Mapping the Future: Language and Intercultural Education in the Age of Disruptive Innovation

The Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning Conference 2025

Biographies, Titles, and Abstracts

Opening Keynote

Learning languages beyond the classroom: New literacies, motivations, and implications

Bio: Jonathon Reinhardt (PhD, Penn State) is a Professor of English Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition and Teaching at the University of Arizona. His interests lie in the theory and practice of technology-enhanced additional language pedagogy, especially with emergent technologies like social media and digital gaming, language teacher preparation and learning, and critical language awareness. http://jonreinhardt.wordpress.com

Abstract: Since the inventions of the Internet and mobile smartphone, the number of resources for informal L2 (additional) learning 'in the digital wilds' has exploded, especially for super-languages like English and Spanish. Why and how should we respond? Understanding the history, practice, and theory of the phenomenon of 'language learning beyond the classroom' (LLBC) is a good place to start. Recognizing what is truly new (and what is not) can help instructors and curriculum designers leverage LLBC for formal purposes and identify what their new roles might be. A variety of recent studies exploring informal and formal practices using social media, digital games, and other emergent digital technologies offer insight and direction. New media, digital literacies, and post-structural identity theories offer useful heuristics, as well as traditional and new theories of autonomy and motivation. Turning towards socio-cognitive and ecological interpretations, SLA and psychological theories are responding as well. By examining the new literacies and motivations for LLBC, this talk will hopefully implicate new practices, moving the conversation beyond keeping formal language learning experiences relevant towards making them indispensable.

Panel: Innovation Across the Consortium, Part I

Empowering Multilingual Learners: A Process-Based Framework for AI-Enhanced Writing
Barbara Spinelli, Columbia University

Bio: Barbara Spinelli is Senior Lecturer in Italian at Columbia University. She worked as a Researcher in Educational Linguistics at the University for Foreigners in Perugia, Italy. She collaborated with the Centre for Language Assessment and Certifications as a teacher trainer and language tester. As a language expert, she participated in research projects funded by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. She has served as Director of the Italian Language Program at Columbia University and at the Columbia University Study Abroad Program in Venice, Italy. She is the co-author of the *Profilo della lingua Italiana: Livelli A1, A2, B1, B2*.

Abstract: This presentation examines a case study that adopts a process-based approach aimed at promoting the informed use of ChatGPT to improve the writing skills of multilingual university students in an introductory Italian language course. The approach involved: 1) updating classroom policies to address the use of ChatGPT alongside other AI and online tools; 2) designing scaffolded writing activities and collaborative tools; 3) integrating instructor and student feedback through a Writing Portfolio; 4) incorporating student voice and promoting their participatory role during study skills sessions; and 5) comparing student writing during learning and assessment phases.

The study draws on qualitative data, including students' meta-reflective feedback on monitoring and evaluating AI and online tools to improve their second draft editing skills. Quantitative data include responses to pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and participation in discussion forums reflecting personal perceptions and emotional responses to these tools.

Findings reveal individual trajectories in students' use of AI tools and significant shifts in emotional and cognitive engagement with them. These results are analyzed with a focus on human agency, fairness, and well-being, offering insights into how AI tools can complement traditional teaching while fostering critical and reflective learning practices in a multilingual academic setting.

The Avatar Age of Language Learning
Michael Farina, Yale University

Bio: Before coming to Yale in 2005, Michael Farina taught at UConn, Duke, and Trinity College. He has founded study-abroad programs and served on several national councils and boards. His work spans Renaissance literature, Medieval cookbooks, and teaching with technology. He has given eight talks on the use of ChatGPT in the classroom and recently taught the Yale Faculty Academy course "Teaching and Learning with ChatGPT."

Abstract: This presentation will explore the "Avatar Age of Language Learning," a new paradigm of language learning that blends custom Generative AI chatbots and real-time video avatars to foster personalized, culturally rich language learning beyond the classroom. Drawing on custom GPTs that I have developed as OERs at Yale University, these AI-tutors adapt to learners' language proficiency, interests, and learning styles to offer differentiated learning. They offer context-sensitive guidance, vocabulary expansion, instant feedback, OPI practice, and differentiated instruction and assessment.

Complementing text and audio GPTs, we have now entered the video avatar age wherein real-time video avatars such as HeyGen, as well as ChatGPT vision, have transformed GPTs into dynamic, visual experiences that emotionally engage students. When founded on custom instruction sets and knowledge bases, students can engage these avatars (even avatars of their own professors) in ever more realistic simulated communicative scenarios – from language practice to discussing contemporary literature to medical student's practice conversations with patients.

These avatars result in an immersive learning environment that increases motivation, cultural competence, learner confidence, and outcomes. At the same time, these avatars also push us to rethink our own place in the classroom and redesign our syllabuses for a radically changing future.

Blending Student-Written Lyrics with AI-Based Music Composition: Enhancing Language Learning Through Creativity and Culture
Angela Lee-Smith, Yale University

Bio: Angela Lee-Smith, Ph.D., is Senior Lector II and Coordinator of the Korean Program in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale University. Her pedagogical practice focuses on proficiency-based instruction, standards-based assessments, curriculum design, multiliteracies, interculturality, heritage language instruction, Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL), teacher training, and Open Educational Resources (OER) development for language teaching and learning.

Abstract: This presentation explores how AI technology can be integrated into language and intercultural education through a songwriting project that combines narrative writing and music composition. Students write their own lyrics and use Suno, an AI music composition tool, to create melodies by selecting and customizing elements such as genre, tone, voice, tempo, and instrumentation. This process emphasizes student agency, ensuring that AI serves as a supportive tool rather than leading the creative process. Beyond language practice, the project allows students to engage deeply with cultural content, make artistic decisions, and create authentic musical narratives. Through composing and refining their lyrics, students develop narrative skills and strengthen linguistic and creative expression. Their engagement with K-pop and other musical genres fosters exploration of cultural products, practices, and perspectives, deepening intercultural understanding. Student reflections highlight the project's impact on language learning, creativity, and cultural awareness. Language teachers can utilize AI tools like Suno to transform student-written lyrics into music, enhancing engagement while maintaining student autonomy. Ultimately, the project extends beyond traditional "learning by doing," demonstrating how AI can enrich musical composition while fostering authentic and meaningful language learning experiences.

Proactive Approaches to GAI in Curriculum Design and Teaching
Adam Oberlin & **Ekaterina (Katya) Soloveva Woodyard**, Princeton University

Bio: Adam Oberlin is a senior lecturer, program coordinator, and study abroad director in German at Princeton University. His Ph.D. is in Germanic philology and historical linguistics and his research interests include phraseology, lexical semantics, dialectology, corpus linguistics, and periodization across the Germanic languages, as well as strategies for curriculum development and the teaching of grammar from applied linguistic perspectives. Among other subjects, he has taught the German language for eighteen years at universities and schools and has been developing new intermediate and advanced curricula at Princeton for the academic year and summer study abroad programs.

Bio: Ekaterina (Katya) Soloveva Woodyard is a Lecturer in German at Princeton University. She earned her Ph.D. from Georgetown University's German department in 2024, where she was trained in Applied Linguistics, Second Language Acquisition, Genre-Based Language Instruction, and Systemic Functional Linguistics. Her research explores Positive Discourse Analysis, social media discourse, and migrant identity in Germany. Katya's work examines how language and visual resources construct identity via stancetaking on social media. As a language educator, she is passionate about curriculum development, integrating content and language instruction, developing thematically based materials to support this approach, and incorporating technology to enhance language learning.

Abstract: We address proactive approaches to the use of generative AI (GAI) in language pedagogy, demonstrating several cases already being implemented in German courses at Princeton University. These cases include the creation of illustrative texts keyed to CEFR levels and other rubrics across genres, registers, and other dimensions of textual variance, and the integration of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and content via prompt engineering. Examples include tasks designed for vocabulary instruction, based on a curriculum focused on high-frequency vocabulary of German, as well as content-based grammar exercises and scaffolded activities that support meaningful content-based instruction in the language classroom. While some recent publications and projects have provided either approaches to GAI as an editing tool or ways of illustrating potential problems to students, we seek to increase positive implementations of the technology across curricular needs. By leveraging GAI, language instructors can efficiently create materials that are tailored to specific learning objectives and reflect real-world language use. Alongside the presentation of our work and its role in the taught curriculum and outside the classroom, we will discuss the role of GAI as a transformational element of OER creation and curriculum development.

Panel: Student Perspectives on AI in (Language) Education

In this panel, MIT undergraduate students will share their perspectives on AI and language education. For more information about the participants, please turn to the website of the Global Languages Student Ambassador program.

Panel: Academia / Industry Collaborations in Language Education

In this panel, three experts will share their views on collaborations between academia and industry in the area of language education.

Bio: Kristina Schoen is a learning designer at Duolingo at their headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Before joining Duolingo, she was an Assistant Professor of Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin, where she also earned her Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition in 2019 in the Department of Germanic Studies. Her dissertation research investigated the intersection between digital games as texts and language learners turned game players into collaborative readers of those texts. Dr. Schoen began her work with Duolingo as a German Pedagogy Expert in March 2020 before taking on larger responsibilities as a Learning Designer. In addition to her ongoing work on Duolingo's German course, she has taken on multiple new projects using AI to automate and improve in-app translations and exercises.

Bio: Julio C Rodríguez is the Director of the Language Flagship Technology Innovation Center, Director of the Center for Language and Technology, and Director of the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. Within the broad area of instructional technology, he is now primarily focused on faculty development programs, project-based language learning, materials development, and online course design. Before coming to the University of Hawaii, he directed the curriculum development division for online courses at Iowa State University. Rodriguez has published and presented widely on instructional technology, project-based language learning, and design-based research in computer-assisted language learning.

Bio: David Bong is the co-founder and CEO of Avant, a language proficiency platform that spun out of the Center for Applied Second Language Studies at the University of Oregon. Avant delivered the first online language proficiency assessment and currently delivers tests in over 140 languages. Previously, he established the Tokyo office of Kroll Associates, the world's leading investigative and security consulting firm. Later he founded Earl, an iPhone app using patented text-to-speech and speech-to-text technologies enabling the blind to access and listen to hundreds of newspapers. He was also a principal in two other startups, one in yogurt manufacturing (with an MIT Physics dropout!), the other a digital platform delivering information in Japanese on listed US companies to individual investors in Japan. David graduated from Wesleyan University with a BA in Japanese History.

Panel: Innovation Across the Consortium, Part II

The Role of AI in French Writing Workshops: Deep Learning and Expanding Multiethnic Perspectives
Ramla Bedoui, Yale University

Bio: Ramla Bedoui is a Lector in French at Yale. She completed her Ph.D. on Baudelaire and Mallarmé at the Sorbonne where she also earned a master's degree in the Philology and Literature of the Arab World. Part of her work is furthering learning, with a focus on deep learning, by deploying AI in the classroom.

Abstract: This presentation examines the challenges and opportunities of post-COVID teaching in a French Writing Workshop, focusing on the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI can reshape language instruction by providing personalized, real-time feedback on vocabulary, syntax, and writing through technologies that foster a dynamic, responsive learning environment tailored to individual student needs.

AI also enables deeper exploration of the diverse cultural influences within the French language. By integrating the study of Provençal and Arabic traditions – key contributors to French linguistic and cultural landscapes – students engage with the multicultural dimensions of French. This approach highlights regional and historical influences, including those of second-generation North African immigrants, offering a richer, multiethnic perspective that transcends Eurocentric frameworks.

By engaging with notions of ethnic authenticity within a globalizing technology that privileges the infinite reproduction of texts, students reflect on the ethical dimensions of AI in creative and academic production through hands-on activities and engagement with authentic scholarly texts (including French Theory). This approach fosters meaningful dialogue on the benefits and limitations of AI, deepening student engagement with linguistic structures, with cultural nuance, and with the ethics of intellectual creation.

Let's Chatbot: Chatbots for Students by Students in Language Teaching
Grit Matthias Phelps, Cornell University

Bio: Grit Matthias Phelps has been teaching German at Cornell University since 2008. She studied in Heidelberg, Dresden, and Jena, Germany. Her research and teaching interests include finding effective ways to incorporate emerging technologies into language teaching and promoting cultural communication, critical thinking, and language competencies for lifelong learners. Every semester, her students work collaboratively via synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication with students in Bielefeld, Germany. She loves Podcasts and questioning the digital.

Abstract: In my advanced German class, "Against and Beyond the Digital," students collaboratively created limited micro chatbots with ChatGPT 4.0 for students in my first-semester German language class. I would like to present this project as a way to critically discuss the use of AI in the language classroom.

The Pedagogy of Everyday Life: Engaging with the Sound of Language
Dinny Risri Aletheiani, Yale University

Bio: Dr. Dinny Risri Aletheiani is a faculty member at the Council on Southeast Asia Studies in the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies and Director of Southeast Asia Language Studies at Yale University. Her publications and research are in curriculum studies, historical archive, Southeast Asia diaspora curriculum and consciousness, indigenous education, language and art practices, language learning, Indonesian language reading curriculum, Virtual Reality (VR), and soundscape. She has also performed theaters, dance performances, and choreography internationally.

Abstract: The presentation describes and reflects critically the creation of 360 VR video and sound captures, its rationale, and the value of human creativity and explorative practices in engaging with and through technology for language teaching and learning.

Closing Keynote

Uncertainty as a catalyst for engagement and pedagogical reinvention
Nicole Mills, Harvard University

Bio: Nicole Mills is Joint Director of Language Programs in the Department of Romance Languages & Literatures and a lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She teaches courses in French, language pedagogy, and technology-enhanced language learning. Her research explores the psychology of language learning and its intersection with virtual and AI-driven environments. She co-authored *Perspectives on Teaching Language and Content* (Yale University Press, 2020) and has published widely in journals such as *The Modern Language Journal*, *Foreign Language Annals*, and *Language Learning*. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Studies and French from Emory University.
Links to publications and presentations: https://works.bepress.com/nicole_mills/

Abstract: Research in neuroscience and educational psychology suggests that unpredictable outcomes can activate emotional and cognitive systems that deepen persistence, enhance focus, and promote long-term engagement (Clark et al., 2009; Schultz, 2007; Shank, 2020). When intentionally designed, uncertainty can become a powerful motivational force (Al-Hoorie, 2022; Sapolsky, 2017). Language education stands at a pivotal moment where this concept has renewed urgency. The disruptions of the pandemic compelled educators to innovate – reimagining connection, creativity, and curriculum through digital experimentation (Goertler & Gleason, 2024). Today, in the face of both the transformative potential of generative AI and the continued uncertainty in higher education, we are again called to rethink the future of language learning. This keynote explores how immersive technologies and AI-powered tools can position uncertainty not as a challenge to overcome, but as a catalyst for engagement and pedagogical reinvention. Through virtual reality simulations, interactive AI companions, and narrative-centered experiences, we can design environments where learners don't simply study languages and cultures – but they live, experience, and interact with them.