term absence of approved statewide standards has meant that there is no clear guide for new and existing programs toward producing students with high levels of proficiency. The greater effect on the Pennsylvania labor force is that we have fewer students graduating with the language skills needed and sought after by many businesses. Finally, even though the state recognized the PA Seal of Biliteracy in March of 2022, no action has been taken by PDE to improve world language programs in the state so that students can obtain intermediate-high or advanced proficiency upon high school graduation. To address these issues, the PSMLA Advocacy Committee decided to form a task force which was first announced at the 2023 PSMLA Fall Conference. The PSMLA Task Force, a group of dedicated language constituents, joined forces for the first time in December 2023 to advocate for both a World Language Supervisor for PDE and for the World LEAP Act to provide funding for existing and new World Language programs.

"One major outcome of the first meeting was the decision to organize a PA Language Summit consisting of stakeholders from Pennsylvania's business, human service, K–16 education, community, and government sectors."

Additionally, the group has begun to develop a comprehensive resource kit promoting world language teaching as a fulfilling career choice for teachers to use with current high school and college students. One major outcome of the first meeting was the decision to organize a PA Language Summit consisting of stakeholders from Pennsylvania's

business, human service, K–16 education, community, and government sectors. The goal of the Summit is to identify Pennsylvania's current and future multilingual workforce needs and discuss language and cultural competencies and their role in the state's economic success. Additionally, the PA Language Summit will review Pennsylvania's current K–16 educational capacities in world languages and work together to develop recommendations for the future direction of K-–16 world language education. To assist in the organizing of the PA Language Summit, the Task force is reviewing language roadmaps (strategic planning documents) from other states to better understand the steps needed to accomplish the group's objectives. Once data is collected and clear objectives for Pennsylvania are developed, the Task force will host the in-person meeting of the PA Language Summit within the next 14 months so that a language roadmap for Pennsylvania can be created to address issues concerning world language education in our state.

Currently, the PSMLA Task Force is also working to reinstate the World Language Supervisor position which entails finding a pro-language state legislator who is willing to ask for state appropriations to fund the World Language Supervisor position in PDE. Before this can be achieved, data must be collected to support the argument for a World Language Supervisor and connections and relationships must be established with state legislators. For the future of the state, changes need to be made now to ensure that there are enough world language teachers to develop bilingual/ multilingual students and to instill in students a cultural awareness. Already, there are more than 5,400 bilingual vacancies in Pennsylvania (indeed.com). This number will only continue to grow. If successful, we will make Pennsylvania more competitive in the global market and will give Pennsylvanians the ability to communicate with people of diverse backgrounds not only abroad, but also within our communities.

Some of the PSMLA Task Force members meet via Zoom in January 2024.

We can´t afford to stay quiet!

Jason Hank

Beaver Area School District

We teachers love to hear from former students. I don't think I'm alone in saying that what means the most to teachers personally is hearing about how what we taught our students has shaped who they are and what they want to do. Be it from our content, be it from our life lessons, or be it from both, we like hearing that we made a difference in a kid's life; it's why we do what we do.

On July 28, 2023, I received an email from a bright, linguistically ambitious former student, named Brielle, who had just graduated the previous June. She was a wonderful Spanish student, scoring a 4 on the AP Spanish Language and Culture Exam. She was also a faithful and active member of our Spanish Club, rarely missing a meeting. After my colleague, Rachael, took her and others on a trip to Panamá, she wrote me the loveliest email expressing her appreciation for our Spanish program and telling me about her trip. Regarding her travel experience she said, "It helped confirm my love for learning the Spanish language and appreciating the culture and diversity that Latin America has to offer. It taught me that even though my Spanish isn't perfect yet, I should never be afraid to at least attempt to speak it, because the only way to get better is to speak with confidence. It taught me that I want Spanish to be a part of my life and my career forever." My heart melted! This is the jackpot, dream-come-true, Hollywood-ending kind of thing teachers fantasize about! ChatGPT couldn't have generated a better response to the prompt "What is the most perfect thing to say to melt my Spanish teacher's heart?" (I actually tried, and it wasn't even close.) It was clear that this wonderful young woman was bursting at the seams with enthusiasm and eagerness to begin her first year, majoring in Spanish at...West Virginia University (WVU).

Brielle's email on August 18, 2023, which was a response to my email the previous day expressing my consolation for her and outrage with WVU's recommendation to discontinue all world language majors, had a drastically different tone. However, she did express her excitement for her Spanish 311 class, and that she got a boost of

confidence being able to help a fellow student (a Junior). In this email she lamented, "If I would have known this was going to happen, I would have chosen a different school.", later adding, "I came to this school thinking I was going to pursue both my dreams of being a Forensic Pathologist and being bilingual, but now one of my biggest dreams is being crushed. I love the school so much, and I don't want to have to transfer, but depending on how they make the final decision I might have to."

This is one time I wish Brielle were alone. Sadly, though, there are myriad other stories like Brielle's and countless other institutions of higher learning cutting language programs. If this trend continues, it won't be *just* sad stories of bright and eager students getting their dreams shattered 3 days into college, but rather the consequences will be more dire socially. To discuss the importance of learning another language and having cultural literacy in this forum would be preaching to the choir, so I'll spare you that homily. Instead, I would like to discuss world language advocacy and promotion.

"If I would have known this was going to happen, I would have chosen a different school.",

I find myself composing this article in the months just after the 2023 PSMLA Fall conference. At the conference, I attended sessions regarding the current state of WL programs around the Commonwealth and the importance of advocacy and promotion. This is where I met Cherie Garrett, the dynamic force of nature from the other side of the state who has not only what sounds like one hell of a program, but also is heavily involved in PSMLA, PDE policy, and WL advocacy. My major takeaway from PSMLA was that promoting second languages is too important for me to stay quiet and make excuses because I can't / won't get involved. In other words, I needed to get over myself, and do the work that is for the greater good. If I could do that, I can be a part of something big. So, I started to think big: why not have a county-wide world languages career fair? We language teachers talk all the time about how being proficient in another language provides limitless opportunities, especially with regards to career paths, so why not partner with local businesses and universities to hold an event so that the community can hear it from people with first-hand experience?

So, that's just what we're going to do. My wife works for the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at Pitt, and she also attended the conference, but as an exhibitor. Brainstorming and taking the first steps to plan the event is all we could talk about on the drive home. I won't dive into the minutiae of what's already been decided about the format and other partners we'll have for the event but suffice it

"Cuando tienes la oportunidad de mejorar cualquier situación, y no lo haces, estás malgastando tu tiempo en la Tierra."
~Roberto Clemente

to say we've gotten approval from my school, and we're having the event mid-September 2024. While organizing events, especially ambitiously large ones like this, is way out of my comfort zone, I'm leaning into the uneasiness I have, focusing on my strengths, and keeping in mind the larger purpose of why we're doing what we're doing.

In the meantime, it's important that I do the little things. We don't all have to plan large gatherings to promote second-language proficiency and cultural literacy; promoting our programs, and more importantly the mission of our programs, is something we can do on a regular basis. I am already very good about emailing parents, particularly with info about upcoming assignments and assessments. Why not include some messaging in those regular updates about how the work that their children are doing is not just ensuring that they will get a good grade in chapter 3 this quarter, but that they're building linguistic skills and working one step closer to second language proficiency? In other words, *I need to do what I can on an everyday basis to drive home that Spanish is not just a class that the kids are taking; it's a living language* that they're in the early stages of learning, and the goal is to make them all Spanish speakers.

As a Pittsburgher and baseball fan, naturally Roberto Clemente is one of my heroes. Most of us teaching today never saw him play, yet we still find inspiration in his humanity. I'll leave you with likely his most iconic quote. *"Cuando tienes la oportunidad de mejorar cualquier situación, y no lo haces, estás malgastando tu tiempo en la Tierra."* [When you have the opportunity to better any situation, and you don't, you are wasting your time on Earth.]

We, indeed, have the opportunity to make our situation better, so let's get to work!

Unpacking activities for the proficiency-driven classroom: Reflections from a PSMLA Peer Mentor and Mentee

Brooke Starr, *Cheltenham High School*
Seth Thayer Pidot, *The Shipley School*
Rich Madel, Ed.D., *Colonial School District*

This past February, the PSMLA Peer Mentor program was offered a rewarding opportunity with a live virtual session from Florencia Henshaw, lead author of *Common Ground* and producer of the Unpacking Language Pedagogy YouTube channel, and Jude Krushnowski, contributing author of *Honing Our Craft,* both of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The session was titled *Unpacking activities for the proficiency-driven classroom.* With mentors and mentees, both past and present in attendance, we were led in discussion by Henshaw and Krushnowksi about valuable activities in a proficiency-oriented classroom.

As educators, we strive in our best efforts to improve upon our techniques and outcomes for our students. In this session, we were able to talk about the need to form meaningful connections with our students. Both authors, Henshaw and Krushnowski, presented to us and reiterated how important it is to create conditions for language development so that learners are able to communicate in realistic targeted language.

Mentor's perspective (B. Starre)

One key takeaway in this session was seeking ways as educators to have our students engaged both meaningfully and purposefully. We unpacked some potential shortcomings to some common activities and strategies used in world language classrooms in a useful and reflective way. We discussed strategies, such as speed-dating or jigsaw dictations and what limitations they may have for students. We then brainstormed ideas as to how we could make these activities more communicative to form meaning and connections in the target language. Some ideas were to think about our goals of what we want our students to be able to do, which ultimately is to communicate effectively in the target language. The techniques, activities, and lessons we use in our classroom are not something that we need to rid ourselves of, but we should continually find ways to keep students engaged.

Through the lens of a mentor, this session reminded me of how teaching is a craft. We, as professionals, are continuously improving and building upon our own skills. An unexpected and inviting outcome was being reminded, as seasoned professionals, that we have come so far, but we also still have so much to learn. Self-reflection is so important in all stages of our careers. This session brought up so many great points to ponder when moving forward in planning our proficiency-based lessons and curriculum.

Mentee's perspective (S. Pidot)

As a mentee, I found the February virtual session to be, at once, affirming and challenging. The model activities that were presented hold pedagogical

merit and great interpersonal appeal for students and teachers alike. I say that based on some pre-existing experience with such fun and fruitful exercises, but my perspectives widened, and my understanding deepened by virtue of the professional discussions mentors and mentees had in live-time with our presenters. I appreciated those discussions on two levels.

First, we indulged in a somewhat theoretical, high-level discussion about language learning that included student agency, buy-in, self-actualization, and development of communicative skills (as opposed to content acquisition).

Second, and perhaps more importantly, we drilled down to the practice – the application of abstract scholarship in the classroom trenches where the impact and results manifest. That is how, in my role as a mentee, I felt comforted by other, more experienced teachers; we stood in solidarity, recognizing that even the best laid lesson plans with proven game-strategies don't always land the way we envision.

Without abandoning hope or showering pity, we considered concrete methods to improve our proficiency activities if and when they seemingly fall short. Not that they're faulty. Rather, they can stretch, just like we stretch our own students to move beyond mastery into the yet unknown, where curiosity is leading.

For me, there was one method, in particular, that the presenters suggested – a method of extension I will try with my own proficiency games. What I gleaned is that my comprehensible teacher input (i.e. stimulus, prompt, or directions) for an activity ought to be simple, straightforward, and actionable. And, from there, a game that goes from "good to great" might entail a few rounds: from one round to the next, it was proposed, a student or group's output can, in turn, become the new input for the classroom peers' subsequent, scaffolded steps. While not necessarily derivative in a watered-down way, this concept of student-centered momentum benefits community building (a very noble goal) and removes the teacher from a possible pitfall of having too much control or overly top-down, scripted input.

Conclusion

This past year with the PSMLA Peer Mentor program, we have been fortunate to have the time together, as mentors and mentees, to build upon our craft and for us to reflect on our own classroom practices. This program continues to show how important it is for the mentor/mentee relationship and what it has to offer for World Language educators, in every stage of their professional development.

The PSMLA Peer Mentoring Program is designed to support novice world language teachers while simultaneously recognizing and further developing teacher leadership among experienced Pennsylvania world language educators. PSMLA members with fewer than three years of teaching experience are invited to apply to be mentees. Mentor applicants are also expected to be PSMLA members and should have at least eight years of experience teaching a world language. Applications are accepted through June 30 each year in order to match mentors/mentees for the following school year.

Learn more and apply today at PSMLA.org

Coaching and Growing: Reflections from a PSMLA Peer Mentor and Mentee

Kent Dwyer, *State College Area School District*
Adam Fisher, *School District of Philadelphia*
Rich Madel, Ed.D., *Colonial School District*

The Pennsylvania State Modern Language Association (PSMLA) Peer Mentoring Program matches teachers with less than three years of experience with veteran teachers in a structured and collaborative format. Mentors hone leadership skills through supporting mentees in communicative language teaching pedagogy. In this article, two members of this year's cohort reflect on their experiences and how the program has impacted their career.

Mentor's perspective (K. Dwyer)

When I learned about the PSMLA Peer Mentoring program, I immediately knew that I wanted to participate. When I was in my first year of teaching, my district-assigned mentor was exceedingly encouraging but offered very little in terms of specific ways in which I could grow professionally. I jumped at the chance to collaborate with a younger teacher interested in an acquisition-driven model, as I would have loved that guidance earlier in my career.

Adam and I began to communicate virtually in August, connecting via phone and outlining some initial thoughts on a joint Google Doc. The program officially started with a virtual session in September, but most of the participants had already established

a professional relationship at that point. After getting to know one another a bit over the course of a few conversations and exchanges on the Google Doc, Adam and I used the program's guide to set some SMART goals for the school year. I appreciate the clarity and intentionality of the program's steps, as they keep us focused on how we can measure the impact of our intentions on student outcomes.

Throughout the school year, Adam and I speak on the phone once or twice a month, exchange messages, and share sample materials. We discuss areas in which he'd like to grow and celebrate successes together. A highlight of the program for me has been attending the PSMLA Fall Conference together. This year's cohort of mentors and mentees was able to participate in interesting sessions, engage in thought-provoking professional dialogue, as well as just get to know one another better as people.

My participation in the PSMLA Peer Mentoring program has been one of my favorite aspects of the school year. I enjoy engaging with a learning community that extends beyond my building. The program is well organized and action-oriented. It's not just one more thing to do on my task list; I feel challenged and fulfilled as I support another teacher as he refines his approach. It feels great to know that our joint efforts have a measurable impact on students' experiences within and beyond the classroom.

Mentee's perspective (A. Fisher)

This is my second year in the mentorship program with PSMLA. Program Director Rich Madel had encouraged me to continue with another year knowing that Kent's experience in the Philadelphia School District would prove helpful to me and my teaching environment. I was feeling frustrated by my lack of compass: an anchoring set of philosophies and activities that I could rely upon when feeling overwhelmed by the laundry list of other things I needed to do as a teacher. District professional development was confusing to me and made me feel less confident as an educator, and I struggled to get the comprehensible input (CI) lessons I was reading about online to work for my classroom and students. I am driven by a desire to be an effective language teacher, and everything I was trying seemed to fail. My relationships with students and passion for the language were suffering as a result. I could feel myself burning out and I needed to make a change.

My relationships with students and passion for the language were suffering as a result. I could feel myself burning out and I needed to make a change.

From our first conversation I knew Kent was going to be an invaluable resource as I took the next step in my career. Our talks were big idea in nature, but he always had concrete plans and activities to bring it to life in my classroom. I am easily overwhelmed by all that I see online when looking to improve my teaching; I end up thinking negatively about my own practice because of all the things that I'm not doing instead of focusing on what I do well. Kent helped me realize that my instincts for CI were on the right track, I just needed to cut through the noise and leverage these instincts in a more effective way. These talks, along with his generous sharing of experiences and resources he has created over the years, really helped me rediscover a growth mindset rather than be anxious about a perceived fixed state of inadequacy.

Although I have grown in my instructional practice, I would still like to grow and learn. One section I

teach currently makes me particularly anxious and I don't speak the target language as much as I would like. Despite this, Kent is always there to help me recognize the journey of teaching. It is about growing in small ways now to meet current students where they are at so I can best serve future students with solid language pedagogy built upon my past experiences. The PSMLA program has helped me rediscover that spark to sit down, tinker with a lesson plan, and get my students immersed in proficiency-driven classes.

This program is what I both needed and wanted in a professional learning community. While the program is built to support new teachers, I can't imagine finding a more impactful cohort of individuals at any stage of my career.

If you are interested in participating in the PSMLA Peer Mentoring Program next school year, **learn more and apply today at PSMLA.org**

Building Interpretive Listening Skills & Confidence

Michael Bogdan
Pennsylvania State Education Association
Assistant Director of Education Services

Perhaps because it is less "visible" than reading, I propose that many language educators and students find listening skills more challenging to teach and assess. It may simply be a factor of having textbooks and literature in the written word as a core classroom component, whereas listening activities are seen as supplementary, not included, or are accessed in another platform. Poor past experiences juggling cassette tapes and CD-ROMs, navigating user un-friendly portals with artificial conversations, or the time spent searching for the perfect listening source may have contributed to this perception as well. Nevertheless, the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages indicate that in Interpretive Communication "[l]earners understand, interpret, and analyze what is *heard*, read, or viewed on a variety of topics." [emphasis added] Certainly,

listening skills are also necessary in oral interpersonal communication as well.

ACTFL defines listening comprehension as *"largely based on the amount of information listeners can retrieve from what they hear and the inferences and connections that they can ma*ke." Therefore, it is not simply understanding what is heard but also how it fits into a larger context. Language educators may forget how challenging listening comprehension may be or how long it may take for learners to progress; this is referred to as the *expert blind spot*. Therefore, it may be helpful for educators to review the descriptions and audio samples that ACTFL provides for each proficiency level to ensure that the expectations for students match their ability. These guidelines are available in 14 languages on the ACTFL website.

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Listening from Week 1

In the same way that most language educators will have students say a few very-structed sentences or identify written cognates on the first day of the course, listening skills should be taught from the beginning and included throughout the term. On Day 1 of my Level 1 classes, I show students cognates in the target language as they compete to slap the correct category in competition with a seat partner. Then, so they realize that some words are easier or harder to identify when heard in comparison to seen, I say cognates as the game continues. I simply provide a half-page grid of the categories of the words, such as animal, person, class, and fruit.

Also, in the first week I introduce authentic music videos from recent artists. For the song "Millionaire" by Soprano, students receive a list of several words that they may or may not hear in the song. In a pre-listening activity, they indicate whether those words have a positive (+) or negative (-) connotation. Then, as we listen to a portion of the song, students will circle the words in French that are heard. This provides a preview of some of the song's content and then the actual listening comprehension. I also provide a space for students to write additional words that they think they hear. This allows for stronger students to show what they know as well as for the correction of misinterpretations.

As students move through these activities during the first days of the course, providing praise when they are successful will facilitate the development of self-confidence. Whether that is a sticker for winning the cognate competition or a look of surprise when they correctly identify new words that were not on a prepared list, these acts of encouragement may reduce some of the anxiety associated with listening activities as the course progresses.

Listening as a Daily Activity

Undoubtedly, language educators must continue to integrate listening activities in the daily lesson plan beyond the first week. Common interpersonal activities such as information-gap conversations involve these listening skills. Educators may also ask students to identify whether a verb tense they hear is in the future or the past, if a description they hear is masculine or feminine, or if a time that is read is earlier or later than the present. Students can respond in a non-verbal way through active response cards, thumbs up, colored papers, moving to corners of the room, flyswatters, or many other means so that the teacher is solely assessing interpretive skills without presentational skills inhibiting the student's ability to indicate comprehension. Furthermore, following a paired conversation, a follow-up activity can be for students to share what their partner said to them or to compare their response with that of their partner. This will allow for the practice of third-person structures but also verify that students are truly listening to their partner when that partner is speaking.

Rather than having listening as a stand-alone activity, take advantage of the authentic resources that are available for multiple modalities; listening can be a spark for writing and speaking. Ask students to answer questions about an individual being interviewed and then have students answer those questions about themselves. Students can write down a summary of what they understand from an audio description of going back to school, pastimes, or family and then write about their own using studied structures.

Practicing & Previewing Listening Assessments

In terms of what types of questions should be asked in an interpretive listening activity, turn to the *Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA)*. The question categories, as outlined in Troyan et al., are:

- Keyword recognition
- Main ideas
- Supporting details
- Organization features
- Guessing meaning from context
- Inferences
- Author's perspective
- Comparing cultural differences
- Personal reaction to the text

If students will be assessed with an IPA, then students need to practice those skills in class as well. For example, regarding a restaurant commercial audio text, students may be asked the type of source (organizational features), whether a vegetarian could eat there (inferences), and how the restaurant compares to typical restaurants in their own community (comparing). If you are unsure how often you are practicing the interpersonal listening mode,

consider using images of a headphone, microphone, pencil, and book to track the frequency of the four modes in your lesson plans.

Moving away from worksheets and tasks that can be easily completed by translation programs and artificial intelligence, the homework for my students was often to listen to an audio clip uploaded to our LMS that would be the subject of an evaluation later in the week. This allowed students to listen to the source the number of times that was needed in preparation for an in-class evaluation. Educators can ask students to predict questions, explain the evidence for their answers, and provide an additional fact that was not tested. Audio preparation homework works very well for practicing the listening activities of the AP Language & Culture Exams when it is not always possible to devote so much class time to listening to the source multiple times.

Summary

In short, be aware of how often students are attempting interpretive listening skills and integrate their practice as often as possible. Take advantage of high-quality authentic listening sources by connecting listening activities to speaking or writing as pre- or post-practice. Be sure to rehearse for interpretive listening assessments various times and in a similar format to the graded version. Finally, find sources that are of interest to students and praise them as they grow in their listening proficiency.

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Member Survey: IMPRESSIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLGIENCE

Artificial Intelligence applications, such as ChatGPT, having seemingly become ubiquitous in our day-to-day lives. As educators, it's easy to dismiss this advanced technology as an overrated tool that waters down, or threatens, the learning process. We asked our members about their impressions on the use of AI in education.

– Nathan Campbell, co-editor, *PLF*

If you have used an AI application in the classroom, what are some ways that you have used it?

To formulate comprehension questions for readings, creation of short stories with selected vocabulary, assistance with e-mails to parents and other ways.

I've used Diffit to create reading activities. Twee and Quizziz to create activities for YouTube videos/listening comprehension. Flint for simulated conversations and formative written assessments with AI generated feedback. And ChatGPT to create stories using vocab and themes, as well as to create comprehension questions, discussion questions, and other scaffolded activities for the classroom.

I've used it mostly to help spark ideas, assist in generating emails, messages,

I have used it to craft questions to accompany a Disney short video; I have used it to look up further facts to enhance knowledge on a certain topic; I have used it to search for antonyms for vocabulary terms.

I have used it as a model for a detailed oriented description.

If you haven't used an AI application in the classroom, what has held you back from using it?

I refuse to allow my level of intelligence and that of my students to be destroyed by a computer. If we allow for these products to "do" things for us, we are essentially replacing the need for teachers. Where is pride in one's level of intelligence? Why are people selling themselves short? They are lazy to learn, to read, to DO.

I feel we are using way too much technology.

Time to explore the new AI tools available to see how I can use them with my content.

Not yet.

Nope.

Yes.

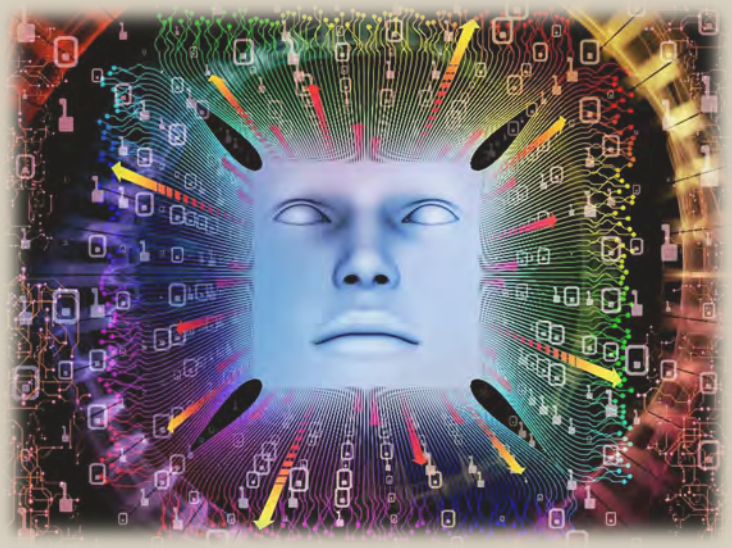
No.

Yes, it mimics what we as a world language department has created years ago with translation devices. We consider it academic dishonesty and a form of plagiarism.

Does your educational organization have a system or policy in place to deal with AI?

Not yet but it sounds like it may be coming soon.

For teachers, not to my knowledge. For students, not but I use it to check for plagiarism.



What is the line between these apps providing assistance and plagiarizing or not producing original content?

I would love to know more about ways to incorporate it in my class in healthier ways.

What questions remain for you related to AI?

I feel we are using way too much technology.

What AI lang model do WL teachers find most effective (as there are so many options!)?

I'm curious about how AI will continue to grow exponentially and continue to put pressure on our careers as world language educators.

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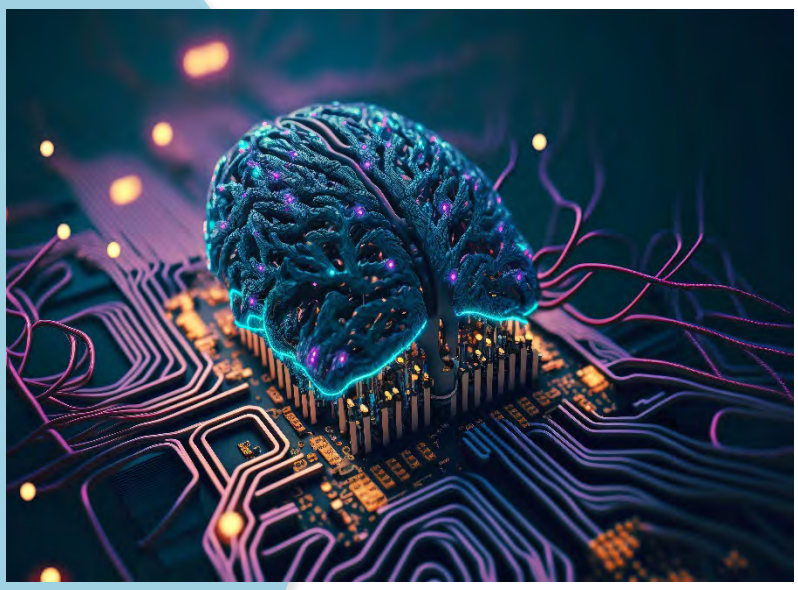
So, what is AI? And should we be afraid?



The editors of *PLF* reached out to Past President, Mina Levenson, and PSMLA Teacher of the Year, Jennifer McGonagle to provide insight into the latest trends in AI and its impact on education.

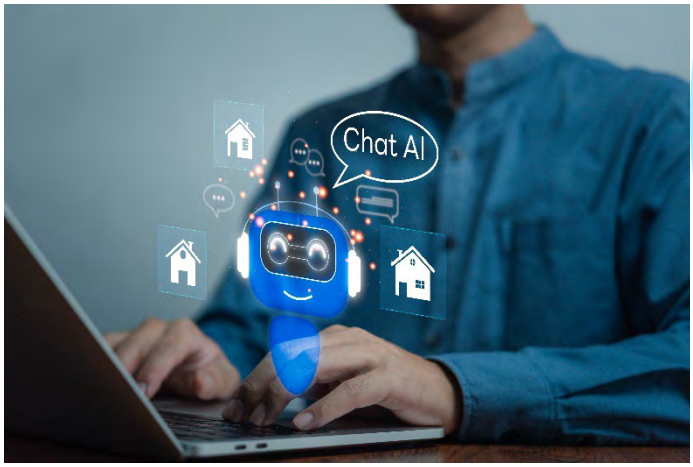
What exactly is this AI that we have been hearing so much about lately?

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. This includes learning, reasoning, and self-correction. **ChatGPT** is an example of AI, specifically a large language model that can understand and generate human-like text based on the input it receives.

What are some of the perceived fears about open AI that educators have as it gains in popularity and influence in our profession?

1. **Lack of understanding**: AI can be complex and intimidating to those who are not familiar with it. Teachers may resist using AI because they do not fully understand how it works or how it could benefit their teaching.
2. **Concerns about student engagement**: Teachers may worry that using AI could lead to less interaction and engagement with students, which are key components of effective teaching.
3. **Skepticism about effectiveness**: Some teachers may be skeptical about the effectiveness of AI in education. They may question whether AI can truly enhance learning outcomes or if it is just a passing trend.
4. **Personal bias**: Teachers, like everyone else, can have personal biases and preferences. Some teachers may simply prefer traditional teaching methods and be resistant to change.

5. **Lack of training**: Teachers may be resistant to using AI if they feel they have not received adequate training on how to effectively integrate it into their teaching practices.
6. **Fear of Change:** Humans are creatures of habit, and change can be unsettling. Some teachers may resist using AI because it represents a significant shift in their teaching methods and workflows. They may fear that incorporating AI will disrupt their established routines and require them to learn new skills.
7. **Loss of Control:** Teachers often take pride in their ability to tailor instruction to their students' needs and preferences. AI, with its automated processes and algorithms, may be perceived as taking away some of that control. Teachers may worry that AI will dictate the learning experience and diminish their autonomy in the classroom which can be uncomfortable.
8. **Concerns About Job Security**: There's a pervasive fear among educators that AI will eventually replace human teachers. This fear can lead to resistance to incorporating AI into teaching practices, as teachers may worry about the long-term viability of their profession.
9. **Lack of Trust in Technology**: Not all teachers are comfortable with technology, and some may have a general distrust of AI systems. They may worry about the reliability, accuracy, and biases inherent in AI algorithms. Without a solid understanding of how AI works and its potential benefits, teachers may be hesitant to embrace it in their teaching practice.
10. **Perceived Threat to Expertise**: Teachers are experts in their field, with years of training and experience. The introduction of AI may be perceived as a challenge to their expertise, with some fearing that AI will diminish the value of their knowledge and skills. This fear of being supplanted by AI can lead to resistance to its adoption.
11. **Concerns About Student Dependency**: Teachers may worry that students will become overly reliant on AI for learning, leading to a decrease in critical thinking skills and self-directed learning. They may fear that students will use AI as a shortcut rather than engaging deeply with the material.
12. **Ethical and Privacy Concerns**: Teachers may have ethical concerns about the use of AI in education, particularly regarding data privacy and the potential for algorithmic bias. They may worry about the implications of using AI systems that collect and analyze student data, especially if they feel they don't have sufficient control over how that data is used.



What are some reliable resources that educators interested in learning more about AI could access?

As is often the case, our colleagues and peers serve as the best resources for educators interested in learning more about AI. For those who use social media accounts such as Facebook, there are groups such as ChatGPT for Teachers and **AI Teacher Resources with ChatGPT, Canva & Midjourney** which answer questions and share materials. Additionally, **The Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)** offers resources and conferences focused on AI in education. Teachers seeking a more in-depth knowledge may seek out online courses (e.g., Coursera, edX, Wharton), books (e.g., *Artificial Intelligence in Education* **by Cristina Conati et al.**), or professional development programs (e.g., AI4K12.org). **Code.org** provides an AI 101 series for educators. Additionally, attending conferences, workshops, and webinars on AI in education can provide valuable insights and networking opportunities.

How can teachers and students effectively utilize AI rather than using it as just a shortcut?

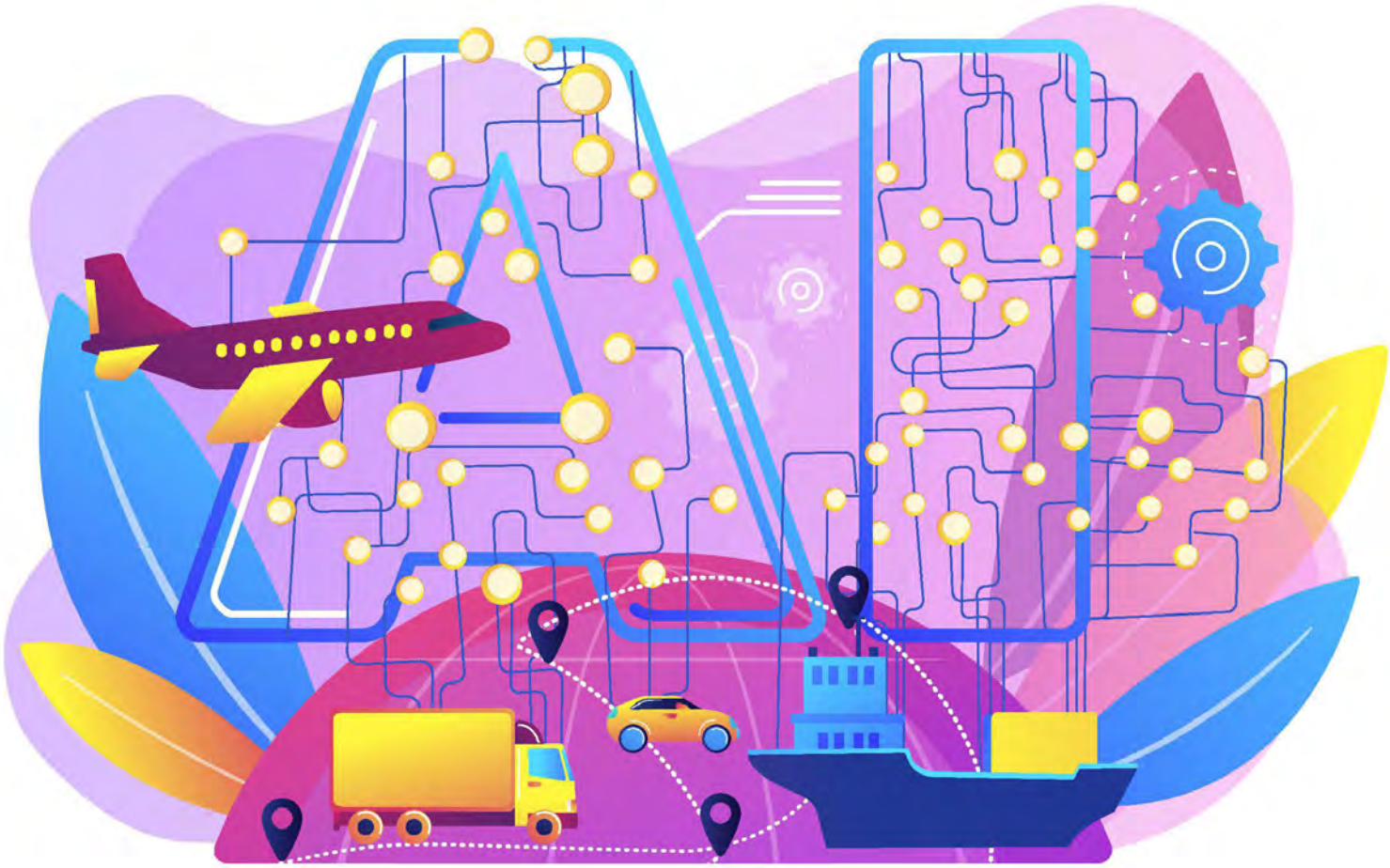
For teachers:

- Use AI to generate writing prompts that contain relevant vocabulary and grammar for students to practice responding to. This provides more opportunities for writing practice.
- Have students proofread and edit AI-generated texts in the TL to build editing skills.
- Use AI chatbots to create conversational practice opportunities. Students can practice speaking skills by having discussions with a bot.
- Generate a diverse range of perspectives on a topic by using AI to write sample passages from different viewpoints. Students analyze and compare the passages.
- Create personalized quiz questions tailored to each student's ability level using AI to build more quizzes.

For students:

- Get feedback on writing drafts by having an AI review for grammar, spelling, fluency. It supplements teacher feedback.
- Practice conversational skills by interacting with an AI chatbot tutoring them in the language. The bot can give real-time corrections.
- Use creative writing prompts from an AI to write original poems, stories, dialogues in the target language. The prompts provide inspiration.
- Receive extra vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension practice using AI tutoring apps that give detailed explanations.
- Listen to AI read aloud passages, articles, stories in the target language to improve listening and reading skills.

This article was written by Jennifer McGonagle and Nathan Campbell with collaboration from Mina Levenson.



Embracing GenAI: A Teacher's Journey from Hubris to Humility

Sarah Dutton

Elizabethtown College

Initially, as a teacher of World Languages I felt a fair amount of impunity in the face of the GenAI hype. “Surely,” I thought, “this must be as good/bad as Google Translate” and I´d have nothing to worry about. And then one day I made an account and put in a query in Spanish and, like many others who finally gave this thing a try – I was shocked and humbled, concerned but also curious.

Fast forward a few months to late October 2023 in Central Pennsylvania and the changing leaves outside reflect a changing academic landscape in the classroom. ChatGPT is the hot button topic at every faculty meeting I attend, both formal and informal, and for the past year we have been feeling a need to catch up (or on) to our students, who are already using myriad forms of GenAI. The topic bubbles up

frequently in the classroom, too, but what's different now is that my students are actively wondering out loud about *how*, not *whether* they may use the technology.

Into the mix throw my first bout with Covid-19 and I am down for the count, completely wrecked for nine days straight. Catching up seems impossible amidst the lingering brain-fog, and I know I need to be back in the classroom with my students, but further deep diving into the nuances of if-then clauses and the subjunctive mood strikes me as ambitious. I've been brainstorming activities to help my advanced language students learn to use GenAI as a tool rather than a crutch and a plan begins to form.

There are few things college students love in a classroom more than watching a familiar movie, and I managed to find *The Book of Life* in Spanish and without subtitles. This is a wonderful film that pre-dates Disney's similarly themed *Coco* and, although I love *Coco,* I think *The Book of Life* does a better job of communicating cultural subtleties that provoke deeply interesting discussions.

So, my nine students and I watch it, pausing every now and then to highlight and discuss some of the important cultural themes, and when we finish, they hand-write a short essay in Spanish to answer the prompt: *Write a summary of the movie The Book of Life.* Their essays run in length anywhere from ~250-450 words and after class finishes, I type them to eliminate handwriting/pen color recognition. I then go to both ChatGPT and Google Bard and input the same prompt and print out the results from these GenAI applications as well. Everything is approximately the same length, the same typeface, the same paper, and the same topic.

During the next class, I eliminated two of the students' essays, replaced them with the GenAI pieces, distributed them so that no one got their own essay, and asked them to constructively critique both the language and the content of the essay. Then they paired up and discussed the essays they had with a partner.

Finally, I pulled out the big reveal: two of the essays were GenAI and now their job was two-fold:

1. Identify the GenAI writing.
2. Evaluate the GenAI writing.

What had initially been an activity born out of less than fortunate circumstances became the highlight of the semester for both me and my students.

Their key takeaways:

- **GenAI writing was more bland and emotionally less detailed than that of**

human beings. When I read the GenAI writing, it had all the right pieces in exactly the right places without any real hint of personality. Especially with this kind of open response, students couldn't help but interject tiny bits of their personalities into their summaries with opinion-laden adjectives about the characters. The GenAI descriptions were functional, but much less interesting to read.

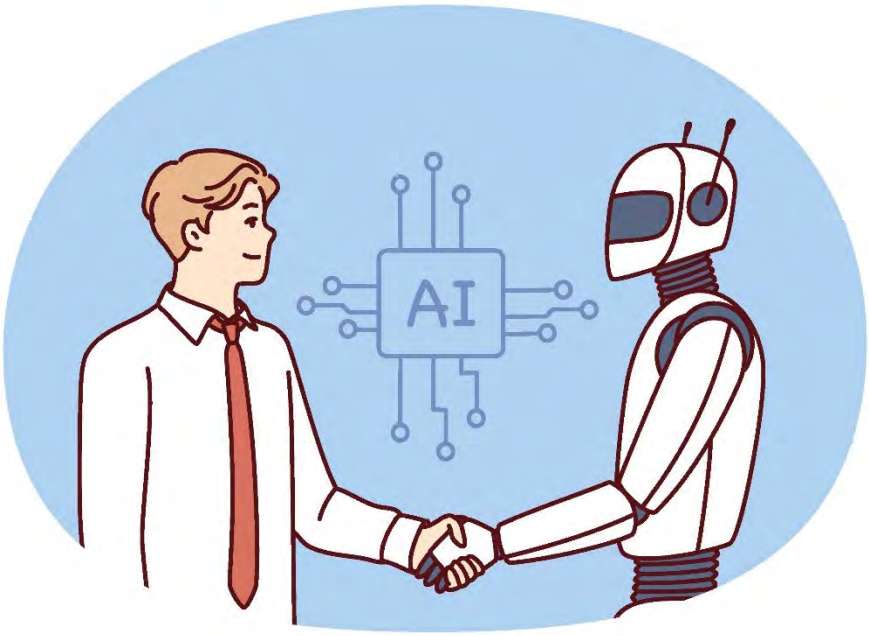
- **It could be wrong!** It wasn't a scorpion bite; it was a snake bite that sent Manolo to his ancestors. Students and I were honestly shocked at this error. We've all been told that the tool is only as good as the tools and information and that some of it may be out of date and therefore wrong, but to contain a content error on a film that is 10 years old gave us a moment to carefully consider how much we should actually TRUST the tool. Our conversation grew into a discussion of editing strategies and interestingly overlapped in a lot of ways with the things that I teach students to look for when evaluating authentic and primary source materials.
- **The quality of the prompt was incredibly important.** One GenAI response summarized the movie plot, and the other summarized the movie's IMDB data points. This led to a lively conversation about polysemous words and the influence of content schema in interpretation and translation between languages.

The following semester I heard from two of the nine students about how important that class was in their own growing understanding of GenAI's place in their academics, as indeed it was in my own. Overheard at the PSMLA Conference in Seven Springs this past fall was this phrase that has stayed with me:

"GenAI won't replace teachers. It will replace teachers who don't work with GenAI."

This statement was received in the room with the same trepidation I remember feeling after submitting my first tentative query last spring, and even (much) further back to when I was a brand-new teacher and Wikipedia had just arrived on the scene. Teachers had to first learn to use that tool and then teach students how to vet the information and effectively use it as an ancillary to their own learning.

Change may be the only constant in education but change that is as seismic as the introduction of GenAI is rare and it will take a lot of work to adapt to and capitalize on the swiftly changing developments in the field. I hope this story encourages other educators to embrace the challenges and rewards of GenAI that lie ahead on behalf of our students, and for the lifelong learners in ourselves.



* Full disclosure: I used GenAI to suggest a title for this article and could not turn down this suggestion!

AI Prompts for Effortless Learning Design

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked a revolution in education through innovations like AI-powered chatbots that are utterly transforming lesson planning and learning personalization. These brilliant chatbots are liberating teachers from hours of tedious work by instantly generating customized learning activities, differentiated assignments, and tailored assessments that invigorate our classrooms. In mere seconds, teachers can describe objectives, levels, and needs to the chatbot and receive a thrilling breadth of outcomes-based recommendations that match their students' unique potential. We can improve retention by focusing on students' own interests and experiences, an approach often lacking among textbooks aimed at a broad student population."

Using strategic chatbots can break teachers free from the cookie-cutter textbook instructional materials to unleash deeply personalized education through effortless and passionate lesson crafting. Chatbots are also unlocking the power of data to radically differentiate instruction. By continuously analyzing assessment results, they rapidly detect knowledge gaps, instantly suggest remediation, identify enrichment opportunities, and allow teachers to revise activities to optimally nurture each student's growth. This hands the heavy data lifting to AI while teachers focus on what they love — teaching.

On top of all this, chatbots serve as an ever-available curriculum expert for tireless guidance in checking standards, making connections across subjects, determining prerequisites, and weaving student passions into instruction. With the time we save, we will be able to provide feedback that will have the greatest impact on students' language confidence. As AI capacities continue to accelerate, these chatbots will only grow more

versatile, collaborative, and essential for passionate, personalized teaching. They are redefining what's possible, making differentiation easy, and bringing joy back into lesson planning and classrooms.

WRITING AN AI PROMPT

- **Use authentic cultural texts, media, and examples.** Select sources that authentically reflect the target culture and language, not just manufactured materials. This resonates more with students.
- **Situate language culturally to promote critical thinking.** Contextualize language practice within cultural products, perspectives, and behaviors. This promotes higher-order analysis and concept retention.
- **Design activities around real-world usage.** Structure activities around interacting with adaptable versions of real target-culture websites, ads, music videos, etc. This is more engaging and practical.
- **Carefully review AI-generated content**. AI can sometimes produce questionable vocabulary, grammar, or factual errors. Thoroughly review all auto-generated answer keys.
- **Ask the AI to critique and improve your prompt.** Leverage the AI's strength by having it analyze and suggest improvements to the prompts you write. Request alternatives that better fit your learning outcome goals.
- **Provide prompt frameworks with blanks.** Use brackets to indicate where the specific information (language, text, media, etc.) should be inserted in a prompt framework. This allows easy customization.

The key to success is designing thought-provoking prompts situated in authentic cultural settings, then collaborating with the AI chatbot in a collaborative process to refine and perfect prompt language that sparks engaging and pedagogically rich learning activities.

AI CHATBOTS TO CONSIDER

In my experience using the free versions of the following AI chatbots, I have discovered some key pros and cons, though paid plans likely offer additional features. My favorite chatbot overall is Claude AI. By inputting the same prompt into multiple chatbots, educators can compare the variations in proposed learning activities and strategically select the best elements from each to build a stronger learning activity.

ChatGPT	Claude AI	Merlin AI	Google's Bard (Gemini)
PROS + Most robust data + Understands incorrect grammar and spelling in English and common languages **CONS** - Lacks up-to-date information - Unavailable during high-demand times - Can engage in unethical conversations	**PROS** + Most natural speech in English and common foreign languages + Most ethical. Does not engage with racist, sexist, or homophobic conversations. **CONS** - Upload a file	**PROS** + Chrome extension provides summaries of everything you research online + Summarize and ask questions about YouTube videos **CONS** - Reduced daily limit compared to other chatbots	**PROS** + Connects to Google Docs and Sheets + Contains a fact-checker button + Provides internet links **CONS** - Is less robust, requiring users to rephrase prompts to get a suitable response

AI PROMPTS FOR CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Some suggestions for revising prompts include specifying the number of questions or activities you want created, and providing more detailed cultural contexts that connect to your current unit of study. Ask for differentiated learning materials that meet the needs of heritage language learners in your classroom.

Learning management systems (LMS) like Canvas allow instructors to create auto-graded quizzes. When writing quiz questions for an LMS, tailor the prompt to the system's grading capabilities. For example, Canvas can automatically grade quiz questions when the correct answers are formatted with back quotes. To create a printable quiz, write sentences with blanks for students to fill in and ask for an answer key to be provided separately. Specifying the desired format in the prompt streamlines the grading process for both computer-graded and hand-graded assessments.

Sample Prompt 1: Choose the Word Activity

- Please generate 15 sentences in [Spanish] using the provided vocabulary contextualized in the cultural context of [Topic] and focusing on [Language Structures].
- In each sentence, include two-word options separated by a slash (/), where only one is correct. The incorrect option should be either a word from the provided vocabulary or another commonly used

[Spanish] word. Place the correct and incorrect options in random order, so that the correct answer is not always in the same position. Provide plausible but obviously incorrect alternatives for a student who has learned the vocabulary. Use the [Present] verb tense[s] when applicable.

- Here are two examples with different vocabulary just to show you what to do:
    - *La escultura puede (caminar / llamar la atención) de cualquier persona.*
    - *El cielo estaba (amarillo / gris) y nublado durante todo el día lluvioso.*
- Use this vocabulary list: [Vocabulary]

Sample Prompt 2: True-False Vocabulary Activity

- Create true/false statements in [Spanish] for [Novice Mid Proficiency Level] using the following vocabulary words. Be sure to construct easy to read complete sentences that have a mix of both true and false claims.
- Contextualize the statements in the context of [Japanese and Chinese migration to South America].
- Vocabulary list: [Copy and paste list]
- For example: *El tomate es un tipo de marisco.*
- Provide an answer key after the generated learning activity.

Sample Prompt 3: Fill-in-the-blank Sentences Vocabulary Activity

- Create simple Spanish sentences using one vocabulary word from the provided list per sentence. Contextualize these sentences in the context of [Topic].
- Construct the sentences to either define or describe the vocabulary word so that it can be easily identified from a word bank. The sentences will be used in a fill-in-the-blank quiz with a word bank, so only one vocabulary word should logically fit in each blank. Generate Spanish sentences with varying structures and lengths. Put the sentences in a random order.
- Include a word bank.
- Example of a sentence: *Yo hago la tarea en la biblioteca después de mis clases*.
- Vocabulary List: […]

Sample Prompt 4: Fill-in-the-blank Paragraph Vocabulary Activity

- Generate short fill-in-the-blank paragraphs in Spanish of 4–5 sentences each about [Cultural Context]. Include only one vocabulary word per sentence. At the end, generate an answer key that matches each blank.
- Example paragraph: *Todas las mañanas, Ana y muchos otros madrileños salen a comprar ingredientes frescos en el _____ para preparar el almuerzo. Muchos pasan la tarde relajándose en el _____ o en una _____ antes de regresar a casa para la _____.*

Sample Prompt 5: Logical Grouping Vocabulary Activity

- Create Spanish vocabulary grouping questions using the provided vocabulary list. Construct each question with 3-4 words, including one outlier word that does not logically fit with the others.
- Present the vocabulary words in logical categories, pulling in [Spanish]-English cognates if needed to complete the groupings. If there are not enough words for categories, draw from common words or cognates that beginning-level students would know.
- Randomize the location of the correct word within the grouping as to not automatically guess which one it is.
- For example: *comer, tocar, bailar, cantar*

Sample Prompt 6: Sentence Scramble Activity

- Provide sentences in [Spanish] related to [Topic] that contain [Indirect/Direct Object Pronouns]. Scramble the word order of each sentence, separating words and phrase chunks with / slashes. After each scrambled sentence, provide the correctly ordered sentence and a correct alternative, if possible, as an answer key.
- Example: *precio / el / me / parece / poco / un / caro*
    - Answers: *El precio me parece un poco caro. Me parece un poco caro el precio.*

Sample Prompt 7: Choose the Verb Conjugation Activity

- Create [Spanish] sentences for [Proficiency Level] students using one verb infinitive from the provided list per sentence. Construct the sentences to either define or describe the vocabulary word so that it can be easily identified from a word bank. Each of the vocabulary verbs will be conjugated in the verb tense. So be sure to specify the subject of the sentence using subject pronouns or common and some uncommon Spanish first names and titles found in the [Spanish]-speaking world, including [the Caribbean and Equatorial Guinea]. Only one vocabulary word should logically fit in each blank.
- For example: *Yo canté una canción original en el concierto.*

Sample Prompt 8: Basic Sentence Conjugation Activity

- Conjugate the given [Spanish] verbs to create present tense sentences with a variety of singular and plural subjects. Use a range of common [Spanish] names to represent both formal and informal forms of **you**, avoiding/including [the pronoun *vosotros*]. The sentences should reflect real-world relevance for [Spanish]-speakers and the cultural context of [Topic].
- For example: *Mi familia y yo comemos (comer) paella los domingos como tradición en nuestra casa. Ustedes beben (beber) una taza de mate todas las mañanas.*

Sample Prompt 9: Paragraph Conjugation Activity

- Using the key ideas from the supplied topic or text, write a paragraph in [Spanish] focused on practicing the [Verb Tense]. Construct sentences that accurately convey the meaning of the original passage, but with verbs that need to be conjugated in the [Tense]. Be sure to include the subject pronoun or the proper name of the subject. Be sure to include a variety of singular and plural subjects. Use a range of common Spanish names to represent both formal and informal forms of **you**, avoiding/including [the pronoun *vosotros*]. Be sure to include a variety of lexical verbs.
- For example: *Cuando yo era (ser) niño, mi familia viajaba (viajar) con frecuencia al campo en el verano. Recuerdo que los días transcurrían (transcurrir) lentamente explorando la naturaleza.*

Sample Prompt 10: Verb Hunt

- Create a Spanish reading passage or use an existing text. Then construct a verb hunt activity based on that text focused on identifying and marking all examples of [Preterite tense, Targeted at Intermediate-High Proficiency]. The goal is to have students locate and underline instances of that tense within the reading.
- When generating the passage, aim for [150-200 words in a narrative format featuring] multiple examples of [the Preterite tense] naturally embedded. [Incorporate vocabulary and expressions common in Latin American Spanish.] Ensure a range of different lexical verbs are included.
- Then give instructions guiding learners to find and underline all verbs conjugated in [the Preterite tense]. Provide an example as a model in the instructions [with vocabulary appropriate for high intermediate students]. For additional scaffolding, offer a word bank of key verbs students can search for within the text. [Use some distractors conjugated in other tenses to add complexity.]

Sample Prompt 11: Grammar Analysis Close-Ended Activity (Indirect/Direct Object Pronouns)

- Compose 5 sentences in Spanish related to daily activities that contain indirect and/or direct object pronouns. For each sentence:
- Create a multiple-choice question to identify the indirect object pronoun(s): Answer choices*: le, les, lo, la, se, nos, os,* or "no indirect object pronoun."
- Create a multiple-choice question to identify the direct object pronoun(s): Answer choices: *lo, la, los, las*, or "no direct object pronoun."
- Create a multiple-choice question about what the indirect object pronoun refers to. Answer choices should include 5-7 different noun options relevant to the sentence, reflecting people, places, or things the pronoun could logically refer to.
- Create a multiple-choice question about what the direct object pronoun refers to.

- Answer choices should include 5-7 different noun options relevant to the sentence, reflecting people, places, or things the pronoun could logically refer to.
- For example: Sentence: "*Él le compró un libro a ella.*"

  Q1: Identify the indirect object pronoun.

  A: *le, les, lo, la, se, nos, os,* no indirect object pronoun

  Q2: Identify the direct object pronoun.

  A: *le, lo, la, los, las,* no direct object pronoun

  Q3: The indirect object pronoun *le* refers to:

  A: his mother, the store, their house, *ella*, *un libro*

  Q4: The direct object pronoun *lo* refers to:

  A: his mother, the store, their house, *ella*, *un libro*

THE PITFALLS OF AI CHATBOTS

Though AI chatbots hold exciting potential for accelerated learning activity creation, educators should be aware of common pitfalls. First, avoid using any generated activities verbatim without customization to your teaching goals and philosophy. The secret is leveraging the AI as an assistant by trying various prompt phrasings across multiple chatbots rather than taking initial results at face value. Additionally, verbatim use makes activities more susceptible to cheating. Ask chatbots to self-critique with more specific information to refine prompts toward ideal alignment. Be vigilant of sporadic language errors, faulty translations, and vague instructions — no chatbot is foolproof, so review carefully. *Lastly, don't lose your creative spark in reliance on algorithms*. Chatbots should inspire new directions, not replace educators' skills and judgment. By understanding these cautions, we can utilize incredible AI capabilities while circumventing limitations through human guidance and discernment. With thoughtful implementation, the chatbots make high-quality learning design easier for busy language educators.

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