



## Foreign/Second Language: French and Hospitality

What if elementary French were about welcoming a new member of the class?

Nancy taught elementary-level French; she was also a classroom teacher. She wanted her French lesson to be about welcoming, because she remembered her friend Angelique, and how homesick Angelique had been when she moved to the US from Rwanda as a student.

"I decided to plan my lesson around some of my friend's experiences. Angelique was blessed to have found a church that was very welcoming, and people looked after her when she felt homesick. One particular couple had a ministry of looking after foreign students; they invited people to dinner each weekend, and Angelique spent several Christmases with them.

"I showed pictures of Angelique and told her story, and then I showed pictures of her when she was ten years old, in her school uniform. I asked the class to imagine the ten-year-old Angelique arriving in their class speaking only French. How would they use their French to help her feel at home? I put up the following questions:

- What would you want to say in French?
- What tone of voice would you use?

"We worked on a few basic sentences that they could use to welcome Angelique, and they practiced using them in role play. To end the lesson, I asked them to imagine moving to a new country and to reflect on how they would want to be welcomed."

What's going on here?

Nancy saw her language lesson as a place to emphasize and practice hospitality to strangers. She made French something that her students could use to express love to

others.

She engaged her students experientially through role play and storytelling. She enabled them to learn from their French and connect with the wider world and encouraged them to reflect on how they would want to be treated.

Nancy reshaped her practice by planning an introduction that drew on real experience. She changed the concept she used to frame the lesson to one of hospitality and used storytelling as her approach. She used a question to help students reflect.

## What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

Nancy approached her French class intentionally, focusing on how language learning can be about loving and learning from others. Christian faith includes an emphasis not only on loving one's neighbor but also on loving strangers, those who are different from us.

## What difference does it make?

Language learning sometimes can end up with the main focus on getting to say what we want to say or learning how to obtain services when abroad. This lesson shifted the focus to welcoming by listening to another person's story that contained spiritual and moral challenges to stimulate reflection.


## Where could we go from here?

A range of other stories can be used in the foreign language classroom to create an emphasis on welcoming and learning from others—both historical stories told through word and image and, if available, stories from local people who can be invited to the class.

## Digging deeper

The Bible teaches that we should love neighbors and strangers as ourselves ([Leviticus 19:18](#), [Leviticus 19:33-34](#)) and calls us to exercise hospitality toward strangers ([Matthew 25:34-35](#); [Hebrews 13:2](#)). Jesus said that whoever welcomes a stranger welcomes him.

The call to welcome the stranger is grounded in the experience of Israel, for they knew what it was like to be strangers in the land of Egypt. Throughout the Old Testament we see examples of hospitality shown to unexpected visitors by Abraham, prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, and strangers in the community. In the New Testament, hospitality is mentioned as something that should be the mark of a leader ([1 Timothy 3:2](#)) and cultivated by ordinary believers ([1 Peter 4:9](#)).



*The challenge of hospitality, both personally and professionally, comes when we are stressed out or tired and we offer it grudgingly. The gift of hospitality comes when we find in the welcoming face of hospitality the welcoming face of God. Cornelius Plantinga*



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